SHAPING TORONTO: FEMALE ECONOMY AND AGENCY IN THE CORSET INDUSTRY, 1871-1914

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Abstract

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In amplifying the contours of the body, the corset is an historical site that fashions femininity even as it constricts women's bodies. This study sits at the intersection of three histories: of commodity consumption, of labour, and of embodiment and subjectivity, arguing that women were active participants in the making, selling, purchasing and wearing of corsets in Toronto, a city that has largely been ignored in fashion history. Between 1871 and 1914 many women worked in large urban factories, and in small, independent manufacturing shops. Toronto's corset manufacturers were instrumental in the urbanization of Canadian industry, and created employment in which women earned a wage. The women who bought their wares were consumers making informed purchases, enacting agency in consumption and aesthetics; by choosing the style or size of a corset, female consumers were able to control to varying degrees, the shape of their bodies. As a staple in the wardrobe of most nineteenth-century women, the corset complicates the study of conspicuous consumption, as it was a garment that was not meant to be seen, but created a highly visible shape, blurring the lines between private and public viewing of the female body. Marxist analysis of the commodity fetish informs this study, and by acknowledging the ways in which the corset became a fetishized object itself, both signaling the shapeliness of femininity while in fact augmenting and diminishing female bodies. This study will address critical theory regarding the gaze and subjectivity, fashion, and modernity, exploring the relationship women had with corsets through media and advertising. A material culture

analysis of extant corsets helps understand how corsets were constructed in Toronto, how the women of Toronto wore them, and to what extent they actually shaped their bodies. Ultimately, it is the aim of this dissertation to eschew common misconceptions about the practice of corsetry and showcase the hidden manner in which women produced goods, labour, and their own bodies in the nineteenth century, within the Canadian context.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to all of the women included in these pages, but especially to Elizabeth Bray (d. 1887), whose death is featured in chapter two. This is also dedicated to my grandmother, Mildred Darby, age 102 at the time of completion, who earned a wage her entire life, and provided a role-model of what a strong independent woman is.

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Introduction

In 1901, Mrs. Carrie Nation, a famous leader of the American Temperance movement, spoke at Toronto's Massey Hall. In her closing remarks, she told the audience of one thousand people that corsets "were the instruments of the devil for squeezing the life out of women and destroying the natural beauty of their form".[1] These remarks and others like them pervaded the cultural memory of Canadians so deeply that over a century later scholars and the public still believe that "Women in Canada continued to allow Victorian attitudes toward women's roles and feminine appearance...[to] dictate what they wore even as they fought for political emancipation and against social evils" and that "in effect, the restrictive nature of their corsets epitomized their continued position in society."[2] Contrary to the rhetoric spouted by Mrs. Nation, corsets were not responsible for squeezing the life out of the women of Toronto, but rather breathed life into the economy of the city, and shaped the lives of the women who made them. Though Mrs. Nation's audience was specifically upper and middle-class women, the opinion that corsets kept women in a place of social subservience dismisses any agency that women had over their bodies, as informed consumers, and as employees working in a nascent industry. Corsets were a constant part of the everyday lives of most Toronto women, and were part of an economy that was largely female based. Women owned Toronto corset companies, sewed in them, kept their accounts, worked in sales, purchased the final product at any number of retail or bespoke outlets, and wore them everyday. Through newspapers and magazines women of Toronto were also subjected to ever increasing ire toward the garment as a risk to their health, juxtaposed against advertisements for the latest corset styles. This seemingly complicated relationship with their foundation

[1] "Go, Smash, Says Carrie", *The Globe* (Toronto, ON), Sept. 26, 1901, 12.
[2] Barbara E. Kelcey, "Dress Reform in Nineteenth Century Canada", in *Fashion: A Canadian Perspective*, ed. Alexandra Palmer (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004): 230.

garments has resulted in negative press for corsets, sentiments that continue through the generations and still plague modern corsets and the women who choose to wear them.

Through an examination of female commodity consumption, labour and subjectivity, this study argues that the corset industry in Toronto was a largely female economy, which provided opportunities for women to assert agency with both their careers and bodies. The term "female economy" is borrowed from Wendy Gamber's book of the same name about milliners and dressmakers in Boston, between 1860 and 1930.[3] The term suggests a system of making and selling, wherein women owned and operated businesses, which employed women making goods intended for female purchase and use.[4] Much like the findings in Gamber's work, corset making involved several parties, exposing connections between the female economy and the larger, male-operated consumer universe, where women were the largest producers and consumers.[5] Furthermore, the female economy supported roles and employment that existed outside of the established narrative of homogeneous work environments that supposedly existed within the needle trades.[6]

Pulling inspiration from Arjun Appadurai's *The Social Life of Things*, this study uses the life-cycle of the corset, from design to wear to illustrate the pervasiveness of corsets in the life of most Toronto women. In previous studies of female labour in Toronto's clothing manufacturing, the object itself is absent, and women are presented simply as cogs in the capitalist machine. By examining the objects themselves, and reflecting on the women who made them and wore them, this study deviates from existing scholarship, as foundational as it is, by placing importance on the labour, consumer, and the object itself.

[3] Wendy Gamber, and her book 1997 *The Female Economy: Millinery and Dressmkaking Trades, 1860-1930*.
[4] Gamber, 3.
[5] Gamber, 99.
[6] Gamber, 5.

The life cycle begins by profiling corset manufacturers. Companies were owned and operated by both men and women, in nearly equal proportion, subverting the Victorian notion that women's place was in the home and men earned wages in the public sphere. In some of the instances where men owned the companies, evidence shows that they were previously owned by women, or had women running them outside of the public eye.

Following the life of the corset and juxtaposing this account with the biographies of labourers, the second chapter exposes the nearly total female labour force of corset makers in factories, and reveals the astonishing variety of jobs therein, including white collar and sales work. The female workforce was significant enough that the clothing trade was instrumental in spurring factory reforms, including minimum age, and work hours. Each section of this chapter is illustrated by biographies of selected women and their families, as a means of humanizing their work experiences, and to punctuate how difficult it can be to locate the lives of everyday women in historic sources.

After the corsets were made, they were sold, and analysis of the life cycle continues with a deep content analysis of advertising techniques, to elicit key words and imagery. Corset advertisements used allegorical imagery, and sold promises of grace and elegance, as well as quality and economy. Included in this chapter is a sample of data regarding the corsets that were available to the women of Toronto, including price, size, colour and make, to better argue against still pervasive myths surrounding corsets and size, and the low prices of some demonstrating that corsets were an item available to all women, regardless of social class.

The life cycle of the corset concludes with consumption and the day-to-day experience of wearing the corset, with a specific emphasis on the relationships the women of Toronto had with

their corsets. This examination includes a discussion of the dress reform movement and medical myths surrounding corsets that are still culturally pervasive. While this chapter does not argue against dress reform, it does argue that the propaganda against corsetry was just as anti-feminist as the reformers claimed corsets were. This chapter engages with newspaper stories, and fashion advice columns, to illustrate the breadth of women's exposure to corsets, whether they were being advised against wearing them, or encouraged to try the latest style.

This study concludes with interviews with corset makers in Toronto today, and offers a retrospective of how corsets have returned as a fashionable item after years of being relegated to subcultural status. Through making and wearing corsets, the women of Toronto challenged the Victorian values of natural form and domestic womanhood. This study argues that women did not need emancipating from corsets, nor did they experience social restriction because of them, but rather the retrospective policing of women's bodies through modern corset critique has erased women's agency in their careers and bodies. Corsets are only one (very diverse and complicated) item on a time line of fashion history, wherein both men and women altered their natural forms.

This chapter introduces the history and evolution of corsets as foundation garment, as well as some of the social issues that they raised. These issues are contextualized by a literature review of fashion and cultural theory, and Canadian labour and women's history. These literature reviews situate this study within the greater interdisciplinary fields that contribute to understanding the impact of corsets and women's labour in nineteenth century Canada. Following the literature review are the theoretical frameworks that informed this study, with justifications for why these specific frameworks were used. The Methodology section reflects the interdisciplinary nature of the research used, including archival and material culture, and

elaborates on the need for fashion studies to incorporate multiple approaches and modes of research. This chapter concludes with an introduction to Toronto history, a tour of the city and its parts, as well as the growth of commerce and industry in the city to provide geographic and social context for the stories in the subsequent chapters.

History of the corset

Valerie Steele, author of *Corsets: A Cultural History* opens her book with the statement "The corset is probably the most controversial garment in the entire history of fashion."[7] Our Western cultural memory recalls it as a torture device imposed upon women by the patriarchy as an attempt to control their bodies and sexuality.[8] Even the design and construction of corsets has been historically attributed to men.[9] It has been relegated to the realm of fetishists, or worn for the sexual thrill of being bound.[10] However, as Baudrillard notes, the original term fetish[11] refers to "a fabrication, an artifact, a labour of appearances and signs".[12] This form of fetishism applies to corsets, as the purpose of a corset was to create a smooth foundation for the tight-fitting fashions, and

Figure 0-1 Minoan Goddess shown wearing tight belt, c. 1600BCE. Royal Ontario Museum.

[7] Valerie Steele, *The Corset: A Cultural History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001): 1.
[8] Steele, 1.
[9] Marianne Thessander, *The Feminine Ideal* (London: Reaktion Books, 1997): 82.
[10] Elizabeth Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity* (London: Virago, 1985): 100.
[11] The term "fetish" also refers to Marixist commodity fetish, and religious fetishes, which are objects possessing supernatural powers.
[12] Jean Baudrillard, *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* (St, Louis: Telos Press, 1981): 91.

primarily to hold the breasts, as spanx and bras are used to today, or girdles in the mid-twentieth century. Corsets, (also known as jumps[13], pair of bodies[14], stays[15] depending on the era) were worn as foundation garments for fashion for 400 years, though the history of non-western and pre-modern histories of similar garments is unclear.[16] The instance that is most often cited, and which I recall being taught as a first year Costume Studies student, was a third millennium BCE image of a Minoan woman (figure 0-1) wearing a tight garment with an exaggerated waist with exposed and unbound breasts.[17] Steele discusses images of Ancient Greece and Rome which appear to be strips of fabric wound tightly around the mid-section, though she dismisses any similarity to the corset of modernity, as the clothing of pre-modern Mediterranean did not include stiffening or lacing.[18]

Though historians have stated otherwise, women wore supportive undergarments well before the modern corset. In 2012, archaeologists uncovered a set of undergarments in an Austrian castle.[19] They were dated to the fifteenth century, and resemble current bra and panties, the latter which were actually for men. Without this material evidence history has relied on paintings and writing, which was not a rich source for such intimate items. The

Figure 0-2 Top of medieval lingerie set located in an Austrian castle. C. 1400 CE. Universitat Innsbruck.

[13] Phyllis Tortora and Ketih Eubanks, *Survey of Historic Costume* (New York: Fairchild, 2000):236.
[14] Norah Waugh, *Corsets and Crinolines* (New York: Routledge, 2000): 19.
[15] Tortora and Eubanks, 183.
[16] Steele, 1.
[17] Francois Boucher, *20,000 Years of Fashion* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1987): 79.
[18] Steele, 4.
[19] Beatrix Nuts, "Medieval Lingerie Discovered", *Universität Innsbruck.* Accessed March 21, 2017. https://www.uibk.ac.at/ipoint/news/2012/buestenhalter-aus-dem-mittelalter.html.en

modern corset, which was worn beginning in the 16th century, used stiffening such as whalebone, wood, horn, or buckram to help shape the body into a triangular conical shape, and was allegedly popularized by Catherine di Medici.[20] This was a garment worn exclusively by upper-class women. It continued to be worn and evolve up to the French Revolution. By the late 18th century, dress became elaborate, including the stays, which created small waists and exaggerated breasts which spilled over the top of the stays and dress by constricting across the bust, forcing the ribcage into an unnatural triangular shape, and pushing the flesh up. After the French Revolution, fashion was much less extravagant, as the political nature of demonstrating wealth through such excessive displays was no longer in vogue. Women's dress was loose fitting and Grecian-inspired, which, although it was not tight around the waist, still required bust-support, which was achieved by lightly, or not at all, boned stays.[21] At the end of the Napoleonic wars corsets reappeared and spread throughout society. As technology advanced, sewing and weaving became quicker, corsets were mass produced and became a staple of women's clothing for the next hundred years.[22]

It is after this spread of corsets around the bodies of women from all walks of life that the concerns about the dangers of corsetry were disseminated. Prior to the nineteenth century, stays were mostly worn by upper class women only. The democratization of fashion made corsets accessible to even lower-class women, and women who earned wages,[23] in spite of some sources claiming that it was impossible to work while wearing a corset.[24] Corsets were so pervasive, that

[20] Boucher, 227.
[21] Waugh, 75.
[22] Steele, 33.
[23] Leigh Summers, "Yes, They Did Wear Them: Working Class Women and Corsetry in the Nineteenth Century", *Costume* 36, no. 1 (2002).
[24] Thessander, 83.

within the context of Fetish that Baudrillard spoke of, a woman who did not wear a corset was immodest and immoral; loose.[25] The corset became a symbol of modern femininity.

According to popular lore, the corset disappeared from fashion with Paul Poiret, and his daring and innovative designs, a claim that he corroborated when he stated in 1908 "Oui, je libérais le buste, mais j'entravais les jambs" (yes I liberated the bust, but I shackled the legs)".[26] The First World War also assisted in removing the corset from regular fashion through a rationing of materials used in corsets, such as steel and canvas.[27] After the First World War dress styles available to women, and a range of leisure and sports activities, also increased the number of undergarments available to them, making the alleged abolishment of corsets a complicated issue.[28] I chose to conclude this study with the start of the War due to the complications in production that it caused. However, the claim that women were liberated from corsets is a misconception. Certainly, as fashions changed, a corset no longer served as an appropriate base for post-war dress. The stiff, hour-glass shape did not suit the garçonne style of the 1920s, which preferred a straighter figure with flattened breasts. But, much like the hour-glass the corset created, the boyish figures did not come naturally to many women who desired a fashionable silhouette, and girdles and brassieres were applied. After the Second World War, fashion once again changed, and the New Look was introduced. A British Pathé newsreel from 1948 shows a model dressing

Figure 0-3 Still from a British Pathé video showing the extremes of New Look underpinnings, 1948. Via Youtube.

[25] Johann Flugel, *The Psychology of Clothes* (London: International University Press, 1930): 75.
[26] Waugh, 297.
[27] Boucher, 408.
[28] Jill Fields, "Fighting the Corsetless Evil: Shaping Corsets and Culture, 1900-1930", *Journal of Social History* 33, no. 2 (1999): 62.

in a New Look gown, which includes being laced at the waist and pads added to her hips (Figure 0-3). The voice-over describes the garment as a "straight jacket for that figure of eight appearance… the French call it a 'guêpière', meaning wasp, the Americans a 'cinch', we know they're just old fashioned stays...For years British models have slimmed down to be a la mode, but now they just haven't got what it takes."[29] Until the sexual revolution of the 1960s, women continued to wear girdles, belts, brassieres, and other means of altering their natural forms for the sake of fashion, and then, as Valerie Steele notes, the 1970s and 1980s brought the diet and fitness craze, so no longer did women need to alter their bodies externally for thinness, but rather began altering their bodies from the inside. By the 1990s plastic surgery afforded women the opportunity to alter their bodies further from the inside, through liposuction, breast implants,[30] and, more recently, posterior implants. Both the fitness craze and plastic surgery have been blamed for a host of psychological disorders, including anorexia nervosa.[31] However, during the nineteenth century, the dress reform and health movements made the corset the main enemy of women's health, citing a number of illnesses, from intestinal disorders to stupidness, caused by cinching. The statistics are not reliable due to the nature of Victorian medicine, but certainly the number of illnesses caused by over-dieting, fad diets, excessive fitness, and plastic surgery must surpass the injuries caused by corsets. And yet, in spite of the bad press, the external corset has made a comeback, with "waist trainers" endorsed by celebrities, and formal occasions for the average woman are now marked by squeezing into a set of spanx, to create a pleasing foundation

[29]"New Look Underwear" (1948) *British Pathé* [Video] Retrieved March 14, 2017, from youtube.com/watch?v=baxaHMpL9cQ.
[30] Steele, 163.
[31] Susan Bordo, *Unbearable Weight*, (Berkley: University of California Press, 2003),: 201.

for formal attire. This need to reshape the body exemplifies Susan Bordo's statement "If anatomy is destiny, women are discovering new ways to reshape both".[32]

Theoretical Framework

This study begins in 1871, a year chosen because it was a census year, but also because production of goods in Toronto was not largely factory based prior to this date.[33] This industrial development is relevant as the division of labour and the social order that factory work created is integral to the mass manufacture, sale, and purchase of corsets. Several Marxist theories, as well as the evolution of these ideas, will be used as a framework for research and assessment of the Toronto corset trade. These include historical materialism, commodity fetish, political economy, and their evolution within the field of feminist studies and material culture.

Historical materialism is extremely relevant to this study. Part of Marx's early theories on labour and society, historical materialism contends that humans have created societies based on the division of labour, and the evolution of modes of production.[34] The final stage of this evolution is capitalism, with a separation of the common people from the control of means of production, production which is completed through the use of machines. In this instance production is done by sewing machines to divide the working lower class and the factory-owning upper class. Though Marx assumes the factory owners contribute nothing to the process, some of the female corset factory owners in this study straddled the line between owner and labourer, themselves processing the skills required to make the final product, and indeed often doing so. The corset factory system differs from other forms of factory production in this sense.

[32] Bordo 20.
[33] Peter Goheen, *Victorian Toronto, 1850-1900* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970): 156.
[34] Anthony Giddens, *Capitalism and Modern Social Theory* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1971): 19.

The theories of historical materialism were the beginnings of Marx's analysis of factory labour and capitalism. Chapter six of book one of *Capital*, for example, described the process of buying and selling labour power in order to produce goods, where it is understood that labour is a major factor in the exchange value. Because value is created from labour, capitalists should not be able to create value, as they do not labour.[35] Labour-power is commodified labour that is mainly bought by capitalists to create surplus value (profit). It is the difference between someone making and selling their own goods, and someone working for another person to make and sell goods for the profit of that person. Capitalism is specifically the social system that restlessly seeks profit, and gains profit from exploiting the labouring class. In the coming chapters, I will examine the disparate existences of factory owners and their employees, largely women, and the outcome of this capitalist mode of production, the commodity fetish.

Though corsets have largely been associated with sexual fetish in the past 50 years, in part due to their inclusion in BDSM style pin-up photographs, they also relate to the Marxist idea of commodity fetish, an idea which has not been greatly explored in corset literature. At a basic level, commodity fetish involves transforming subjective aspects of economic value into objective, real things that people believe have value.[36] It creates a mysticism surrounding a product, masking the exploitation and alienation of producers, making them subordinate to the product.[37] Tied into this alienation is the fact that workers in capitalist societies do not own or control their means of production, and as such their livelihood depends upon anonymous economic forces that are out of their control, such as commodities, money, profit, etc. [38] According to David McNally, for Marx, commodity fetishism was "an objective social process

[35] Karl Marx, *Capital* (New York: Random House, 1964): 47.
[36] Isaak Illich Rubin, *Essays on Marx's Theory of Value* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1990): 5.
[37] Arun Bose, *Marxian and Post-Marxian Political Economy* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1975): 47.
[38] David McNally, *Bodies of Meaning: Studies on Language and Liberation* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2001): 197.

in which the movement of things really does regulate the lives of human beings".[39] In *Bodies of Meaning*, McNally uses Benjamin's *Arcades Project* to explore commodity fetishism, through nineteenth century Parisian consumerism, which relates to the reading of Toronto consumer culture in the following chapters. This involves analysing the erotic connection people make with goods, and replacing this with a nearly mythical level of attachment, creating Gods out of their consumer goods.[40] "The fetishism of commodities produces the most amazing investment of symbolic powers and meanings in objects", creating temples of shopping malls, and holy texts out of advertisements.[41] Corsets, especially, offered to literally change the consumer, and in McNally's word, regulate the movements of the body. Advertisements promised health and beauty, and even if these changes did not occur, women's bodies were physically altered through the use of moulded canvas, steel bones and lacing to create the desired silhouette. This mythical vision, often manifested by naming corset styles after deities, also blinded consumers to the fact that objects were made by other humans, but the fairy-glamour placed on them hid the fact that the body of the maker was also present in the artefact.[42] The presence of the worker becomes clear when examining extant artefacts, looking at the stitches and realizing that the hand of a long-dead factory worker guided the fabric through a machine under the watchful eye of a long-dead factory foreman, to profit a long-dead business owner.

Feminist theory is heavily influential to this study, as seen in the focus on the history of women's labour and body politics. The disparate views of corset history among current scholars are all valid feminist arguments. The negative view which discusses the dangers of corsetry to the physical and mental health of women leads to the perception that women were freed from an

[39] McNally, 197.
[40] McNally, 198.
[41] McNally, 198.
[42] Elaine Scarry, *Bodies in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985): 266.

oppressive sartorial regime, which is an essentialist version of history that suggests that all women suddenly stopped wearing corsets. A contrary reading of the corset suggests that women were agents in their own sartorial choices, and as Leigh Summers states, were not cultural dupes. Both of these views acknowledge that nineteenth century women had control over their own bodies, whether it was by choosing to eschew the practice of corsetry, or by having control over their physical shape. Through the research completed, and my own experiences with corsets, I fall within the second camp; however it is important to listen to both sides of the spectrum in order to avoid an essentialist view of a complicated history.

Pierre Bourdieu, in *Masculine Domination*, argues that roles of women in industry, especially at the start of the capitalist age, were largely dependent on the roles that had traditionally been assigned to them in life, often roles of subordination, and largely with a domestic focus.[43] This also explains how the desire for fashion became associated with the feminine. Where women had been responsible for "the conversion of economic capital within the domestic unit" (ie: dressing the family), this transformed into a demand for attention to their own physical appearance,[44] as well as the ideas of vicarious consumption touted by Veblen, in which the wife displays her husband's wealth on her body.[45] A much kinder and more supportive reading by Bourdieu suggests that women participate in the consumption of fashion, because they contribute to its production, creating a female economy of producers and consumers.

In *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, Jean Baudrillard merges the Marxist concepts of labour with the feminist ideas of women as liberated from fashion. However, he suggests that fashion is imbued with sex and the sexed female body, and when women are "liberated" from fashion (a

[43] Bourdieu, 101.
[44] Bourdieu, 101.
[45] Veblen, 111.

word often associated with corsets), then the sexes are made equal. Though he states that fashion is itself feminine, "women can only be 'liberated' and 'emancipated' as a 'force of pleasure' and 'force of fashion', exactly as the proletariat is only ever liberated as the 'labour force'".[46] Though this all sounds rather reductive of women's existence, he notes that the historical definition of feminine is based on the body and sex bound up with fashion.[47] He posits that the moment women had access to labour as the proletariat, the whole world had access to the emancipation of sex and fashion. Though this is an idea that deserves more space to unpack, and which has its problems, his statement that women "produce(d) commodities in accordance with the market, and produce(d) the body in accordance with the rules of sex and fashion"[48] certainly applies to women earning wages in corset factories.

This study is not only based on the abstract ideas of capitalism, feminism, and consumer culture. The foundation, so to speak, of this work is based on one object, the corset, and connecting theories and methods to that object. In the methodology section, I will examine these objects in great detail and consider the importance of material culture to my study. However, there is also a theoretical basis for this method. Daniel Miller, in *Stuff*, devotes a chapter to exploring the theories behind the importance of objects. Through combining the works of Goffman, the performance of existence, and Gombrich, the literal framing of objects, Miller creates the theory of "the humility of things". Here he states that objects are important because we do not see them. "The less we are aware of them, the more powerfully they can determine our expectations, by setting the scene and ensuring appropriate behaviour, without being open to challenge. They

[46] Jean Baurdrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death* (London: Sage, 1993): 97.
[47] Baudrillard, 97.
[48] Baudrillard, 97.

determine what takes place to the extent that we are unconscious of their capacity to do so".[49] Corsets are a prime example of unseen objects affecting the unconscious. They were not intended to be seen, in fact they were hidden by layers of clothing, and yet, if a woman was not wearing a corset, it would have been obvious, and indeed, quite scandalous to the moral majority, and their fashionable peers. Corsets, as an invisible item, created a body schema, a sensation and movement specific to the garment and the wearer. It changed the way people stood, walked, sat, moved, and breathed. Critics of corsets used this phenomenological basis (although it was not referred to this way at the time), as a means of calling for its demise. However, all clothing creates a sensation that requires the wearer to alter their performance, as Goffman would call it. Taking today's fashion into consideration, women walk differently in high heels than they do in running shoes, or in yoga pants than they do in a pencil skirt, indeed even the movements of going braless change from the movements of wearing a bra.

The experience of wearing clothing is related to the philosophy of phenomenology, which is the philosophy of the experience of the body in relation to the world around it. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, the French philosopher who wrote about phenomenology, notes in *The Primacy of Perception*, that the experience of the body partly relies on Cartesian dualism, "I think therefore I am", but based on the enigma of seeing and being seen, of touching and being touched, that the body is made of the same stuff as the world that it exists in.[50] In Heidegger's view of phenomenology, with relation to clothing, humans become a "being in the world" at around the age of two or three, and become aware of themselves, as well as become accustomed to clothing worn by themselves, and those around them.[51] For women wearing corsets at that age, this

[49] Daniel Miller, *Stuff* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010): 50.
[50] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception* (Evanston: Northwest University Press, 1964): 162.
[51] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997): 167.

becoming a being in the world included seeing corseted women, and being dressed in children's corsets; proto-corsets that had no shape, but were filled with lines of cord to create slight stiffness. Modern proponents against corsets, usually found in misleading articles on the internet, often claim that children were forced into corsets at a young age. Though this is not entirely accurate, they were exposed to them, and weaned into them as they aged. The phenomenological framework that I have proposed above will be a speculative one. Without being able to witness or observe corseted women in Toronto in the nineteenth century, or to speak to them directly about their experiences, I can only extrapolate based on letters in newspapers, or through the material culture work of measuring extant corsets, as well as my own experiences of wearing corsets, a "self-reflective auto-ethnography".[52] Perhaps it is best to call it "speculative phenomenology", combining it with the field of speculative realism, which argues against the belief that "all existence is reducible to the human experience of existence".[53] To wit, we can attempt to read the experiences of women in corsets, but these experiences cannot be reduced to a single essentialist statement of positive or negative, as, like Foucault's ideas of historicizing discourse states, knowledge, object and practices differed radically in history, without continuity between them.[54]

[52] Alex Franklin, "Phenomenal Dress! A Personal Phenomenology of Clothing", *Clothing Culture* 1, no. 1 (2014), 84.
[53] Eric Phetteplace, "Speculative Realism: Resources on an Emerging Discipline", *College and Research Libraries News* 71, no. 6 (June 2010): 305.
[54] Stuart Hall, "Foucault: Power, Knowledge and Discourse", in *Discourse Theory and Practice* ed. Margaret Wetherell and Stephanie Taylor. (Thousand Oak: Sage, 2001): 74.

Literature Review

Fashion Historiography

Nineteenth century writers, most often men, held opinions about corsets, their meaning, place and semiotics. W.B Lord wrote *The Corset and The Crinoline: An Illustrated History* in 1868, with the intention of "lay(ing) clearly before our readers this historical facts- experiences and arguments- relating to the much discussed 'Corset question'",[55] the question being an ongoing argument regarding the healthfulness or harm of prolonged corset wearing, specifically tight-lacing. The majority of his text examines constricting garments from very early humans, and contemporary indigenous groups, up to 1867 with letters and journals detailing the lived experiences of women (albeit mediated through the male lens). Problematically, though not surprising for the time, his first mention of corsets was a reference to Ancient Greek tales of goddesses, specifically Venus, the Goddess of love and sexuality, from whom Juno borrowed a girdle. Juno, he states, "borrowed (her girdle) with a view to the heightening and increasing her personal attractions, in order that Jupiter might become a more tractable and orderly husband".[56] This he uses as proof that the women of 560BC had "recourse for the achievement of the same end... as in the year 1868",[57] that women constricted their waists for the visual pleasure of men. However, he later explains that "Without the aid of the corset, it has been very fairly argued, no dress of the present day could be worn, unless its fair possessor was willing to submit to the withering contempt of merciless society".[58] He even tackles the topic of the ideal waist size, which is a topic often referenced in anti-corset rhetoric, such as the myth of the 16 inch waist

[55] William Barry Lord, *The Corset and The Crinoline* (New York: Dover Publications, 2007): 1.
[56] Lord, 30.
[57] Lord, 30.
[58] Lord, 189.

perpetuated in the film *Gone with the Wind*.[59] According to Lord, one should consider the size of the woman wearing a corset, that a tall woman with broad shoulders would look much smaller of waist lacing down to 20 inches than an already petite woman lacing to 20 inches.[60] Regarding the practice of tight lacing, Lord cites a letter to *Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine*, in which the writer states that the corset as an object itself is often to blame for the injurious effects of wearing a corset too tight, whereas blame should rest with the wearer for "not making proper use" of the corset.[61] And ill-fitting or poorly sized corset is certain to cause discomfort, much the way any ill-fitting garment will. This text is the earliest one that I present a challenge to, providing a historiography to my argument against the history of the corset as harmful.

Thirty years after Lord attempted to mediate the debate of the "corset question", Thorstein Veblen, in his scathing critique *The Theory of the Leisure Class,* did not attempt to hide his disdain for the garment. In addition to heavy skirts, French heels, and cumbersome chapeaux worn by women, he cites the corset as an example of garments used as an excuse to abstain from productive employment. Corsets, said Veblen, lower the wearer's vitality and "render her purposefully and obviously unfit for work."[62] The emphasis on employment exemplifies Veblen's argument with *Leisure Class*; that the upper echelons of society with their conspicuous consumption and spare time, do not contribute to society in an economically productive way. It also completely dismisses the women who were not members of this leisure class who both earned wages and wore corsets, as will be explored in chapter 2.

In the 1920s and 30s, dress reformer, naturist and psychologist, Johannes Flügel examined the reasons why humans clothed and decorated themselves, through an anthropological history of

[59] David Kunzle, *Fashion and Fetishism* (Totowa: Rowan and Littlefield, 1982): 283.
[60] Lord, 193.
[61] Lord, 216.
[62] Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (New York: Mentor, 1999): 106.

world dress and habits of adorning the body. In this study, he described the individual differences that exist with preference of dress and fashion. Among these are the "supported type" wherein "persons... feel pleasurably strengthened and supported by their clothes, especially by tight or stiff clothes... The pleasure seems to be derived, partly, from a displacement of muscle eroticism onto tight fitting and 'supporting' clothes... partly from an unusually strong emphasis upon the phallic symbolism of clothes and from the 'potency' associated therewith".[63] His examination relates to the individual psychology and needs of the wearer. His spectrum of wear and comfort complicates the essentialist notion that corsets were harmful and despised by all women, which aids in my argument that women had more agency in wear than otherwise remembered. Indeed he spoke almost favorably about corsets, referring to the undergarments of the 1930s as "flimsy descendants... invertebrate degenerates in comparison".[64] In spite of being a naturist, and preferring to wear loose fitting clothing, he still appreciated the support obtained from corsets.

Cultural Studies

The prevalence of corset wearing in western cultures of the nineteenth century has been a topic of discussion for theorists of the twentieth century as well, observed through hind-sight. Pierre Bourdieu in *Masculine Domination* addresses the power men have historically held over women's bodies, through ideas of "belted" women as chaste, or closed, language that mirrors a clasped belt,[65] but that equally, "liberated" women are subjected to the male gaze,[66] imposing a binary of expectations on women. This confirms the notion of morality as a "symbolic dividing

[63] Flugel, 99.
[64] Flugel 171.
[65] Pierre Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2001): 15.
[66] Bourdieu, 29.

line... between pure and impure".[67] Further to this, the bodies of women are "at once offered and refused", while compared to the corseted body, which is both covered and revealed, is "very obviously subordinated to the male point of view".[68] The showing/concealing nature can be compared to veiling, as Efrat Tseëlon discusses, where "it has both erotic connotations and chaste ones. It hides and it reveals, and it reveals as it hides".[69] She argues that the natural body is stigmatized, leading to various means to distortion, which is contrary, as will be seen in chapter 3, to the fetishized "natural" body of the nineteenth century. Similarly, the practice of corsetry was compared to the Chinese practise of foot binding. Susan Bordo used foot binding and corseting to describe how feminism has "imagined the human body as itself a politically inscribed entity" whose physiology was shaped by histories of containment and control.[70] These histories, according to Bordo, contributed to the epidemic of eating disorders among women and the cult of thinness in the twentieth century. Taking this further, Quentin Bell, an art historian writing in the middle of the twentieth century, posits that, indeed, an uncorseted woman is loose, and that there is even a correlation between removal of corsets from fashion and an increase in promiscuity and inflated currency.[71] Joanne Entwistle problematizes and challenges this idea of morality, rather than just re-telling the tale, and questions the lived and embodied experience of individuals who wore corsets: "The existence of the corset in the nineteenth century and the discourses about the supposed morality of wearing one (the terms "loose" and "straightlaced" used to describe a woman refer to the wearing of the corset, and illustrate, if metaphorically, the link between this article of clothing and morality) tell us little or nothing about how Victorian women experienced the corset, how tightly they chose to lace it, and what bodily sensations it

[67] Bourdieu, 16.
[68] Bourdieu, 29.
[69] Efrat Tseëlon, *The Masque of Femininity* (London: Sage, 1997): 117.
[70] Bordo, 21.
[71] Quentin Bell, *On Human Finery* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1976): 98.

produced".[72] Instead, she posits, we should rely on Foucault and his framework for understanding how the body is acted on by power and knowledge: "... these particular Victorian women could be said to illustrate the ways in which power once invested in the female body, results in 'the responding claims and affirmations, those of one's own body against power... of pleasure against the moral norms of sexuality, marriage, decency...' In other words, illustrative of reverse discourse".[73] She also cites David Kunzle, an American pop culture historian, and how these women illustrated the idea of reverse discourse, through having control over their bodies, how tightly or loosely they chose to wear their corsets, and the possible enjoyment of any sexual gratification they experienced in the process. The problem that Entwistle posits, is that we do not have the voice of the women who actually wore them, but rather have a century worth of stories, mediated by other voices, often male, and apocryphal stories that sensationalize the history, as it is sexier to write about helpless damsels in distress, rather than to present women who are capable of choosing their own dress.

Fashion Studies

The subject of undergarments in general is a popular topic, in fashion history, as well as museum displays, possibly due to the taboo of seeing on display items that were meant to be hidden. Recently the Victoria and Albert Museum in London held the "Undressed: 350 Years of Underwear" exhibit (2016-2017), and in the Greater Toronto Area there have recently been at least two exhibits on the history of underwear, one at the Design Exchange ("100 Years of French Lingerie", 2013), and The Peel Museum ("Waist Management", 2015). Corsets are always present in these exhibits, rigid exoskeletons for the modern woman to shake her head at

[72] Joanne Entwistle, "Fashion and the Fleshy Body", *Fashion* 4, no.3 (2000): 331.
[73] Entwistle, 329.

as she passes to the more familiar brassiere and its evolution. Valerie Steele wrote the introduction to Coleen Hill's *Exposed: A History of Lingerie*, and categorizes lingerie into two types, hard and soft, with chemises, petticoats, and stockings representing the soft, and corsets, hoops and brassieres representing hard.[74] This introduction provides a brief history in the change of silhouettes created by undergarments, and also includes a telling quote from a ladies' journal printed in 1902 criticizing the undergarments worn in previous centuries as "bulky" and "thick".[75] This tradition of criticizing the undergarments of the past is certainly among the reasons why corsets are criticized today, by women who have the option of wearing barely there thongs and delicate lace bralettes. Steele's essay concludes with the 1930s and 1940s reintroduction of the wasp waist, highlighting the importance of the corset in silhouette. Because the corset changed the body by external, mechanical means, women were able to change their bodies at the whims of fashion. Georges Vigarello states in *The Silhouette: From 18th Century to the Present Day* that the term silhouette was primarily used in the context of illustration until the end of the nineteenth century, when it was used to describe the physical form. This shift in nomenclature occurred in the 1870s, when fashions changed faster than previously, and dresses lost the volume of crinolines, and the front-view of a woman's body accentuated her waist, hips and thighs.[76] Any volume, padding or folds of fabric were used to accentuate this silhouette by adding to the feminine shape of hips, posterior, and chest. Corsets, he states, were an important component of creating the desired figure, with "each model uphold(ing) the aesthetic canon"[77] Likewise in Denis Bruna's collected work on the mechanical alterations of body, Aurore Bayle-Loudet cites this period as being important for not only the front-facing silhouette, but also the

[74] Valerie Steele, "Introduction", *Exposed: A History of Lingerie* Colleen Hill, ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 7.
[75] Steele, 11.
[76] Georges Vigarello. *The Silhouette: From the 18th Century to the Present Day*. (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), 95.
[77] Vigarello, 96.

profile, creating a "thoroughly modern, three dimensional silhouette".[78] Emphasis no longer was placed solely on the shape of the waist or breasts, but was also focused on the back, and at the turn of the century, and the s-curve, as viewed from the side. In spite of their importance to fashion in the late nineteenth century, Bruna himself refers to the "tyrannical reign" of corsets, but does make the connection between them and current shape-wear.[79] This attitude toward corsets is both argued for and against in texts that focus on corsets as the main subject.

Corsets are a popular point of discussion in fashion texts, however there are few volumes dedicated entirely to the topic. Valerie Steele (2001), Jill Fields (2007) and Norah Waugh (1954) are some of the best known scholars of dress history to broach the topic. Steele, in spite of completing her doctoral research on corsets, attempts a neutral cultural history, in a book that is accessible for general readers, but also contains analyses, advertisements, and topics of gender. Field's book *An Intimate Affair* surveys a range of undergarments, with a full chapter dedicated to corsets. She examines corsets from roughly the same time period as I do, and described the embodied experience, as well as the commercial and social influences surrounding the problemetization of corsets. Waugh's less scholarly text includes history, patterns of reverse-engineered museum pieces, and often poorly cited quotations from contemporary sources, both negative and positive, about corsets and other underpinnings, which speak to the embodied experiences of wearers. Of the most recent writings about corsets, dress historian and museum professional Leigh Summer's *Bound to Please* (2001) situates the corset as a site of societal tension. In her introduction she states "My work problematizes the garment, but also offers a sustained examination of corsetry's role in women's lives, to unveil why it remained so popular,

[78] Aurore Bayle-Loudet. "The Corset, Essential Protagonist of Modern Femininity" in *Fashioning the Body: An Intimate History of the Silhouette*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 166.
[79] Bruna, 19.

despite its discomforts and, at times, its dangers".[80] Within the first few pages she tells the reader that she will be telling an unpleasant story, and indeed, she does not paint the corset in a positive light. However, in spite of her obvious position, she also states that "Victorian women were not quintessential cultural dupes of patriarchy, but were agents in the construction of their own (sexual) subjectivity".[81]

David Kunzle's *Fashion and Fetishism* (1984) describes the corset as a tool of feminine power. In this early reassessment of corsets, he says "The most strident enemies of the corset, from Rousseau and Napoleon to Renoir, were often autocratic males with a low opinion of the female sex and an attachment to the concept of the 'natural woman', that is, one dedicated to home and children".[82] His study focuses on the strength of female sexuality and women's use of the corset, but also includes other forms of body modification, such as tattoos and scarification. Kunzle clearly outlines that his focus on corsets is on the extreme practice of tight-lacing. When the horrors of the corset are discussed it is largely the practice of tight-lacing which is described, which was mutually exclusive from the everyday wearing of corsets. Contrary to other opinions, he states "her corset is both the symbol of her potential or theoretical availability, and of her self-control, which renders her ultimately invulnerable, always victorious, in the war of the sexes".[83] As indicated in the title, Kunzle speaks often about the fetishistic aspect of corsetry, including the rise of psychoanalysis, the pathologizing of sexual fetishes, the relationship to corsets as creating a phallic symbol of the female body through creating an erect form,[84] and how medical professionals viewed tight-lacing as a surrogate for female masturbation.[85] Kunzle's exploration

[80] Leigh Summers, *Bound to Please: A History of the Victorian Corset* (Oxford: Berb, 2001): 5.
[81] Summers, 5.
[82] Kunzle, 40.
[83] Kunzle, 52.
[84] Kunzle, 13.
[85] Kunzle, 171.

of tight lacing and power are supported by Johannes Flugel's theories of the supported type of dresser. However, in spite of the positive attempt at arguing agency in dress, Kunzle's argument is just as essentialist in nature as those who are argue against corsets. In spite of this, and in spite of the fact that his argument is focused on the practice of tight-lacing, which I do not discuss, his arguments are a useful foundation, as his is early scholarship in favour of corsets.

Apart from the above monographs, there have been numerous journal articles written about corsets. I have located twenty five such secondary articles that are useful and provide a multi-disciplinary approach to understanding corsets, from challenging the perceived dangers of corsetry from a medical standpoint (Gibson, 2015, O'Connor, 2008, *The British Medical Journal* 1903), analyses of working class women's relationship with the garment (Summers, 2002), the corseted pregnant body (Waterhouse, 2007), dress reform (Fields, 1999), and marketing (Smith, 1991).

Toronto Labour History

This study of the corset relates not only to the lived experiences of women in the nineteenth century and the garment on their bodies, but also views their bodies as a site of production. Studies of female labour in Toronto in the decades straddling the turn of the last century examine the horrors of early factory labour,[86] and the development of labour unions,[87] gender relations in clothing factories,[88] and the consequences of the increased presence of women in Toronto's

[86] Ruth Frager and Carmela Patrias, *Discounted Labour: Women Workers in Canada, 1879-1939* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005).
[87] Ruth Frager, *Sweatshop Strife: Class, Ethnicity and Gender in the Jewish Labour Movement of Toronto, 1900-1939* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992).
[88] Mercedes Steedman, *Angels of the Workplace: Women and the Construction of Gender Relations in the Canadian Clothing Industry, 1890-1940* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1997).

workforce.[89] In other parts of North America, the lives and experiences of working women,[90] and the ideas of female economy[91] contextualize the topics of immigration, labour practices, and family lives of women who earned wages. However, there are currently no studies that discuss corsets in Toronto, although the topic of female labour in Toronto's needle trades has been written about extensively. Ruth Frager's *Sweatshop Strife* (1992) tells the tale of the struggles of Jewish labourers in Toronto's early factory sector, and the involvement of women in the development of labour unions. Likewise, Mercedes Steedman's *Angels of the Workplace* (1997) focuses on women in the needle-trades at the turn of the last century. She examines garment manufacturing and the retail sale thereof. Neither of these texts include corset manufacturing or sales, however they do provide a necessary understanding of the position of women in Toronto's garment manufacturing industry. Carolyn Strange's *Toronto's Girl Problem* (1995) describes women's experiences within areas of employment that were more publicly visible, such as in department stores as shop girls. As my study will also examine the retail aspect of the corset trade, the history of shop girls will be crucial to understand their roles within the development of department stores, and the perceived feminine pastime of shopping.

Methodology

The field of fashion studies is, by necessity, an interdisciplinary one. It relates to many areas within the social studies and humanities, fine arts, performing arts, museology, business, and even science. Because this is truly an interdisciplinary study, mixed methods were used, both qualitative and quantitative, achieved through the two dominant areas of research: archival and

[89] Carolyn Strange, *Toronto's Girl Problem: The Perils and Pleasures of the City, 1880-1930* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995).
[90] Nan Enstad, *Ladies of Labor, Girls of Adventure* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).
[91] Wendy Gamber, *The Female Economy: The Millinery and Dressmaking Trades, 1860-1930* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1997).

material culture. These two research approaches complement each other, creating a holistic view of corset production and wear. Archival research, for example, may provide data the cost point, or size range of a corset; a focus on material culture complements archival research by offering the researcher the visceral sensation of touch, and the reminder that the object once wrapped around a living person, thus providing additional context for understanding the wearer's life. These approaches are also classified by primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include first-hand accounts such as government documents and advertisements, as used for this research, and sources often reserved for the elite, letters and diaries, which represent a very small part of the population. The material culture research also falls under this classification. Secondary sources include newspaper stories, literature written about the topic researched, or accounts that are otherwise mediated by a third party. The past speaks through both of these types of sources,and is recoverable through them.[92]However, both primary and secondary sources need to be evaluated through external considerations.[93] For example, for the primary sources, including the material, it must be taken into consideration that they have been culled or edited, either by their creator, or years later by archivists who have determined if the record is of value. Secondary sources, on the other hand, must be read with the consideration of its author and the intended audience. Because of the strengths and weaknesses of both types of sources, it is important to use both to support the evidence located in them.[94]

Archival research

As a large urban centre and site of factory production, Toronto provides a sizeable sample of women who produced, bought, sold and wore corsets, with a population that grew from 59,000

[92] Mary Fulbrook. Historical Theory. (London: Routledge, 2002). 100.
[93] Fulbrook, 102.
[94] Fulbrook, 103.

residents in 1871 to 381,383 in 1911.[95] In order to study the corset as a commodity I completed a content analysis of newspapers such as *The Toronto Star*, *The Globe*, and *The Toronto Daily Mail* (for advertisements, "help wanted" postings, and personal accounts in editorial letters and articles), women's journals such as *The Delineator*, manufacturing journals such as *The Canadian Dry Goods Review*, and advertising cards produced by Toronto businesses. I also used catalogues of department stores such as Eaton's and Simpson's to gain an understanding about the variance in prices, styles, and advertising of corsets. The products in these catalogues are displayed by either using drawings of women wearing the products or showing the product on its own. Advertisements and catalogues provide a cost point, and a description of the materials used, and provide further understanding of the retail practices of the time. The primary source materials include daily, weekly and monthly editions of periodicals which I searched using a combination of hands-on reading, as well as online archival databases, using optical character recognition (OCR) searches. These sources reside at institutes such as The City of Toronto Archives, the Archives of Ontario, and The Toronto Reference Library. The labour portion of this study used accounts of a patent lawsuit between Crompton's and Balls from 1887, historical research done by the City of Toronto in designating the Crompton's factory façade an historical site, again newspaper searches, as well as research into the lives of individual workers.

A comprehensive search of City Directories for each year between 1871 and 1914 (with the exception of 1910 which is not available in PDF) and Census of Canada (every ten years between 1871-1911) was completed online through PDFs available at the Toronto Reference Library, and online through the Library and Archives of Canada, to enumerate women who were employed by corset manufacturers. While these sources do provide a large cross-section of men

[95] The Hon. HH Stevens, *The Canada Yearbook* (Ottawa: Printer to the King's Most Excellent Majesty, 1932).

and women employed in Toronto, it is not an exact list. Because of this lack of completion of each source, it is important to use multiple sources to confirm information. The annual Tax Assessment Rolls were also consulted, however due to degradation, they were often illegible. Where information was available, it did not provide anything beyond what was already obtained through the census and directories. By consulting multiple primary sources, the risk of being wrong, or misinterpreting the data, is reduced.[96] This deep archival research provides the foundation for detailed descriptions of the lives and employment of corset factory owners, employees, and customers, in order to create a humanized, sympathetic view of history.

Material culture

Jules Prown, the Yale professor who popularized the study of material culture, states that "…the term material culture seems unsatisfactory, indeed, self-contradictory. Material is a word we associate with base and pragmatic things; culture is a word we associate with lofty, intellectual, abstract things".[97] And certainly corsets are both base and pragmatic. As an object it has become fetishized and sexy, and a symbol of female subservience, but it is also a largely utilitarian object, used to support the breasts and create smooth lines under clothing. It is both base in its eroticism, and pragmatic in its foundational purpose. In examining the corsets themselves as objects, I hope to uncover a truth behind the cultural beliefs that exist surrounding corsets, as "Objects do embody and reflect cultural beliefs. But although such embodiments of value differ in form from verbal and behavioural modes of cultural expression, they do not necessarily differ in character or content."[98] These cultural beliefs include the ideal measurements, the range of

[96] Fulbrook, 103.
[97] Jules Prown, "Mind in Matter: An Introduction to Material Culture Theory and Method", *Winterthur Portfolio* 17, no. 1 (Spring, 1982): 2.
[98] Prown, 3.

sizes, the range of styles, and the changing silhouette of fashion that is created by the changes in styles of corset, in short the malleability of the human form.

Prown suggests that "the most difficult problem to recognize and surmount in cultural studies is that of cultural stance or cultural perspective. The evidence we study is the product of a particular cultural environment. We the interpreters are products of a different cultural and historical environment. We are pervaded by the beliefs of our own social groups- nation, locality, class, religion, politics, occupation, gender, age, race, ethnicity- beliefs that form of assumptions that we make unconsciously."[99] The trick is to look at something objectively, without our own experiences and culture affecting those views. Studying the history of corsets as a woman of the twenty-first century, with the weight of three waves of feminism, and living an existence where I can decide when to wear a corset, or whether I want to wear a corset, is a different experience than that of the women who wore them every day, and this perceived lack of choice in the matter is where the idea of women as cultural dupes[100] becomes disseminated as the de facto history of corsets. This creates an "Awareness of the problem of one's own cultural bias" and "is a large step in the direction of neutralizing the problem, but material culture offers a scholarly approach that is more specific and trustworthy than simple awareness".[101] The methodology of material culture allows the researcher to use a scientific approach to studying a cultural phenomenon, while making "visible the otherwise invisible, unconscious biases of our own cultural perspective."[102] It brings to the surface our own hypotheses, whether they are conscious or unconscious. Experiencing the materiality of an object allows us to question these cultural perspectives in a way that simply reading theory or other people's opinions on them can.

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[99] Prown, 4.
[100] Summers, *Bound to Please*, 5.
[101] Prown, 4.
[102] Prown, 5.

In following this method, I visited eight museums and collectors from Vancouver to Montreal, in order to observe, photograph, measure and note corsets, and corset-related artefacts. A total of 50 corsets were examined. They dated to between c. 1860 and 1930[103], and ranged in size from 16" (which created an 18" waist for the wearer, allowing for a two inch gap at the lacing) to 42.5" (to create a 44" waist), in a variety of colours and styles. Details of the owners and makers of these corsets will be discussed in chapter four, however this exercise in collecting information by material culture research exposed a range of collection mandates and attitudes toward artefact care, information sharing and knowledge mobilization.

The City of Toronto Museum's Historical Collection has a mandate to capture "a view of Toronto life, from everyday moments to special celebrations and events" from 1812 to present.[104] Their warehouse in Liberty Village houses a number of corsets and corset-related material. Included in these is what they labeled a "doll corset" made by The Corset Specialty Co, on Yonge St, c. 1880s, though it was certainly from at least a decade later, as this company was not operating until the 1890s. It also included a flyer for The Bias Ribbon Co, from c. 1910, and an advertising card for Crompton's. They also had a man's truss, or belt, which is evidence of the masculine desire to pull the waistline in and a garment which is under-represented in studies of corset history. The majority of the corsets in the collection belonged to Mary Austin, the matriarch of the Spadina House Austins. These four articles were mostly from the middle of the first decade of the 1900s, and up to World War One. The collection of artefacts were viewed in the 3rd floor collections area, where I was also given a tour of their other historic garments of famous Toronto residents, including original Toronto Transit Commission uniforms. I was

[103] The corsets from the 1930s were presented to me by the collections managers. In my communications with museums I indicated that my end date was 1914, however, many brought later examples from storage.
[104] "Toronto's Historical Artifact Collection Database". *City of Toronto*. Accessed March 14, 2017. Ap.toronto.ca/gorms/culture/index.jsp

permitted to handle and photograph the objects while wearing white cotton gloves, while they were resting on archival tissue. The collections manager, Neil Brochu, provided information on each item verbally based on provenance in their database.

The newly opened Fashion History Museum (FHM) in Cambridge, Ontario was opened by the original curator of the Bata Shoe Museum, Jonathan Walford. The museum was officially founded in 2004, but found a permanent home in the former Hespeler township post office in 2015.[105] This seemingly small museum has a collection of nearly 10,000 garments, and has a mandate to collect historical garments, and to build "a contemporary Canadian designer collection as well as a comprehensive library and archives of fashion related publications and documents".[106] The available space in the museum is limited, and the items were viewed in the library and archives area, where I was brought a Rubbermaid box filled with corsets. The FHM had three corsets that were of interest to this study, ranging from 1900 to 1930, including one which was used as a sales model, and had a tag featuring manufacturing information. The FHM also had a Crompton's catalogue in the form of a folded flyer, from c. 1880s, which featured 16 different styles of corset, including a nursing corset and children's styles. There was also a catalogue from the Quebec company The Dominion Corset Co., from 1912, which not only showed the range of styles available, but also included a brief history of the company and manufacturing. I was permitted to handle all of the artefacts, including ephemera, with bare hands. The work station was an over-crowded table filled with books and other artefacts. They had only recently begun allowing researchers to come into the museum, and I suspect they were still getting organized after their official opening. Provenance about each item was provided

[105] "About". *Fashion History Museum*. Accessed March 14, 2017. Http://www.fashionhistorymuseum.com.
[106] "About". *Fashion History Museum*. Accessed March 14, 2017. Http://www.fashionhistorymuseum.com.

verbally based on Jonathan's memory of each object, with a note to "follow up" on specific provenance, though they were not forthcoming upon further inquiry.

The Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) had the largest collection of corsets of any other institution that I visited. The Textile and Fashion collection are housed within the World Cultures department, and include 50,000 objects from around the world, with the mandate of mounting exhibits that relate "stories that interweave cultures and societies and record intimate histories".[107] Access to the ROM involved registering with security, and receiving a visitor ID badge. Though. I was given disposable nitrile gloves to wear, and instructed to not touch the objects, but rather have the collections manager move the objects on my behalf. They were all laid out, in a secured work-room, on acid-free tissue. When measuring the artefacts I could not rest my measuring tape against the garments, but rather hovered the tape above, and take an approximate measurement. There were fourteen corsets ranging from the 1880s to the 1930s. I was provided detailed curatorial notes from their database, which they printed out for my records. This included measurement information, provenance, maker, materials, and date, all very useful information.

The research I completed at the Ryerson Fashion Research Collection (FRC) occurred on two separate days. On the first trip there were only two corsets in the collection that were appropriate for my project. However, due to an ongoing relationship with the Coordinator, Ingrid Mida, she was able to acquire new garments for the collection, with my research in mind. This research collection was created in 1981, but soon abandoned in the Ryerson library, until Mida revived it

[107]"ROM Textiles & Fashion". Royal Ontario Museum. Accessed March 14, 2017. www.rom.on.ca/en/collections-research/centres-discovery/textiles-fashions

in 2013.[108] Since then she has a mandate of making fashion research accessible and supporting researchers, making available the several thousand objects in the collection.[109] In total, the FRC held eight corsets for examination, including one on loan for the use of Mida's monograph *The Dress Detective*. Research here was completed wearing white cotton gloves. There was little to no provenance for the objects, with the exception of one which was still in the box that it was purchased in, with the bill of sales and delivery slip still inside.

Attempting to visit the Seneca Fashion Resource centre proved to be the most challenging. It is primarily used as a teaching aid for students of Seneca's fashion programs.[110] Coordinator Dale Peers teaches in the School of Fashion at Seneca as well as coordinating the Resource Centre which left her little time to accommodate outside researchers. It took over a year to access the collection after the initial contact. Once inside, however, the collection had six corsets ranging from 1860s to 1930s. The collection is housed in a purpose-built room at Seneca College, and because it is a teaching collection, the room was filled with college students bustling about. I was given a space on a small work table to use, and was not required to wear gloves. I was provided with a document with each artefact that detailed the donation history and provenance. Because Dale was not the first or only coordinator, the information was inconsistent, and indeed in many instances simply incorrect. I was able to assist in correcting the date of a corset, based on the stamped patent date on a garter, where the corset had been labelled and catalogued 15 years too early.

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[108] Nathalie Atkinson. "Lanvin in the Library". *National Post*. October 19, 2013. http://news.nationalpost.com/life/style/lanvin-in-the-library-why-and-how-fashion-schools-maintain-archives-of-clothing

[109] "Fashion Research Collection". *Ryerson University*. Accessed March 14, 2017. http://www.ryersonfashion.ca/research/fashion-research-collection.

[110] "Seneca College- Fashion Resource Centre". *Seneca College*. Accessed March 14, 2017. http://www.senecacollege.ca/video-transcript/fashion-resource-centre.html..

My penultimate research trip was to the McCord Museum in Montreal. Though their collection has "grown to focus more specifically on Montreal", they also house objects that "are tangible witnesses to the people, places, and events that have marked Canada's history over three centuries".[111] At The McCord, much like the ROM I was required to register with security, though no identification badge was issued. The Curatorial Assistant, Alexis Walker, supervised my work in one of the collections rooms on a row of tables lined in tissue. There were seven corsets to examine ranging from 1900 to 1929, as well as a package of corset cord, two catalogues from Dominion Corset Co. (one from 1912, a duplicate of the one seen at FHM, and the other from 1925), and catalogues from Eaton's and Simpson's. She also showed me a monograph written about the history of the Dominion Corset Co., and an early example of a Wonderbra. I was given white cotton gloves to wear while I examined the objects, and was initially told that Ms. Walker would have to move the corsets for me if I wanted to see them at different angles, or examine them further. This suggestion did not last long, as it became obvious that this would be a laborious task.

The final collection that I visited was Museum London, in London, Ontario. This large regional museum has 45,000 artefacts which "reflect the City of London as an important regional urban centre in Southwestern Ontario".[112] I was assisted by registrar Kevin Zacher, who pulled corsets from the collection upon my arrival. This visit was less formal than the others, as I had a previous relationship with Museum London through its former curator, and have spent time volunteering with their costume collection. I was not required to wear gloves, and was deferred to as an expert in the field for information on the artefacts. Though not specifically related to

[111] "Collections and Research". *McCord Museum*. Accessed March 14, 2017. http://www.musee-mccord.qc.ca/en/collections/.
[112] "About". *Museum London*. Accessed March 14, 2017. http://www.museumlondon.ca/about/

Toronto, collection of corsets in other Southern Ontario city centres is still useful. For example, of the six corsets I examined, three were from a London corset maker, who labelled the inside of the corset with not only the waist measurement, but also the price. This collection also included two adjustable training corsets intended for youth, as well as a corset with elasticized side panels, which were intended to be more healthful.

I also contacted independent collectors who are not affiliated with institutions, including Melanie Talkington in Vancouver. Talkington is the owner of the boutique Lace Embrace where she makes bespoke and off-the-rack corsets. She is also an avid collector of historic corsets, and had once planned to open a corset museum. However, at the time of writing the website for the placeholder "online" museum has been removed. Through email communications, she sent me photos of corsets ephemera for Canadian companies, including display stands for P.C. Corsets in Quebec. Upon inquiring about research possibilities within her collection, she indicated that she has "300 antique corsets, advertising forms/ displays, ephemera, etc" and that "it's extremely difficult to find anything Canadian",[113] and as such had no Canadian-made corsets in her collection. Among the ephemera sent there was a bill of sales from P.C. corsets in Quebec from 1919, and an envelope from Western Corset Works from Windsor, Ontario. The fact that such an avid collector as Talkington had so few Canadian artefacts, and none from Toronto, makes the artefacts I viewed at institutions particularly significant, but also skews the reality of the volume of Toronto-based sales and production. It also exemplifies the ephemeral nature of advertisements, and the garments themselves.

By completing this material culture research I hoped to challenge the established narrative of corset wear, that of the rhetoric of the sixteen inch waist, and of cumbersome steel cages.

[113] Melanie Talkington. E-mail message to author, March 21, 2016.

Through the provenance obtained it became clear that these corsets often held different meanings to the women who wore them[114]. Some were well-worn and repaired, others were part of a wedding trousseau, and still others were in the box and never worn for unknown reasons. By studying the material object itself, the corset becomes less a controversial item, less an abstract tool of control, and more a utilitarian garment, made by someone's hands, and wrapped around someone's body. The material allows historians to "recast narratives, and rethink methodologies" so that objects are no simply "inserted within historically determined contexts".[115]

Historical Framework

Apart from the material culture history housed within the city, this study is also informed by the development of Toronto as an urban centre. In 2017, Toronto is one of the largest cities in North America with a population of 2.8 million, housing an array of boutiques belonging to international companies, stores featuring major labels, as well as a thriving community of independent designers. It is the home of three colleges and one university offering fashion design programs, and has a number of organizations designed to help laypeople learn how to sew.[116] Though most of the large scale clothing production now happens overseas, up until the 1980s when the slow decline of domestic production sped up,[117] Canadian clothing manufacturers employed a large numbers of men, but more importantly, a significant number of women.

Early Toronto Clothing Manufacturing

[114] Anne Gerritsen and Giorgio Riello. *Writing Material Culture History*. (London: Bloomsbury, 2014): 2.
[115] Giorgio Riello. "Things that Shape History: Matieral Culture and Historical Narratives:, in History and Material Culture: A Student's Guide to Approaching Alternative Sources, Karen Harvey ed. (London: Routledge, 2009), 41.
[116] Institutions such as George Brown College, Seneca College, Humber College, and Ryerson University, as well as theatre costuming courses offered at both Ryerson and York Universities.
[117] Sandro Contenta. "Made in Canada". *Toronto Star*, May 27, 2013.

This rise in industry began slowly, as Toronto was not always the large cosmopolitan centre it is now. In 1793, Governor John Graves Simcoe established the town of York as the capital of Upper Canada, and was originally a small village comprised of ten blocks where the current St. Lawrence Market stands, the location was chosen based on the proximity to the extant British fort, the Don River and Lake Ontario.[118] In 1834, the Town of York amalgamated with surrounding villages to create the City of Toronto with a population of 9, 254.[119] The city was quite small in the beginning, but it grew rapidly, with immigration from England, Ireland and Scotland in the first half of the nineteenth century. Though Toronto was largely a landing point for incoming immigrants who had final destinations of farm land outside of the city, or for the more adventurous, continuing journeys to open the West, many people stayed and applied skills from the old country to their new lives in Canada, skills which included needle-trades. Canada was advertised to potential immigrants as a place where people could thrive, and due to the small population and the need for labour and goods, it was also a place where women had more options in life. The constant growth of immigration in the early days of Toronto did not increase the populations of the upper-class, but rather created a large merchant or middle class, and these were the people who opened businesses and created the foundations of Toronto's economy.[120] This economy had an early-established retail centre, running east and west along King St, and north and south along Yonge St. In his 1876 book *Toronto of Old*, Henry Scadding described the intersection of Yonge and King in 1830 as a place where "loungers of each sex are leisurely promenading, or here and there placidly engaged in the inspection and occasional selection of 'personal requisites'- of someone or other of the variegated tissues or artificial adjuncts

[118] Cole R. Harris and John Warkentin, *Canada Before Confederation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974): 113.
[119] "Toronto History FAQs". *Toronto Archives*. Accessed March 14, 2017. Toronto.ca/wps/portal/contentonly?vgnextoid=9cae6b31410VgnVCM1000071d60f89RCRD
[120] Valerie Knowles, *Strangers At Our Gate: Canadian Immigration Policy, 1540-2006* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2007): 50.

demanded by the modes of the period".[121] This confirms what Catherine Parr Traill describes in her book to potential new Canadians in 1851, that Canada was a place where "...the capitalist will find safe investment for his surplus wealth".[122] In spite of this, businesses in the early days of Toronto opened and closed frequently, as the population was still small, and maintaining a thriving industry and economic competition was difficult. Economic instability was a regular part of life for the Toronto merchant and producer until the railroads were developed starting in 1850s, which created greater movement of peoples, increased need for labour, and a rapid development of industry. Prior to this industrial boom, clothing production was largely on an artisanal scale, with women either making their own clothing, and the clothing for their families, or hiring one of Toronto's 36 needle-workers (based on aggregated numbers from the 1851 city directory).[123] Clothing could also be obtained through dry-goods stores, who sometimes produced goods by outsourcing sewing to local women, or imported goods from New York, Montreal, Boston, and in the shops for the affluent citizens of Toronto, from London and Paris.[124] Though the off-the-rack system of clothing production and sale was largely situated within menswear, ready-to-wear, and women's wear were custom made, with "white wear" (bloomers, petticoats, chemises) purchased ready-made.

Once industrial development began in Toronto, the artisanal production of clothing, while still prevalent, was joined by the mass production of goods. These factories provided clothing to the increasing number of dry goods, fancy goods,[125] and eventually, department stores that opened in

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[121] Henry Scadding, *Toronto Of Old* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1966): 277.
[122] Catherine Parr Traill, The *Canadian Settler's Guide* (Toronto: McClelland and Steward, 1985): 235.
[123] Alanna McKnight, "Tentering Trade: Women in Toronto's Needle-trades, 1834-1851" (Thesis, York University, 2012): 126.
[124] Robert McIntosh, "Sweated Labour: Female Needleworkers in Industrializing Canada", *Labour/Le Travail* 32, Fall (1993): 109.
[125] "Dry goods" referred to utilitarian products such as textiles and simple ready-made clothing, and "fancy goods" were more elaborate and fashionable. Corsets were sold in fancy goods shops, before department stores.

Toronto to serve the rapidly increasing population. This was made possible by the proliferation of the sewing machine, which was not a new invention, but had been adapted to home use and made affordable to lease or purchase. An article in the *New York Times* in 1859 predicted that "the working woman will now work fewer hours, and receive greater remuneration"[126] by using the sewing machine for her work. This prediction was wildly inaccurate, and rather women employed in clothing factories were (and are) horribly exploited. By 1861, the dawn of factory clothing production in Canada, the Census enumerated approximately 255 female needleworkers in Toronto,[127] out of the population of 44, 821,[128] though certainly not all of these women worked in factories. By 1871 with industry firmly rooted in Toronto soil these numbers increased significantly. Christina Burr, in her book *Spreading the Light: Work and Labour Reform the Late-Nineteenth Century Toronto*, aggregated numbers of female factory workers in Toronto, either working on site, or through the notorious "out-putting" or "home work" system.[129] According to Burr's findings women in clothing factories comprised the following numbers: 1871- 1370 or 71%; 1881- 2002, or 74%; 1891- 4778, or 75%.[130] In other words the majority of employees in clothing factories were women.

The rise of industrial development coincided with the significant shifts in migration patterns to Canada. Where before the 1860s immigration was largely English, Irish and Scottish, afterward immigration opened to Eastern and Southern European nations. The political ideas that these new Canadians brought with them reflected a socialist rhetoric that was growing in Europe at the

[126] Nancy Greene, *Ready-to-Wear, Ready-to-Work* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 33.
[127] McKnight, 127.
[128] "Toronto History FAQs".
[129] "Out-putting" or "home-work" was a system in which factories hired women to work from their homes. This system often involved serious exploitation of workers as they were paid by the garment. Entire families got involved, with children cutting threads or making deliveries of finished garments.
[130] Christina Burr, *Spreading the Light: Work and Labour Reform in Late Nineteenth Century Toronto* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999): 155.

time. Many clothing factories employed Jewish men and women who escaped political unrest and growing anti-Semitic tensions that were developing in Eastern European countries. Though the data I collected indicates that the labour force in corset manufacturers was still largely Western European, the other areas of the needle-trades saw diversification of workers. The working conditions in factories, the long hours, employment of children, disparity in wages between genders, dangerous conditions, inspired employees to organize into labour unions.[131] The women who worked in Toronto's early factories were instrumental in setting change into action for future labourers.

History of Retail in Toronto

Concurrent with the rise of factory production in Toronto was the development of consumer centres.[132] Like industrial manufacturing, consumer centres developed later in Canada than they did in Europe and the United States, partly due to the small populations, and access to goods. It was more cost effective for settlers to bring goods with them, or to make their own goods upon arrival. In European urban centres consumerism rose not only from an increase in industrialization, but also out of the exhibitions and charitable bazaars of the mid-nineteenth century.[133] Grand department stores in London, such as Harrods, grew out the popularity of the Great Exhibition. The shopping arcades in Paris were dissected for cultural importance by Walter Benjamin, as a place where display of personal adornment, and the development of a consumer culture based on appearance developed.[134] In America, department stores developed

[131] The rise of these unions, detailed by Ruth Frager in *Sweatshop Strife* (1992), and the social reform, changes in laws and the plight of the female factory worker in Canada was also addressed by Frager, along with Carmela Patrias in *Discounted Labour* (2005).
[132] Frank Trentmann, "Beyond Consumerism: New Historical Perspectives on Consumption", *Journal of Contemporary History* 39, no. 1 (July 2004), 381.
[133] Peter Gurney, "The Sublime of the Bazaar: A Moment in the Making of a Consumer Culture in Mid-Nineteenth Century England", *Journal of Social History* 40, no. 2 (Winter 2006).
[134] Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press, 1999).

simultaneously as those in Europe, but excelled in promotion, as well as shaping their local urban landscapes.[135] In Canada, according to historian Donica Belisle, great shopping districts did not occur in Canada until after Confederation in 1867, but rather, she notes that the three million Canadians obtained goods by barter and trade in small local markets.[136] In the cities specialized shops were owned by artisans, such as tailors, dressmakers, blacksmiths, etc, while other shops were owned by merchants carrying a range of goods, from dry goods, to millinery, to medications.[137]

The second half of the nineteenth century brought changes in production and manufacturing, which required major changes in how goods were marketed and sold. Shops that became too cramped were expanded into adjacent buildings that were annexed, and often fully redeveloped to create grand retail palaces.[138] Frequent sales were held to encourage turnover of stock, and without a great loss to the merchants, as the increased productive capacity allowed labourers to sell wares at lower prices.[139] This new style of store also ran on cash-sales, as opposed to credit, and encouraged customers to browse goods freely, without an expectation for purchase, which increased their consumer desires.

In Toronto, Robert Simpson and Timothy Eaton, who both opened their shops in the 1870s, were masters of the department store trade, and expanded their businesses until they were not only massive local department stores, but also nationally known names. Eaton's was particularly regarded because of his trade in national catalogue sales, starting in 1884,[140] which gave families

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[135] Louisa Iarocci. *The Urban Department Store in America, 1850-1930*. (London: Routledge, 2016): 3.
[136] Donica Belisle, *Retail Nation: Department Stores and the Making of Modern Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2001): 15.
[137] Belisle, 15.
[138] Belisle, 19.
[139] Belisle, 18.
[140] Belisle, 24.

living in the rest of Canada, which was predominantly rural and lacked the retail comforts of Toronto or Montreal, access to the same goods as urban families. As well as revolutionizing the shopping experience, department stores were a place where women shopped and worked. Employment in department stores was a respectable way for a girl to earn wage, and also had desirable working hours.[141] Corsets specifically required training to fit, and an intimate relationship with customers, and a comfortable environment. As discussed in chapter 3, some stores advertised the comfort of their corset fitting areas, to provide customers with a comfortable environment to shop for an intimate garment. The women sales assistance and fitters working in Toronto's department stores were an integral cog in the female economy.

[141] Belisle, 167.

Chapter 1: "Beware of Poor Imitations": Factory Owners

In 1897, Toronto's new Junction neighbourhood witnessed a burst of industrial activity as factories opened near the railroads. Among these was the Vermilyea Corset Company, owned and operated by Hannah Vermilyea. She led a life that was dotted with scandals, from corset smuggling to divorce. However, she also built a modern factory that was intended to accommodate a workforce of 150 women, sewing at machines, contributing to the large and increasingly important industry of clothing production in Toronto. Few Canadians know that by the late nineteenth century clothing manufacturing was ranked first among the industries contributing to Toronto's economic growth.[1] Before 1849 and the introduction of the rail system in Canada, however, Toronto was a small city with artisanal production, and minimal commercial trade.[2] Though railways opened up the Western territories for access to lumber, raw materials, and commercial trade, the industrial development of Toronto did not expand until the 1880s, with large-scale factories still on the horizon.[3] In these early days, clothing manufacturing was not considered a major industry despite factories housing workforces of hundreds. These were reserved for heavy industry, such as rolling mills, Massey & Co farm equipment, Jacques and Hay cabinet makers, and Gooderham and Worts distillery, all primarily male-dominated industries.[4] However, both men and women owned corset businesses. Most of these were centrally located in the city, along or near King St., Yonge St. or Queen St., and each had their own gimmick to lure customers, which included new patents for corset or boning improvements, appealing to the growing trend of healthfulness in dress, or even the gender of the business

[1] Goheen, 69.
[2] Goheen, 59.
[3] Goheen, 65.
[4] Goheen, 67.

owner. Through self-promotion in the media, which sometimes included subtle attacks against their competition, corset companies in Toronto ensured that their customers knew that their corsets were the best available.

This chapter disrupts the perceived idea that women were only employees in factories by demonstrating that just as many women owned corset businesses as men, and further that they played an integral role in the female economy, and existed outside of the ideology of women's roles in the home. In spite of their numbers, the gender politics of nineteenth century Toronto often prevented the large scale success or longevity of female-run companies compared to their male counterparts. For example, of the five largest corset companies in Toronto, two were owned by women, and one of those had short-lived success in Toronto. These gendered divides also affected the availability of information about the lives of female business owners. Including short biographies along with the histories of their businesses reveals that the information pertaining to the lives of the male owners as compared to female was much more accessible. Finally, this chapter argues that Toronto corset manufacturers provided the city with a number of makes and models, and followed contemporary trends in fashion, such a dress reform and healthfulness, and technological innovations to surpass their competition. The creation of patents, for example, for boning alternatives, or methods of creating a more comfortable or easily wearable corset, was advertised to customers through newspapers and City Directories. These media were also used to relay information to their clients, changes in management or partnerships, new locations, help-wanted advertisements, awards, and ensured customers of the experience and expertise of the owners and employees.

According to information from the Toronto city directories between 1871 and 1914, there were 51 listings for individuals and factories producing corsets (appendix A). These companies were

either massive national organizations that produced hundreds of garments every day, agents for companies with factories located outside of Toronto who brokered sales within the city, or individuals with few or no employees. Of these, at least 16 were operated by women. This number cannot be taken at face value, however, as at least one of these companies had a man listed as proprietor in the directory, but in reality it was his wife who ran the business. John Reading was enumerated in the directory as a producer of corsets, hoops and fancy goods between 1871 and 1875. However, in earlier editions of the directory, though he is still listed as proprietor, the company is referred to by its full name "M. Reading & Co". John's wife, and the mother of his children, was named Maria, and she is also listed as an employee in their business.[5] In later editions of the City Directory, John is not associated with the business at all, only Maria. It can be difficult to read sources such as these for clues, and it cannot be assumed that this was a common situation, but certainly the presence of the Readings, and the tendency to put the man first, is clear. It is also difficult to ascertain why women were hidden in their businesses, but perhaps it was easier for men to be taken seriously with financiers, landlords of workspace, and other male business owners in the community.

From Stays to Corsets

Though documents such as directories and aggregate censuses cite the heads of the factories operating in Toronto as almost exclusively male, and certainly many of the corset factories in Toronto were owned and operated by men, several of Toronto's corset companies had women at the helm. It does seem logical that women would be in charge of companies that made a garment of such feminine intimacy, and being a woman, as we shall see later in this chapter, is credited as a source of success in business. However, in spite of this feminine advantage, stay making was

[5] McKnight, 105.

historically a job held by men.[6] Corset (or stay) making was considered a form of tailoring, which, before industrialization, was thought to require more intelligence than dressmaking, and as such required this same level of genius to execute properly.[7] As the nineteenth century progressed, pattern drafting and sewing technology advanced, which assisted in democratising skill and knowledge, two catalysts which increased the number of women in the corset-making trade.

The archaic term "stay maker" was first used in Toronto's city directories in 1834, the year that the town of York incorporated surrounding villages to create the small city of Toronto. The term stay is commonly used in reference to foundation garments worn in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[8] As long as there has been Toronto there have been stay-makers. The first of these was Mary Adams, who shared a space with a boot-maker named David Wilson.[9] She only appeared in extant directories once. The next stay-maker was a Mrs. Steed, in 1837, married to A. Steed, also a bootmaker.[10] In 1846, Mrs. Bain was cited as "French stay maker",[11] as was Mrs. Dack in 1850.[12]

Catherine Bondidier first appeared in the City Directories in 1856, as "Miss Bondidier", when she was enumerated in the Toronto City Directory as a "French Stay Maker", a title which, in conjunction with her French sounding name certainly served to add an affectation of quality and fashionability to her trade. She was listed under two addresses, one presumably her residence, on

[6] Lynn Sorge-English. *Stays and Body Image in London* (London: Routledge, 2015): 2.
[7] Sorge-English, 15.
[8] Waugh, 37.
[9] McKnight, 109.
[10] McKnight, 110.
[11] McKnight 112.
[12] McKnight 114.

Shuter St., the other her workshop, at 17 Adelaide St. W.[13] In 1860, she resided and worked out of 93 Queen St. E. The following year she was located at 86 Queen St. E, and lived with Joseph Bondidier, a tailor. In 1861, the census enumerated two stay-makers in Toronto, and it is likely she was one of these.[14] Catherine remained in the directories as "stay maker", "French corset maker", and simply "corsets", until 1882, at which point the Bondidier corset maker was Mary. According to the 1871 census, the three Bondidiers were originally from Ireland. The nature of the relationship between the three is unclear, however in the 1861 census they all lived with a widowed "Mrs. Bondidier", and the three younger Bondidiers were enumerated as "single". [15] Joseph and Catherine were the same age, born in approximately 1821, and Mary was born in approximately 1832. The final time the Bondidiers appeared in the city Directory was 1892, when Mary was 60 years old. The Bondidiers present an interesting case study in business owners. They did not advertise their businesses, and rather than use the nomenclature of time, by calling themselves "corset makers", they instead opted for the archaic "stay maker". They did not own a factory or large establishment, nor did they sell their labour power, but rather were bespoke artisans, possibly for an exclusive clientele, working for themselves in an age where factory production was gaining a dominant position in production.

Large Factories

The works of Marx and Engels, the reports for factory legislation, and the investigative journalism of Henry Mayhew in London depict the factory owner of the nineteenth century as a villain of mythical proportions.[16] In *Capital*, Marx paints a picture of the capitalist creating

[13] McKnight 116.
[14] McKnight, 126.
[15] 1861 Census of Canada, Canada West, County of York, City of Toronto, 29.
[16] Bertrand Taith. The *Essential Mayhew: Representing and Communicating the Poor*. (London: Rovers Oram Press, 1996).

monopolies in industry and propagating "misery, oppression, slavery, degradation and exploitation".[17] In the federal Canadian context, between 1880 and 1886, seven Dominion Factory bills were introduced at Parliament, none of which were passed due in part to arguments against them made by employers.[18] Topics for reform included issues like length of work-days, minimum age of employees, and minimum wage, as there were no regulations in place to prevent employers from forcing the labourers to work seven days a week, employing young children and exploiting piece work, where pay was dependent on how fast people could sew.[19] What are now considered basic standards of employment were actively dismissed by employers, adding credence to Marx's vision of the factory owner, who made a profit at the expense of their labour force. Some of Toronto's largest corset companies were owned by people who actively tried to present an opposing image to Marx and Mayhew's factory owner. Frederick Crompton and Hannah Vermilyea, for example, both ensured that the public image of their factories and their benevolence was reported by the media. However, owners such as Andrew Telfer personify this villain with no attempts at cultivating a positive public image.

The Crompton Corset Company

The Crompton Corset Company was the largest corset manufacturer in Toronto, employing hundreds of women, and men as well as children prior to factory legislation. Frederick Crompton was born in the industrial city of Bradford, England, in 1848. In 1851, at 5 years of age, Crompton sailed to Canada with his father, Rev. Thomas Crompton, a Primitive Methodist

[17] Marx, 929.
[18] Eugene Forsey, "Notes on the Dominion Factory Bills o the Eighteen-Eighties", *The Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science* XIII, no. 4 (Nov. 1947).
[19] Elisabeth Wallace, "Origins of the Social Welfare State in Canada", *The Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science* 16, no. 3 (August, 1950), 389.

Minister.[20] Crompton's first foray into business began in 1871 when he opened a dry goods store in Chatham, Ontario, called "The Golden Beaver".[21]

After five years in business in Chatham, he expanded his enterprise to corset manufacturing in Toronto. The Crompton Corset Company opened a small factory at Jarvis and Lombard Streets (between Richmond and Adelaide) in 1876, an area surrounded my other manufacturing, ranging from tanners to jewellers. A year later, Crompton made a business partnership with Andrew Telfer, which was announced in *The Globe*. [22] In 1878, after two years in business in Toronto, The Crompton Corset Co. was featured in an article in the *Globe* highlighting Toronto's leading wholesale houses.

> The Crompton Manufacturing Co. corner of Jarvis and Lombard streets, have within the last year removed their works from Chatham to Toronto. This company confines their operations almost exclusively to the manufacture of corsets; of these they make four grades. The promises are extensive and represent an interesting view in their interior. The manufacture of corsets has been in the instance systematized to a remarkable degree. Each one of some seventy operatives does only one particular part of the work on a corset. Each corset, or the material from which it is made, passes from hand to hand until it finally emerges a perfect article, well finished, and stylish in appearance. The Crompton Manufacturing Company are able to turn out from thirty to thirty-five dozen a day, and claim for their corset great advantages from anatomical and hygienic points of view. Corset-making, while done by hand in many instances, is carried on by steam-power in this factory, the only of the kind in Ontario.[23]

This article is a fascinating look into the young company, notably the fact that they employed 70 "operatives", made four styles (Figs. 1-1, 1-2), and used steam power, which they reported was

[20] "Frederick Crompton", *The Barrie Examiner*, (Barrie, ON), July 28, 1927.
[21] William Evans ed., *Chatham Directory 1876-1877*, (Chatham: Bell & Co., 1876): 96.
[22] "Partnership", *The Globe*, (Toronto, ON), May 5, 1877, 3.
[23] "The Wholesale Trade: A Glance at the Leading Toronto Houses", *The Globe*, (Toronto, ON), Sept 7, 1878, 2.

unique in Ontario. What is particularly amazing is the claim that they produce 35 dozen, or 420 corsets a day.[24]

To display this prowess of production, Crompton's participated in the Toronto Industrial Exhibition in 1879, which later became the Canadian National Exhibition.

Figure 1-1 Advertisement for Crompton's celebrated adjustable corset, showing patent information. From *The Globe*, October 2, 1877.

For many years Crompton's had displays which demonstrated their products and technological advancements, and won gold medals for "general excellent above all other competitors" at the Exhibition, awards that featured heavily in their advertising.[25]

Figure 1-2 Advertisement for stout lady's corset by Crompton. An example of the diversity of bodies that corsets were made for. From *The Globe*, August 10, 1878.

1879 was also the year that Crompton and Telfer ended their professional relationship, and when the factory at 78 York St opened, which was located south of the fashionable shopping district of King St., north of a railway line,[26] and surrounded by a variety of other manufacturers. This was their home for the

[24] Unfortunately similar data was not available for other companies of the time for comparison.
[25] *The Globe*, (Toronto, ON), Sept. 27, 1879, 5.

remainder of his business operations, a building which still stands in Toronto and received heritage designation in 2009.[27] Crompton sought a new partner in the classified section of *The Globe* in June, 1882. He requested "ACTIVE PARTNER WANTED" to "extend well established dry-goods and millinery business" and stating a "cash business of at least $40,000 can be done". If Crompton ever obtained a new business partner, there was no official announcement as there was with his partnership with Telfer, or the partner chose to remain silent.

After ten years in business in Toronto, Frederick Crompton, age 38, had established his public reputation as a kind, well-liked employer and philanthropist. In an article in *The Globe* that interviewed various industry leaders about changes in labour laws and standards of pay, Crompton is quoted saying "employees are paid on Fridays- most of their employees are girls- by being paid on Fridays the employees have the opportunity of giving the money to their families for marketing purposes on Saturday. The factory closes Saturday afternoon."[28] This paints him as a kind, considerate employer who does not force his employees to work seven days a week, gives them rest days, and considered their home duties, where his peers in industry fought against these employee rights.

In spite of his success and clean image, there were still trying times for Crompton. On February 5, 1887, a fire broke out in the basement of an adjacent building. Though the fire brigade did arrive in a timely manner, the fire spread to the stock room, causing an estimated $10,000 of damage by fire and water, and $500 in damage to the building. Luckily, being a cautious

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[26] G.P. deT. Glazebrook. *The Story of Toronto*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), 137.
[27]"Public Notice: Heritage Land". *City of Toronto*. Accessed March 16, 2017. http://www.toronto.ca/involved/statutorynotices/archive2009/nov/hl_112509_4.htm
[28]"Pay-Day and Early Closing: Opinions of Merchants, Mechanics, Clerks, and Others". *The Globe*, (Toronto, ON), May 15, 1886, 9.

business man, Crompton had $94,000 worth of insurance on the stock, building and machinery. The only injury in the fire was one firefighter, who fell from a ladder and fractured his arm.[29]

By remaining relevant in the media, be it as presenting himself as a benevolent employer, factory fires, or the bizarre case of bank fraud in which he was implicated in 1911-12[30], Frederick Crompton maintained a steady business until around 1918, when Crompton was 70 years old, as the volume of advertisements dwindled, and then stopped entirely. He died in Toronto in 1927, survived by his wife Ida, and his daughter and son.[31] In his many years as a community leader and employer, he provided good work for many girls and women of Toronto, any by all appearances worked to ensure that his workforce was happy.

The Telfer Manufacturing Company

The one-time Crompton partner, Andrew Telfer, was born in Roxburghshire, Scotland in 1829. He came to Canada in 1854, at the age of 25, leaving his parents behind. He originally settled in Quebec, and ran the dry good firm of Laird and Telfer for 13 years. He then moved to Montreal where he remained for five years and worked in wholesale dry goods. He returned to Scotland briefly in 1867 to marry his wife, Agnes (nee Dobie). His experiences in Quebec prepared him for his career in manufacturing in Toronto. When he moved to Toronto in 1871, Andrew was employed as a buyer for a wholesale house. [32] He was first enumerated in the Toronto directories in 1872 as a salesman.[33] As far as sources reveal, he began his foray into corset

[29] "Local News: A Destructive Fire". *The Globe*, (Toronto ON), Feb. 7, 1887, 8.
[30] Crompton was involved in a complicated case of bank fraud, wherein he was loaned $100,000 from the Farmer's Bank against stock in a mining operation. These funds were obtained by the bank manager through creative accounting which defrauded the bank of hundreds of thousands of dollars, and involved many prominent business men in Toronto.
[31] *The Barrie Examiner*, July 28, 1927, 16.
[32] J.H. Beers. *Commemorative Biographical Record of the County of York, Ontario* (Toronto: J.H. Beers & Co., 1907): 160.
[33] Wm. Henry Irwin ed. *Toronto City Directory for 1872-73* (Toronto: Telegraph Printing House, 1872): 173.

making in 1877 when he partnered with a young Frederick Crompton. Merely two years later, their partnership dissolved, and Andrew ventured into his own manufacturing business. In 1879, Telfer announced that he had obtained all of the "machinery, plants, models, &tc &tc" from the "late Crompton Co.".[34] He encouraged his old customers to write and inquire about new pricing.

In March 1880, Andrew announced his partnership with James Harold in the *Monetary Times,* stating that the business would continue at their Jarvis St. location,[35] the original factory space he had shared with Crompton. The Telfer and Harold partnership lasted between 1880 and 1887, during which time he moved their operation to Johnson's Lane, several blocks west of their old location, immediately west of Yonge St, between King and Adelaide, closer to consumer streets and rail. It was during the Harold and Telfer years that the dissolution of the Crompton partnership was dragged into a public forum through their use of advertisements and thinly veiled attacks against each other and the quality of their products and materials. This feud will be discussed further in chapter 3.

In 1887, the dissolution of his new partnership was also made public, again through an announcement in *The Globe*, which stated that Telfer had purchased Harold's half of the company, and thenceforth was called the Telfer Manufacturing Company, making corsets, hoops, dress steels, and a number of other useful garment-related items.[36] Though the Telfer Manufacturing Co. remained in business until his death in 1897, he eventually ceased the production of corsets, and turned instead to the production of cardboard boxes, another industry which employed a large number of women.

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[34] "Card", *The Monetary Times* 12, no. 46 (May, 1879), 1386.
[35]"Announcement", *The Monetary Times* 13, no. 38 (March 12, 1880), 1089.
[36] *The Globe*, (Toronto, ON), June 7, 1887, 3.

Andrew died in April, 1897 at age 68, leaving behind his two adult children and his wife.[37]Unlike other large companies, there were no employees enumerated in the City directories who worked for any of Telfer's corset-making ventures, though stories of labour disputes at his factory may indicate why this was. He was described by a former manager as "a tyrannical employer who was unkind to his employees, and cut their wages at every opportunity" and that "some of the girls (in the factory) were afraid to work too hard on piece work, as they expected that their wage would be reduced if they made too good a showing during the week".[38] Certainly a stark contrast to Frederick Crompton.

The Vermilyea Corset Company

Hannah M. Vermliyea (nee Hulett) was born in 1847, in Hastings County, Canada West, to Samuel and Rachel Hulett, the second youngest of eight children.[39] She married Solomon Vermilyea, and settled in Belleville, Ontario, where, in 1875, she began making made-to-measure corsets.[40] In 1885, she and Solomon opened a corset factory in Watertown, New York, however, after three months in business, and with allegedly 200 employees, Mme. Vermilyea was caught smuggling corsets from Canada into the States, bearing the mark of their Belleville company. At this one crossing, $1000

Figure 1-3 Hannah Vermilyea, owner of a corset factory in The Junction. This image is from an article praising her business and her all-female workforce. From *The Globe*, July 25, 1891.

[37]"Died: Telfer", *The Globe*, (Toronto, ON.), April 29, 1897, 12.
[38] Burr, 168.
[39] 1851 Census of Canada, Hasting County, Canada West, Population Schedule, District 13, p. 7.
[40] "A Wonderful Development", *The Globe*, (Toronto, ON), July 25, 1891, 1.

worth of corsets was seized. Their method of smuggling was ingenious. She and "lady assistants" removed the steels and hid these among the skirts in their trunks, and the cloth of the corsets were rolled up and turned into bustles. Several of the steel-less corsets were also rolled up and hidden among dirty corsets. It was alleged that a total of $2000 worth of corsets were smuggled across the border at Kingston and Cape Vincent.[41]

A driven woman, Mme. Vermilyea did not let this mishap prevent her from further expanding her business. In 1889, she moved to Toronto and sold her corsets out of a shop on Spadina Ave, where, in spite of Solomon's name occasionally appearing in documents, a frequent problem married business women had, she was recognized as the sole owner. In 1890, the business was incorporated, with a capital stock of $40,000, the majority of which was held by Hannah herself.[42]

Later that year, she opened a factory in Toronto's Junction, a new neighbourhood located at Keele and Dundas West, and centred around the growth of the railway system that it was named for. The proximity to rails made it an ideal location for a range of industrial production. An article about the Junction in a July, 1891 edition of *The Globe* praised Hannah and her company (Fig. 1- 6), and it is from this article that the majority of the information regarding her business practices was obtained.[43] The factory was described as 40 feet wide by 120 feet long, with spaces for 120 sewing machines, though at the time the article was written, only 60 machines were in use. The office had a view of the factory so that work could be monitored. The facility featured large windows, modern heating and ventilation systems, and lavatories, all to ensure the health and safety of the workers. In conjunction with the opening of the factory, Hannah also opened a

[41] "Eastern Canada Mail", *The Daily Colonist* (Victoria, BC) Aug 27, 1885, 1.
[42] "Manufacturing", *The Canadian Manufacturer* 19, no. 7 (Oct. 3, 1890), 232.
[43] *The Globe* (Toronto, ON), July 25, 1891, 1.

sales room and corset shop at 49 King St. W, "where ladies will find comfortable waiting and fitting rooms, and can leave their measures or purchase Madame Vermilyea's corsets".[44] Either this strategic dissociation of production and sales was not a long-lasting venture, as there is no listing for this shop at this address in the directories of 1890, 1891, or 1892, or she rented space within a larger shop. The made-to-measure nature of Hannah's business was examined in this article, stating that this flexibility was what has made her so successful. Having a corset made for one's specific figure gave "the wearer her natural grace and elegance of figure", and prevented irritation, discomfort and ill-health.[45] Made to measure was not a service offered by Crompton or Telfer, and certainly as a woman, Mme. Vermilyea understood the importance of having a corset made for one's unique figure. Her patents were also discussed in this article, as well as the quality of materials used, including an avoidance steel, and rather, using whalebone or "whaleine, a stiffening used exclusively by them".[46] Though it does not specify exactly what "whaleine" was, there were a number of bone and steel alternatives used, such as Crompton's Coraline, so it is likely that it was also a patented alternative to steel and whalebones.

Lastly, *The Globe* article touched upon her workforce. Sales were made by roughly 150 female canvassing agents, who interacted with Toronto residents to increase the sales and visibility of Vermilyea corsets, a position often held by men in companies like Crompton's. All told, she had 200 women in her employ, between the factory, canvassing agents, and the in-store sales force. The article does not mention a single male employee, nor does it name Solomon. It does, however, praise her for providing "light and pleasant employment for the wives and daughters of the numerous mechanics already located" in the Junction neighbourhood, a statement that frames

[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid.

her female workforce in relation to men.[47] This existence of a heavy female labour force is also supported by the City Directories. Between 1889 and 1894, the years in which The Vermilyea Corset Co. was in operation in Toronto, there were 32 people listed in the directory as employees there, only three of whom are men. One of them was Charles Millward, discussed below, who worked as a cutter.[48] Mme. Vermilyea's final goal for her business was to have 500 women in her employ,[49] a goal she never achieved in Toronto.

By 1894, only 5 years after Hannah had set her sights on the big city with dreams of industry success, an advertisement ran in *The Globe*: "rare chance- the Vermilyea Corset Manufacturing Co's business for sale; electric power, plant, stock, patents, patterns and fixtures, complete and in full running order; established twenty years; cash business, favorable terms, good reasons for selling. Apply to 489 Queen W."[50] However, advertisements for the Vermilyea Corset Company were still appearing in print a year later.

After selling her business in Toronto, she moved to the United States. In 1895 she was caught once again smuggling corsets across the border into Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, with goods amounting to $3000.[51] In 1898 she made headlines in Oakland, California with legal troubles involving a business partner named Benedict who had infringed on her corset patents, and had also stolen goods from her. In a bizarre twist, she was made aware of this betrayal by a local psychic. [52] By 1913, she was located in Columbus, Ohio, where she continued making corsets.[53] At an unknown date, though likely when she left Canada, she divorced Solomon. She remarried

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[47] Ibid.
[48] *Toronto City Directory for 1891* (Toronto: Might's Directory Co.,1891): 1074.
[49] *The Globe*, (Toronto, ON), July 25, 1891, 1.
[50] "Rare Change", *The Globe*, (Toronto, ON), Aug. 18, 1894, 14.
[51] "Convicted of Smuggling", *The Warren Sheaf*, (Warren, MN), July 4, 1895, 2.
[52] "Niceties of the Corset: Mrs. Vermilyea's Lover Appropriated Them", *The San Fransico Call*, (San Francisco, CA), Sept 14, 1898, 9.
[53] *The Journal-Republican*, (Wilminton, Ohio), March 26, 1913, 10.

in 1905, to a James Coleman in South Dakota. Solomon died suddenly of heart failure in June, 1914, in Peterborough, survived by an unnamed wife and two daughters. His obituary stated that after he owned a corset factory in Toronto, he opened a roller skating rink.[54] Hannah Vermilyea, by all accounts, lived life as woman unconcerned with social mores, through her scandalous business practices, and her desire to create an all-female workforce in Toronto, which exemplified the ideals of the female economy.

The Corset Specialty Company- Fannie M. Holmes

The Corset Specialty Co, and their owner and general manager, Fannie M. Holmes presents a common problem in researching women in the historical record. There is limited information available about her life, and indeed, even about the business she ran. The majority of information obtained regarding Fannie's personal history was gathered from her headstone, which is located in Mount Pleasant Cemetery, in Toronto.[55] She was born in Brampton, Ontario, in 1848 as Frances Matilda, the middle child of six, to Rev. Andrew T. Holmes, a Presbyterian minister. At the time of the 1861 census, when she was 9 years old, her father was a widower.[56]

The first time Fannie was enumerated in the Toronto Directories was 1880. She resided on Duchess St. with her sister Annie, both of whom boarded in a house which they did not own, which was not uncommon for single ladies.[57] For the next several years she was employed as a clerk at the Singer Manufacturing Company.[58][59] In 1893, she was listed in the directory with the

[54] *The Globe*, (Toronto, ON), July 1, 1914, 3.
[55] "Fannie M. Holmes". *Find a Grave*. Accessed March 16, 2016. https://findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GSln=Holmes&GSiman=1&GScid=639401&GRid=145615413&
[56] 1861 Census of Canada, Peel County, Canada West, population schedule, Brampton, p. 33.
[57] *Toronto City Directory for1880*, 299.
[58] *Toronto City Directory for 1886*, (Toronto: R.L. Polk & Co., 1886): 496.
[59] 1891 Census of Canada, Ontario, District 119, Toronto West, St. Patrick's Ward, p. 18.

employment "corsets".[60] The following year was the first appearance of the Corset Specialty Co.[61] with Fannie managing the 426 Queen St. W. location, and Annie working sales. They moved their business to 112 Yonge St. in 1897.[62] This was a lateral move in terms of their business, as both areas were popular consumer streets. In 1901, an advertisement in *The Toronto Star* announced that Fannie was retiring from the retail trade, and was selling her existing stock at discount prices, and that all stock must be sold before December 1.[63] The reason for her sudden declaration of retirement is unclear, as is why she did not remain retired.

The business remained in operation at the Yonge St. location until 1906, when it moved to 104 King St. W in the Manufacturers' Building. This final move was announced in an article in *The Globe*, in which they also advertised that they provided a service of altering and repairing corsets, which was not a sign of prestige in a business.[64]

According the advertisements in *The Toronto Star* and *The Globe* (Fig. 1-4), The Corset Specialty Co. carried a range of corsets for all types of figures, and sold ready-made corsets by "P.D., C.P, E.T, P.N, C.B, Crompton's, Warner's, Thomspon's Glove Fitting, and many others" as well as "health waists".[65] Their advertisements always stated that they were looking for "reliable agents", specifically, according to one classified advertisement from 1901,

Figure 1-4 Advertisement for The Corset Speciality Company, highlighting the range of corsets available at their Yonge St. location. From *The Globe*, April 14, 1898.

[60] *Toronto City Directory for 1893*, (Toronto: Might's Directory Co., 1893): 873.
[61] *Toronto City Directory for 1894*, (Toronto: Might's Directory Co., 1894): 656.
[62] *Toronto City Directory for 1897*, (Toronto: J.M. Might, 1897): 590.
[63] *The Toronto Daily Star*, (Toronto, ON), Nov. 22, 1901, 4.
[64] "Corset Co. Removal", *The Globe*, (Toronto, ON), Jan. 16, 1906, 13.
[65] *The Globe*, (Toronto, ON), April 14, 1898, 12.

"reliable lady canvassers" to "sell the best fitting custom corset made".[66] Fanny and her staff fit into the narrative of the female economy, by ensuring her business was staffed by ladies to provide the women of Toronto with quality corsets.

Of the extant corsets within Toronto that I have seen, one was from the Corset Specialty Co, with the stamp of their Yonge St. location. Unfortunately, this extant corset is catalogued by the City of Toronto Historic Collection as a doll's corset (Fig. 1-5). Based on its size and, and the lack of any curvaceous shape, it is likely that it was play clothes for a child's doll, rather than a sales model. The corset is approximately three inches long, with no boning in the exterior casings. The front closes with four ivory (or faux ivory) buttons. There is no provenance with this item in the collection at the Toronto Historic Collection. The creation of doll corsets by a corset company was not exclusive to the Speciality Corset Co. as Parisian corset maker Margine-LaCroix ventured into the doll market at the turn of the twentieth century.[67] And certainly the fact that dolls had their own corsets made by actual corset makers lends to the idea that "dolls… provided early training and apprenticeship into the rituals of fashion consumption and viewing".[68] It was a clever form of cross-marketing, as the Corset Specialty Co. developed brand loyalty, perhaps even before the child was old enough to wear a corset. Leigh Summers describes corseted dolls as preparing female children for their future roles as sexual objects,

Figure 1-5 Doll corset from the Corset Specialty Co. , stamped with their Yonge St. address. Toronto Historic Collection. 1974.107.266

[66] *The Toronto Daily Star*, (Toronto, ON), April 17, 1901, 5.
[67] Juliette Peers. *The Fashion Doll: From Bébé Jumeau to Barbie*. (Oxford: Berg, 2004): 115.
[68] Peers, 20.

though the dolls she describes have exaggerated waists.[69] The doll corset made by the Corset Speciality Co. does not follow these lines, but they likely still prepared children for an adulthood as women wearing corsets (though depending on the age of the child, the majority of their adulthood did not involve the corset of the late 1890s).

Fannie died on December 19, 1906 of hepatitis, at age 58.[70] For nearly two years after her death she was included in the City Directories and advertisements as the general manager, until 1908, when Frank Woolnough appeared in the directory as the General Manager. During her years as general manager, Fannie had at least 26 people in her employ, three of whom were men employed as messengers, engineers or travelers, the other 23 were women employed as clerks, machine operators, stenographers and corset makers. Fannie remained an unmarried business woman until her death.

Brush & Co.

The Brush & Co. Corset Company was an example of a male-owned corset business built off of American patents and design, with Canadian manufacturing, and women employed solely as labourers. Prior to their first appearing in the City Directory in 1886 as corset manufacturers, Seely B. Brush, and his brother Clinton were manufacturers of buttons and dress trimmings.[71] After 1886, they were listed as corset makers and were licensed in Canada to make and sell the Balls brand corsets, of the Chicago Corset Co. It was this association that brought them into a patent lawsuit with Frederick Compton, wherein the Brush brothers and the Chicago Corset Company sued Crompton for patent infringement.

[69] Summers, 73.
[70] Schedule C: Deaths, County of York, Division of Toronto, 1906, p. 287.
[71] Toronto Directory for 1885, (Toronto: R.L. Polk & Co., 1885): 282.

Balls was certainly one of the largest corset companies in North American, so much so that the pages of Valerie Steele's book *Corsets: A Cultural History*, are dotted with images of their advertisements. Indeed, their advertising cards circulated within Toronto, with the note at the bottom of each "manufactured by Brush & Co, Toronto". Apart from just manufacturing Balls for a Canadian Market, they also manufactured their own line of corsets, called B&C. Though their operation may appear substantial, there were only four people in the City Directories enumerated as employees of Brush & Co, two women working as machine operators, and two men, one a cutter, the other a porter. Though this sparse report is not necessarily indicative of the actual numbers of employees, as their products were advertised extensively, both in department stores, and as stand-alone advertisements, with the line "sold everywhere", perhaps indicative of importing Ball's corsets rather than constructing them domestically.[72]

The men and women described above represent the largest corset manufacturers in Toronto. Though their workforces varied greatly in size, and their business ranged from solely manufacture to both retail sales and manufacture, they are indicative of the variety of large business owners. Even between the female employers, the range in business and character was great. While Mme. Vermilyea was represented in the media as a gregarious and driven business woman with the desire to create a corset empire that would rival Crompton's, Holmes' personal life was less public, and her business was successful as a low-key operation.

Independent Manufacturers

Smaller businesses were also owned by both men and women. However, in the case of the following male-run organizations, they each had female involvement. Either they took over female-run organizations, learned the trade from former female employers and subsequently

[72] Brush & Co.Corsets (Trade Card). 1890. Ephemera Collection. Toronto Public Library.

created their own businesses, or had a female partner in the background. The small companies owned by women in the ensuing section are separated from the following three businesses because of their reliance on the dress reform movement and healthfulness to sell their wares, whereas the men all ran businesses established by women, or at least had their successes influenced by female mentors in the trade.

Belcher/ CBC

John D. Belcher was born in Ontario in 1863,[73] and first appeared in the Toronto Directory in 1902.[74] Upon moving to Toronto, he was employed as a partner in the Belcher and Snider Manufacturing Company in the growing commercial district at 489 Queen St. W.[75] He remained under this employ until 1904.[76] Later that year, in October 1904, the CBC corset company was created, and incorporated with a capital of $50,000, and registered as a joint business between PR Corson (Phineas R., of Sovereign Manufacturing Co.), MS Belcher, and CJ Currie.[77] The identity of CJ Currie could not be confirmed, as the only person of that name in the Toronto Directory was a physician.[78] It is possible that a physician invested in this company, especially during a time when the healthfulness of corsets, and the approval of medical professionals was a key factor in advertising campaigns. However this is speculation and no conclusive evidence was located to support this. One interesting item about the incorporation of CBC is the initials preceding the name "Belcher" in the notice. They are not "JD" as is usually the case when Belcher's business interests are discussed, but rather "MS", the initials of his wife Minnie Sarah,

[73] 1901 Census of Canada, Ontario, District 118, Toronto West, Sub-District C, No. 28, p. 17, dwelling 153, family 149.
[74] Schedule B: Marriages, County of Middlesex, Division of Westminster, 1885, p 620.
[75] *Toronto City Directory for 1902* (Toronto: Might Directories, Ltd., 1902): 307.
[76] *Toronto City Directory for 1904* (Toronto: Might Directories, Ltd., 1904): 315.
[77] "Captains of Industry". *Canadian Manufacturer* 49, no. 7 (October 7, 1904), 21.
[78] *Toronto City Directory for 1904*, 425

whom he married in 1885.[79] This is the only hint of Sarah's involvement in the business, and indeed she only appeared in the directories herself after John's death, as his widow. It is difficult to ascertain if Sarah had a greater involvement in the company, as with the Readings from earlier in this chapter, but her inclusion in the incorporation is enticing. Also in 1904, an announcement was published in *The Globe* which stated that the business of Belcher and Snider had been purchased by a number of Toronto business*men*, "for the extensive manufacture of the Bias Filled Corset", an American design which placed the bones on the bias, a feature which was claimed added strength to the corset.[80] The three names published in the incorporation notice are likely these business*men*. It should be noted that the manufacture of the Bias Filled Corset is a separate enterprise from The Bias Co., which had been operating in Toronto since 1901, under the direction of president Herbert Irwin.[81] The Belcher and Snider Manufacturing co. first appeared in the directory in 1902, under the direction of John D. Belcher, and John E. Snider.[82] They appeared in the business directory under the "corsets" heading until 1905,[83] after which the CBC Corset Co. was located at 355 College St.[84] There were only eight people enumerated as employees of CBC, including Charles Millward. However, also in 1905 John is in the directory as traveller, an occupation confirmed by his death registry.[85] This possibly confirms the involvement of Sarah in running the business, as John earned wage elsewhere. John died in 1906 of Tuberculosis at age 43.[86] Though his life was not long, his career was rich and varied, and he, and possibly his wife, contributed to the economy, and provided a number of women in Toronto

[79] Schedule B: Marriages, County of Middlesex, Division of Westminster, 1885, p 620.
[80] "Corset Co. Reorganized", *The Globe*, (Toronto, ON) Aug. 11, 1904, 7.
[81] *Toronto City Directory for 1901* (Toronto: Might Directories, Ltd, 1901): 401.
[82] *Toronto City Directory for 1902*, 307.
[83] *Toronto City Directory for 1905*, (Toronto: Might's Directory Ltd., 1905): 1010.
[84] *Toronto City Directory for 1905*, 1010.
[85] *Toronto City Directory for 1906*, (Toronto: Might's Directory Ltd., 1906): 327.
[86] Schedule C: Deaths, County of York, Division of Toronto, 1906, p249.

paid employment. However, their story also contributes to the problem of the erasure of women's history in the primary sources.

Charles Millward

Charles Millward was a fixture in the Toronto Corset manufacturing trade for many years. He was born in England in 1864, one of eleven children. He and his family immigrated to Canada in 1881,[87] when he began working as a labourer.[88] He was first enumerated in the City Directory in 1890, employed as a cutter for the Vermilyea Corset Company, where he worked for two years. Also in 1890 he married 24-year-old Maud Fennell. He took his experience from working for Mme. Vermilyea to create his own business, and in 1892 he was listed in the directory as the proprietor of the Toronto Ordered Corset Co., at 446 Yonge St.[89] He remained proprietor and manager of this company until 1899, at which point the company had moved to 384 Spadina.[90]

The Toronto Ordered Corset Co. closed for unknown reasons, and Millward moved on to open the M&W Corset Co., which operated out of 706 Queen St. W from 1901[91] until 1912, when the business was moved to 601 College St.[92] Only one other person was enumerated in the city directories as an employee of M&W Corsets, Miss Jennie Walsh. Though the directory does not specify her role in the business, perhaps she was the "W" in M&W.[93] The story of Millward's business is confusing in these primary sources as between 1902 and 1907, when Charles was listed not with a specific company, just as "corset manufacture", and in 1905 to 1907, as foreman

[87] 1911 Census of Canada, Ontario, District No. 124 Toronto West, Sub-District 4, Enumeration District 2, p. 6, dwelling 43, Family 52.
[88] 1881 Census of Canada, Ontario, District No. 134 Centre Toronto, Sub-District A, St. John's Ward, p. 150, dwelling 737, family 812.
[89] *Toronto Directory for 1892*, (Toronto: Might's Directory Co., 1892): 1498.
[90] *Toronto City Directory for 1898*, (Toronto: J.M. Might, 1898): 1063.
[91] *Toronto City Directory for 1901*, 1326.
[92] *Toronto City Directory for 1912*, (Toronto: Might's Directories, Ltd., 1912): 1484.
[93] *Toronto City Directory for 1914*, (Toronto: Might's Directories, Ltd., 1914),:1534.

of the CBC Corset Co. The 1911 census does not indicate that he is an employer, but rather, a worker, earning $400.[94] Millward used his connections and experiences provided by female owners to build a career in corset manufacturing, even if this career did not last.

Woolnough Corsetiere

Frank Jeremiah Woolnough began his corset-making career in Toronto in 1901, according to the city directories, when he opened the Woolnough Corsetieres in the Manufacturing Building at 104 King St. W.[95] He had recently arrived in Canada from Jamaica, where he was born in 1883 to English-Jamaican parents. He was not present in the city directories again until 1908, when he was named the manager of the Corset Specialty Co.,[96] however, since the original manager, Fannie Holmes died in 1906, it is possible that Frank became the manager then as the company had continued uninterrupted, though, as previously mentioned, she was advertised as the manager for two years after her death.

In 1907, Frank married a machine operator at the Corset Specialty Co, named Agnes Purnell. In the directory she was listed as an "operator", however in their marriage registry, she was bestowed the far more elegant job title "corsetiere".[97] The Woolnough Corset Co. continued to be a family affair, as Frank's sister Maud was employed as a stenographer in 1909.[98] Frank kept the name Corset Specialty Co. until 1910, when he reverted the business back to the original name of nine years prior, the Woolnough Corset Co. They remained at the 104 King. St. W location until 1912, when they removed to 286 Yonge St.[99] The directories do not enumerate as

[94] 1911 Census of Canada, Ontario, District No. 124 Toronto West, Sub-District 4, Enumeration District 2, p. 6, dwelling 43, Family 52.
[95] *Toronto City Directory for 1901*, 1262.
[96] *Toronto City Directory for 1908*, (Toronto: Might Directories Ltd., 1908): 1171.
[97] Schedule B: Marriages, County of York, Division of Toronto, 1907, p. 397.
[98] *Toronto City Directory for 1909*, (Toronto: Might Directories Ltd., 1909): 1162.
[99] *Toronto City Directory for 1912*, 1484.

many employees during these years as were employed by the Corset Specialty Co. under Fannie Holmes. Their advertising campaign was also nowhere near as prolific as it was under Holmes, but Woolnough still placed advertisements in *The Canadian Home Journal*, including one full page article describing the new styles of corsets they had on offer, which will be discussed in Chapter 3. By advertising in *The Canadian Home Journal* they reached a clientele in smaller towns, and promoted a mail order business. "To have a corset built for her (ie: women in small towns), from her own measurements, to meet her requirements is, however, just as possible for her as for the city woman". The prices of these corsets were slightly higher than those offered in the urban department stores, but "the saving comes in the extra wear and satisfaction of looking right and feeling right".[100] Frank Woolnough remained in business well into the twentieth century, as evidenced by the 1921 census, where he remained enumerated as a corset manufacturer, and a with a family of three children.[101] His longevity in the business speaks to the need for corsets and shapewear even into the 1920s.

The narrative of men as garment factory owner and women as employees was pervasive due to the ideology of women's roles within the family and the workplace. Women were meant to be the domestic support to men, or exploited labourers.[102] What the stories above demonstrate is that women were also active in either starting business venture for male employers, or worked in the background, running the operation to unknown extents. As Frager and Steedman note, there was a fear of female competition in the paid workforce.[103] Keeping their female partners out of public knowledge, or by buying a female run business was certainly an effective way of removing this competition.

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[100] *The Home Journal* 6, no. 9, (April 1910), 31.
[101] 1921 Census of Canada, Ontario, District No. 142 York East, Enumeration Sub-District No. 35, p. 4, Dwelling 29, Family 36.
[102] Frager and Steedman, 150.
[103] Frager and Steedman, 150.

Comfort and Health: Dress Reform and Corset Sales

The dress reform movement began to capture popular attention in Canada in the 1870s, [104] and by the 1890s it was a regular topic for lectures and newspaper and journal articles, which will be discussed further in Chapter 4. The movement in general began in The United States in the 1850s, and grew elsewhere, as a reaction to the "long-held beliefs about women, their place in society, their health, and their spiritual well-being".[105] Dress reform was a reaction against contemporary women's dress, which include corsets, as well as crinolines, layers of petticoats, tight sleeves, and long trains;[106] components of dress which not only restricted movement, but were considered unhealthful, through trailing diseases from the outdoors in,[107] preventing circulation, and in the case of crinolines, increasing the risk of death by fire.[108] The dress reform movement was supported by several women's groups, which each had their own political or social ideology behind the desire for reform. The most common outcome was to provide women with dress that allowed them freedom of movement, which meant freedom to do more with her life than sit at home and supervise the family. Liberation of dress meant women's liberation, and the hopes of being productive members of society.[109] Early American feminists adopted the garment that came to be known as the Bloomer (named for activist Amelia Bloomer), which was an un-corseted dress, ending just below the knee, with full "Turkish" style trousers underneath.

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[104] Kelcey ed. Palmer, 230.
[105] Gayle Fischer. *Pantaloons and Power: A Nineteenth Century Dress Reform in the United States.* (Kent: Kent State University, 2001), 4.
[106] Diana Crane, "Clothing Behaviour as Non-Verbal Resistance: Marginal Women and Alternative Dress in the Nineteenth Century", *Fashion Theory* 3, no. 2 (1999): p. 242.
[107] Alison Matthews David. *Fashion Victims: The Dangers of Dress Past and Present*. (London: Bloomsbury, 2015): p. 37.
[108] Matthews-David, 160.
[109] Patricia Cunningham. *Reforming Women's Fashion, 1850-1920: Politics, Health, and Art*. (Kent: Kent State University Press, 2003): p. 3.

The costume was so controversial that most adopters stopped wearing it due to the volume of harassment they received on the streets.[110] Though the Bloomer did not immediately catch on, it generated discussion, and the women's movement continued to lobby for dress reform, holding conventions, printing books and articles, and proposing a simpler, healthier style of dress.[111] Other reform was intended to desexualize women's dress, and create a more modest costume, free from low necklines, and skirts that fit tight against a woman's legs.[112] Regardless of whether the ideology was to create a more modest dress, or to afford women greater movement and comfort, dress reform was intended to change women's inferior place in society.[113]

Part of this reform included disposing of corsets, and specifically, of tight lacing. In order for corset companies to remain relevant in the storm of bad press, they had to provide options to women who had an interest in dress reform, or they at least had to try to convince them that a healthful corset was a viable alternative to disposing of the garment altogether. Though the components of dress reform took many forms, from transgressive bifurcated garments, to the kinds of dye or fibers used, corsets were a constant item of contention. The two companies below used the popularity, and notoriety, of dress reform to their advantage.

Madame Marie- Corset Scientist

The story of Mrs. Eve Marie's career in Toronto appears short. In 1911, she was enumerated in the City Directory as Mrs. Eve Marie, corset maker, located at 608 Yonge St.[114] That year there is also a Mrs. Ada Marie in the directory, also a corset maker, at 555 Bloor St., but there was no apparent connection between these two women. Prior to this, there was no indication of Eve in

[110] Crane, 254.
[111] Ibid.
[112] Aileen Ribeiro. *Dress and Morality*. (New York: Berg, 2003): p. 139.
[113] Cunningham, 5.
[114] *Toronto City Directory for 1911*, (Toronto: Might's Directories, Ltd., 1911), 30.

any records, neither the directory nor the census, or any publication searched. She is only present in the directories for three years, and during that time she was not mentioned in any newspaper, or periodical, with the exception of one quarter page advertisement in *The Globe*.

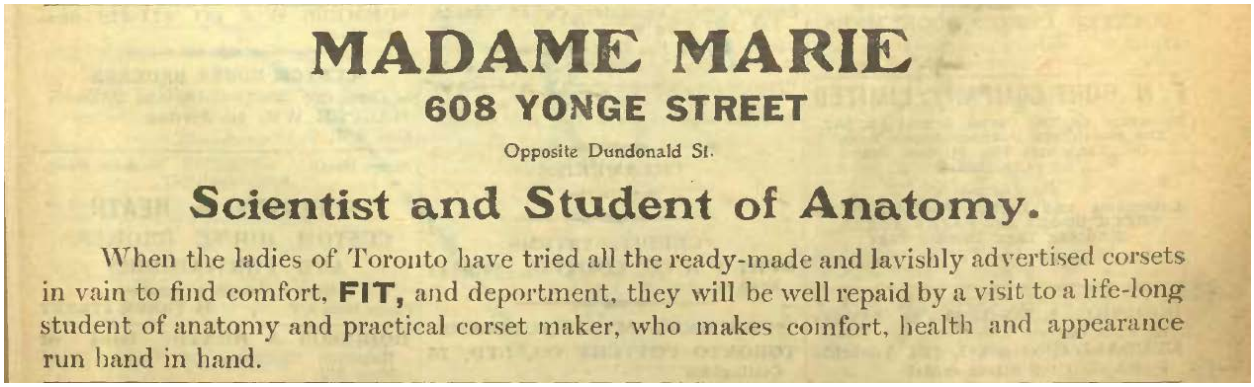
MADAME MARIE
608 YONGE STREET
Opposite Dundonald St.
Scientist and Student of Anatomy.
When the ladies of Toronto have tried all the ready-made and lavishly advertised corsets in vain to find comfort, FIT, and deportment, they will be well repaid by a visit to a life-long student of anatomy and practical corset maker, who makes comfort, health and appearance run hand in hand.

Figure 1-6 Advertisement from the business directory for Mme. Marie, Corset Scientist. Toronto City Directory, 1912.

The first listing for Mrs. Eve Marie was simply for a "corset maker", however, the following year there was a sizable advertisement for her services in the city directory. This advertisement was located in the business directory under the heading "corset scientist", whereas the rest of the corset manufacturers are listed simply under the heading "corsets". She referred to herself as a "scientist and student of anatomy", and appealed to the women of Toronto who have tried all the "ready-made and lavishly advertised" products, to try her corsets. As a life-long student of anatomy and practical corset making she promised to provide customers with comfort and health.[115] Summers notes that many corset advertisements began to appeal to a new woman, who was concerned with her education over fashion,[116] so Mrs. Marie positioning herself as a scientist and student of anatomy certainly appealed to this type of woman. Where other

[115] *Toronto City Directory for 1912*, 1485.
[116] Summers, 127.

manufacturers set themselves apart by the use of patents, or modern factories, Mme. Marie used a concern over health and anatomy to sway customers.

The advertisement in *The Globe* from March 9, 1912 is the only mention of Madame Marie from searches in multiple primary source documents other than the directory. This large advertisement provides clues to her history, and reasons why she was not located in other sources before 1911. The advertisement began with the header stating that the Edwin Knox Company, "Inventors and Patentees of London, England, and Canada, in Collaboration with Madame Marie, the Famous London Corset Scientist" have brought their celebrated "English Physical Corsets" to Canada.[117] They claimed that these corsets were worn by the fashion leaders in London, Paris and Berlin, and that their corsets had the recognition of leading surgeons of Europe. In the advertisement in the directory, Madame Marie claimed to be a life-long student of anatomy. In *The Globe* advertisement, it is declared that she has 20 years of practical experience and anatomical study, though amazingly they stated that they do not make any extravagant claims regarding the construction of their corsets, and appeal to the intelligent women of Canada.

This advertisement also gives a description of how Madame Marie's corsets were medically designed. They were "a combination of corset and belt, which is designed to carry the weight of the abdomen on the spine. By doing so the abdomen is reduced, the spine strengthened, and every tendency to varicose or aching legs avoided."[118] These were some of the same symptoms for which corset-wearing was blamed. It was believed that an ill-fitting corset, or corset laced too tight caused a number of illnesses from numb legs to anaemia to dyspepsia.[119] Having a corset made by an alleged "scientist", and a female one at that, was certainly a recipe for a healthful

[117] *The Globe*, (Toronto, ON), March 9, 1912, 4.
[118] Ibid.
[119] Edward Shorter. *Women's Bodies: A Social History of Women's Encounters with Health, Ill-Health and Medicine.* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1991): 252.

garment. Even the names of the products she produced and sold were medicinal in nature: The Jordan brassiere "for broken muscles, etc", The anti-corset, The Sanitary, belts for floating kidneys, spinal supports, among a number of others. Their range of prices was high in comparison to the department store prices, ranging from $7.50 to $20.00, whereas corsets could be purchased from Eaton's or Simpson's for as low as 75 cents (appendix D). Their justification for this price difference was thus: "We do not make corsets at $1.00 as we cannot make a substantial corset to our patterns at that price, and we decline to turn out any corsets we cannot guarantee". All of their corsets were made by Madame Marie herself, and "mdlles F. and D. Marie". These statements are certainly included to set them apart from other companies using sweated work and hundreds of girls sewing in factories. The combination of alleged medical knowledge, cost of product and the small, intimate work force catered to a woman for whom these affectations of quality and health were important, a mostly middle-class consumer base.

Madame Marie, or Mrs. Eve Marie as she is also known, only appeared in the directories until 1914. Her claim to have recently emigrated from London, a claim which certainly added air of fashionability to her business, is possibly substantiated by the London directory for 1910. There were several women named "Madame Marie" listed in the directory, all working in the needle trades either as dressmakers or costumers, however there were none with the first name Eve, or the initial E.[120] Also no one by the name Edwin Knox appeared in the London directory. This is not a firm indication of the history of Madame Marie, corset scientist, however it is not unfounded that business owners would embellish their statuses and histories in order to appeal to a higher-class clientele. It is possible that she is not locatable in the census, or other vital primary sources, because Madame Marie was a professional moniker. One of the examples in London of

[120] *Post Office London Directory, 1910*, (London: Kelly's Directory Ltd., 1910): 363.

a Madame Marie, dressmaker, gave the name "Mrs. Elizabeth Rossner" in brackets. However, records indicate that she remained in London, and Mrs. Rossner was not our corset scientist.

Ward and McKenzie, and The American Corset and Dress Reform Company

The American Corset And Dress Reform Company began in 1892, under the ownership of George R. Holden. Their business was featured in the 1893 edition of *Toronto Illustrated*, where it was stated that the company was under the sole control of Mrs. J. Ward and Mrs. McKenzie at 316 Yonge St.[121] Mrs. Isabella L. Ward (born 1845) and M. Elvina/Alvina McKenzie (born 1844) first appeared in the city directory in 1894, both as Ward & McKenzie,[122] and under the commercial listing for American Corset. [123] Both of these businesses were located on the commercial strip at 316 Yonge St, a 30 by 100 foot shop, which was "tastefully and handsomely fitted up".[124] Their partnership was present in the directories until 1900. However, though Ward was listed independently in the residential listings, McKenzie was only ever present under the partnership. Interestingly, Ward was always listed under her own first name, but McKenzie often appeared as "Mrs. George McKenzie". By 1902 the company was listed under the sole ownership of Isabella Ward. The following year the business moved to 2 College St. in the still existing Oddfellows building at the corner of College and Yonge, and became simply the Isabella L. Ward & Co. Information regarding their lives before their businesses, and even information regarding their lives while their business was in operation was not located.

[121] *Toronto Illustrated 1893*, (Toronto: Consolidated Illustrating, Co., 1893): 152.
[122] *Toronto City Directory for 1894*, 1596.
[123] *Toronto City Directory for 1894*, 389.
[124] *Toronto Illustrated 1893*, 152.

Searches for their businesses only yielded results in *The Endeavour Herald*,[125] and *The Delineator*. The same advertisement, or a variation thereof depending on the fashions of the day, was featured in *The Delineator* from 1893 to 1900. These advertisements always featured a corset in the bottom left corner, and stated that they were the "sole manufacturer of Jennes Miller and Equipoise Waists, Puritan Shoulder Braces, Abdominal Supporters and Fine Corsets" and cycling corsets, that were all made to order.[126]

Their workforce as represented in the city directories was relatively small compared to their competition, particularly other women like Hannah Vermilyea and her army of female employees. There was only one person in the directories, apart from Isabella Ward, who was enumerated as an employee of American Corset, in 1902, Miss Annie Gallagher, who worked as a machine operator.[127] However, there were three women, including Annie, employed at Ward & McKenzie, two for one year in 1896, and one for two years, in 1897-1898. Considering the fact that Annie was still employed by Isabella in 1902, it is possible that she was an employee in the interim years as well.

The name "American Corset and Dress Reform" presents an interesting study. By all indications, they produced their own corsets, as their ads do not list the names of other companies. The name "American" could imply a greater quality of production, as with companies that advertised French and English goods. America is also where the dress reform movement began, so this gave an air of authenticity to their products, and all of the references I found in the primary sources for Toronto refer to the American movement, in terms of literature and speakers, possible due to proximity creating ease of dissemination of information. In using the term "dress reform" in their

[125] *The Endeavor Herald* 7, no 8, (August 1896), 156.
[126] *The Delineator*, (June 1897), pviii.
[127] *Toronto City Directory for 1902*, 518.

name they attempted to gain customers by performing healthfulness, much in the same way as Mme. Marie did. Their shop also sold an array of trendy dress reform goods, including union suits made of merino, "health" wool, common sense and hygienic waists.[128]

The cases of Mme. Marie and the American Corset and Dress Reform Company suggest that during the height of the dress reform movement, middle- and upper-class women of Toronto were interested in dressing in a more healthful manner, but not ready to dispose of their corsets altogether. By providing options that had an aura of health, these two companies situated themselves in the changing fashions. And the fact that they were run by women certainly lulled their customers into a sense of trust, for who knew the science of women's bodies better than women themselves.

Patents and Lawsuits

In *The Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels describe how the bourgeoisie "cannot exist without constantly revolutionising the instruments of production".[129] Certainly the number of patents registered during the late nineteenth century demonstrates this revolution of production, and indeed patents were present in corset making. Improvements on corsets were used by businesses in their advertising campaigns. Innovations in corset technology were an essential part of business practices, and made the private subject of corsets a matter for public courts.[130] Patents ranged from materials, such as alternatives to steel and whale bones, ways of revolutionising lacing, and on the extreme end gimmicks such as "electric" corsets which claimed to have healthful properties, with advertisements claiming to cure the gamut of ailments

[128] *Toronto Illustrated 1893*, 152.
[129] Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2004): 64.
[130] Kara Swanson, "Getting a Grip on The Corset: Gender, Sexuality and Patent Law", *Yale Journal of Law and Feminism* 23 (2011), 60.

of usual nineteenth century snake oil.[131] These attempts to improve corsets were often patented outside of Canada by larger firms, with the patents purchased for exclusive use by Canadian business owners, with multiple patents owned by female business owners, or even developed by them. Patents granted owners sole right to manufacture, at the risk of a financial penalty, and created competition in design and innovation, to lure customers with cutting edge technology.[132]

A number of disputes over patents were fought in public, through the use of advertising, and will be examined in greater detail in chapter 3. Among these are the disputes over patents between Crompton and Telfer, who used similar alternative boning. The patent in question was over the use of Coraline, which was a "strong, flexible fibre, which is put through a process of spinning and tempering" and used as a replacement for whale bone or steel.[133] Telfer used a boning called Cordaline, which created the foundation for the public feud.

Crompton also took a public approach to a patent lawsuit with the Brush bothers. Early on in the Brushes business their gimmick included selling corsets made with bones that would not break. The quest to manufacture a boning that did not break like steel, or dry out and snap like whalebone, pitted corset companies against each other. Brush was so convinced of the resilience of their corsets that their advertisements guaranteed that if the bones broke within a year they would refund the purchase cost.[134] The lawsuit that they faced with Frederick Crompton in 1886 was based on a patented boning solution, which involved a series of coiled wire springs held

[131] Steele, 81.
[132] Sarah Levitt, *Victorians Unbuttoned* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1986): 6.
[133] The Globe, (Toronto, ON), May 13, 1882, 7.
[134] *The Delineator* 30, no. 6 (Nov., 1893), pxi.

together with Indian rubber to make an elasticated corset.[135] Crompton's won this lawsuit, and again took to the newspapers to announce their success.

As Brush's advertising often hinged on the prospect of unbreakable bones, it is not surprising that they purchased the corset-related effects of the Canada Featherbone Co., from London, Ontario, after Featherbone retired from the corset business to focus on other aspects of manufacturing with their signature materials. The announcement made in *The Canadian Dry Goods Review* promised customers of Featherbone that the quality of their product would certainly increase under the guidance of a company with a reputation of experience as Brush, who provided customers with the most up-to-date corset.[136] This purchase demonstrates the Brush tradition of innovative boning, as Featherbone was made out of the quills of woven turkey feathers, which they claimed to be superior to whale bone, as turkey feathers did not dry out, whereas baleen[137] was a material that existed underwater prior to harvesting and got brittle and snapped after prolonged exposure to air.[138]

Figure 1-7Advertisement for the Parisian Corset Co., in Quebec, using boning patented by John Belcher from Toronto. From *The Canadian Dry Goods Review*, January, 1900.

[135] "Appeal from the Court of Appeal for Ontario- Patent- Infringement of", *Judgements of the Supreme Court of Canada* (Ottawa: Supreme Court of Canada, 1887), 469.
[136] "Retiring from the Corset Business". *Canadian Dry Goods Review* 9, no. 2 (Feb. 1899), 34.
[137] Baleen, or "whale bone" is a cartilage from the mouth of whales, and was used as stays in corsets before the use of steel, and used in expensive, corsets after.
[138] "All from a Quill", *Canadian Dry Goods Review* 10, no. 5 (May 1900),154.

Mme. Vermilyea also held the patent for a number of corset improvements, including steels with holes to accommodate eyelets, and a "self-fitting" corset.[139] The latter was the subject of a lawsuit against another Belleville company, owned by Wallace Canniff, though the case was dismissed because the "plaintiffs knew they were not the original inventors of the said alleged invention in the patents referred to, and that the agreement was fraudulently entered into by the plaintiffs and that no consideration was given to the defendant", perhaps indicating that this was an American or British invention, and Canniff simply held the patent in Canada.[140]

John Belcher had more success in avoiding law suits than his competition. In 1896, he applied for a patent for a new kind of corset clasp, the "good grip", which comprised of a sliding spring and slot, and was meant to undo at a touch. This was much different than the existing busk structure with a u-shaped socket and ball. [141] He also patented an improvement to corset bones, which was announced in trade journals in 1897,[142] and was used by the Parisian Corset Company, which operated out of Quebec. In an advertisement from 1900 (Fig. 1-7), P.C. proudly announced that "we fit our corsets with Belcher's patent, safety pocket, which positively prevents the steel puncturing or cutting through at top or bottom of the corset".[143] The problem of steel bones cutting through the fabric through wear was a prevalent issue with corsets, which is observed when examining many extant artefacts. The bottoms of the boning channels are often patched and repaired, indicating that the bones had cut through the fabric.

[139] James Smith, *The Ontario Reports* (Toronto: Roswell & Hutchinson, 1887): 165.
[140] Ibid.
[141] "Patented Corset Clasp". *Canadian Dry Goods Review* 6, no. 4, (April 1896), 29.
[142] *Canadian Trade Review* 22, no. 22 (April 2 1897), 21.
[143] *Canadian Dry Goods Review* 10, no. 1 (January 1900), 135.

Sales Agents and Out of Province Production

Apart from the corsets made in Toronto, they were also produced in other large urban centres, in Canada, the United States, and Europe. Many of these companies had agents with offices in Toronto who liaised with retail establishments to bring their wares to the people of Toronto. The sale of corsets from companies not based in Toronto is evidenced by the advertisements of department stores and fancy goods stores and were staffed exclusively in Toronto by male agents and managers.

The Dominion Corset Company

The Dominion corset company began in 1886 by Georges-Élie Amyot in Québec City under the name Dyonnet & Amyot. In 1889 they opened an office in Montreal, and in 1892 they opened their Bay St. office in Toronto.[144] They remained in business until 1976, when they were bought by Daisyfresh, and subsequently closed in 1988. Dominion was one of the largest employers in the region of Québec City. Though this source does not indicate the number of staff in the early years, between the end of World War Two and 1960, they employed upwards of 1,200 people, with a steady decline thereafter, from 400 employees in 1970 to only 150 employees upon closure in 1988.[145] The division of labour was clearly gendered, with men working in the office, and women working in the factory. Though there were a few women working in low clerical positions, most office jobs were held by men, as "they worked as an extension of the president".[146] Indeed, even the designers were men, up until the 1970s when they hired their first female designer.[147] As one former employee stated "I don't know why, it seemed to be

[144] Du Berger and Mathieu, 9.
[145] Du Berger and Mathieu, 32.
[146] "Tres majoritairement masculine, il agissait comme une extension du president". Du Berger and Mathieu, 27.
[147] Du Berger and Mathieu, 29.

exclusively reserved for men. I don't understand why. Especially since this was such a feminine domain, feminine undergarments. The sales, that was men; the publicity, that was men; the marketing, it was all men. Today it's completely reversed. There are still men who design, but it is mostly women who design".[148]

The goods that were produced at the Dominion Corset Company changed as the fashions changed. When the company opened at the end of the nineteenth century, the hour-glass "taille de guêpe" or wasp waist was in vogue. Though they used steel to bone many of their corsets, they also used an alternative to steel called Wabone, which they claimed was used "in the very highest class of goods of European and American manufacture".[149] They evolved to make girdles, and brassieres. The 1950s were remembered as a golden age for Dominion, with the pointed bust brassieres a great seller.[150] They even expanded production to panty-hose by the 1960s, to accommodate miniskirts, as stockings and garters had fallen out of fashion.[151]

From the time of their arrival in Toronto in 1892, the Dominion Corset Co. employed 15 people in their Toronto offices as managers and travellers. Only one of these employees was a woman, Miss Jessie Hawkins, though her position was not indicated in the directory. There were two managers of Dominion in Toronto, Edwin McMorran, who ran the operation for a short time (though the exact number of years is inconclusive), and he was succeeded by William Pridham.

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[148] "Je ne sais pas pourquoi, ca semblait être exclusive et reserve aux hommes. Je ne comprends pas. D'autant plus que c'etait un domaine tellement feminine, de sous-vetements feminins. La vente, c'étaient les hommes; la publicité, c'étaient les hommes; le marketing, c'était tout masculin. Aujourd'hui c'est complêtement renversé. Y a encore des hommes qui dessinent, mais ce sont surtout des femmes qui dessinent." Du Berger and Mathieu, 28.
[149] *Quarter Century of Success*, no page.
[150] Du Berger and Mathieu, 44.
[151] Du Berger and Mathieu, 45.

Eastern Township Corset Co.

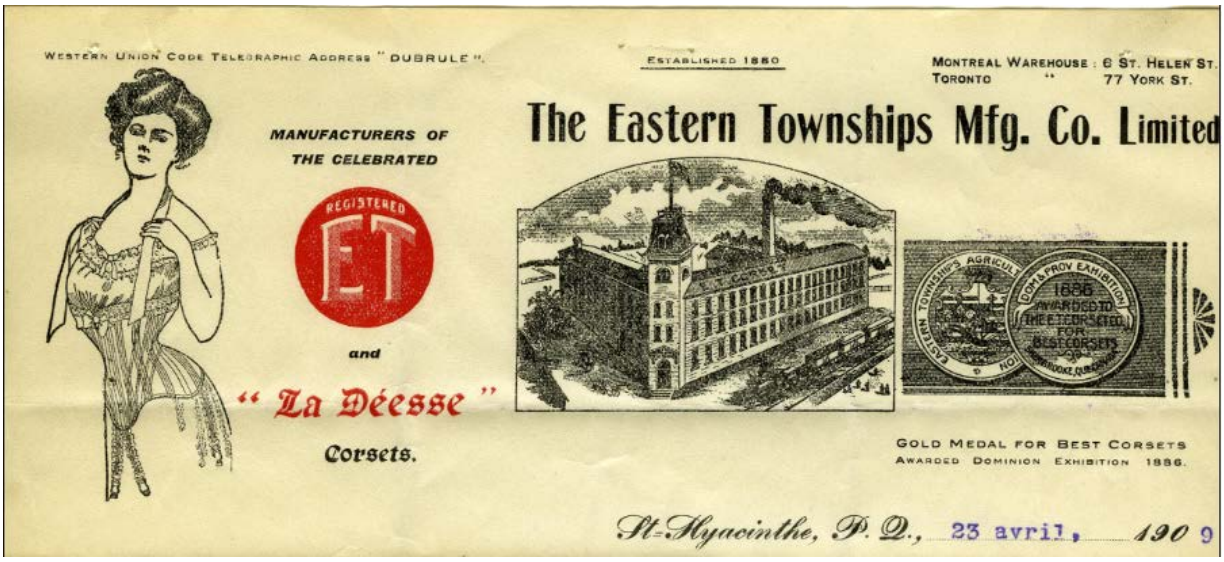

Figure 1-8 Envelope from the Eastern Township Corset Co. (E.T.). Showing their "La Déese" corset, and their Hyacinthe Township factory, c. 1900. From the private collection of Melanie Talkington.

The Eastern Township (E.T.) Corset Co. had products widely carried across Toronto, and were advertised heavily in a variety of periodicals. The company was founded by Octave Gendron as president in Sherbrooke, Québec, in 1880. They did a steady trade, and won the gold medal in the 1886 Dominion Exhibition for best corset.[152] After twelve successful years in Sherbrooke, the town of Saint-Hyacinthe, roughly 100 km away from Sherbrooke, offered companies a $15,000 subsidy to establish themselves within the town in a bid for industrial expansion.[153] The E.T. Corset Co. bought into this incentive and moved to Saint-Hyacinthe in 1892.[154] During the early 1890s, there were between 150[155] and 200 people working for E.T. corsets,[156] including the itinerant sales men in the Toronto offices. According to advertisements throughout the nearly

[152] Envelope from the private collection of Melanie Talkington.
[153] Peter Gossage, *Families in Transition: Industry and Population in Nineteenth-Century Saint-Hyacynthe* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press), 53.
[154] "Sauvons La E.T. Corsets!". *Centre D'Histoire de Saint-Hyacynthe*. Accessed April 4, 2017. http://www.chsth.com/histoire/histoire-regionale/il-etait-une-fois/article/sauvons-la-e-t-corset
[155] "Sauvons La E.T. Corsets!".
[156] Gossage, 53.

hundred years of business, E.T. Corset Co. continued to provide Canadian women with fashionable foundation garments. Like Many other domestic clothing factories, the E.T. Corset Co. closed in 1979. [157]

The offices for ET in Toronto were originally located across the street from the Dominion offices on Bay St. They later moved to York St. They were first mentioned in the City Directory in 1888, with offices at 59 Bay St., managed by MacKay, Hallet & Co,[158] though the following year MacKay is dropped from the name of the agents listed.[159] Between 1888 and 1914 their Toronto offices employed 13 people, all men, with positions ranging from shipper, to salesman, traveller and bookkeeper, with Benjamin Hallett at the helm. Their corsets were sold at major retailers in Toronto.

PLEASE KEEP THIS TAG

SPIRELLA GUARANTEE

If a **Spirella Stay** in this garment should **rust or break** in regular wear, within **one year** from date on tag, we will duplicate the garment **without charge.**

Should any **defects** in workmanship or material (including broken clasp) appear in this garment **within 3 months,** the Company will **repair** it **free of charge** (results of natural wear or misuse excluded).

For any guarantee claim, the garment must be **laundered** and **with this tag,** delivered at once, **within the guaranteed time,** to your Corsetiere or sent to us by insured Parcel Post.

REPAIR SERVICE:-Our Service Department will make **repairs** for you at any time at **reasonable prices.** Timely repairs such as new Supporters, Clasp, Trimming, New Sections, etc., will **greatly lengthen the life** of your garment. For Repair Service see your Corsetiere or write the Company.

CAUTION:-To get **maximum comfort** and **service** from your garment you must **adjust it** and **wear it** according to **instructions** in the Adjustment Leaflet.

The Spirella Stay — La Baleine Spirella

Si une **Baleine Spirella** venait à **rouiller** ou à se **casser** dans ce vêtement durant le port régulier, au cours de **l'année** à partir de la date de cette carte, nous ferons un duplicata de ce vêtement **gratis.**

S'il survenait des **défectuosités** de fabrication ou de tissu (y compris un fermoir cassé) dans ce vêtement **durant les 3 premiers mois,** la Compagnie en fera la **réparation gratis** (résultats provenant du port ordinaire ou de mauvais usage exclus).

Pour toute réclamation sur cette garantie, le **vêtement** doit être **blanchi** et, **avec cette carte,** remis immédiatement, **durant le temps de la garantie,** à votre Corsetière ou nous être envoyé par Colis Postal assuré.

The Spirella Co. of Canada, Limited
NIAGARA FALLS, ONTARIO

Figure 1-9 Label with the Spirella Guarantee, explaining the benefits of their coiled boning, c. 1920. Fashion History Museum, no accesion number.

The Spirella Corset Company

The Spirella Corset Company was an international company with offices across Europe and North America. Their Canadian offices opened in 1910, at which point they advertised in *The Star* for female agents for their Toronto location, in West Parkdale.[160] There is an extant garment from the Spirella Company which was used as a sales sample in 1939 housed at the Fashion History Museum in Cambridge, with the original tags intact. The unique feature of Spirella was the use of steel stays

[157] "Sauvons La E.T. Corsets!".
[158] *Toronto City Directory for 1888*, (Toronto: R.L. Polk & Co.): 1122.
[159] *Toronto City Directory for 1889*, (Toronto: R.L. Polk & Co.): 1207.
[160] *The Toronto Evening Star*, (Toronto, ON), June 17, 1912, p. 16.

that were shaped into a spiral design (Fig. 1-9). Though the company was international, the corsets themselves were made in Canada. The Ontario factory was located in Niagara Falls, and agents' offices were located in Toronto. The city directory only lists two employees from their first appearance in 1901 until 1914, one of whom was the manager, Frederick Crumpton (not to be confused with Frederick Crompton). They continued manufacturing lingerie until the 1960s.[161]

Parisian Corset Co (P.C. Corset)

Another Québecois company which did a fair trade in Toronto was the Parisian Corset (PC) Company. Advertisements from the 1890s stated that they produced "corsets without whalebone", which they claim were invented by a doctor. In 1909, their factory burned down as a result of a neighbouring sash and door factory catching fire.[162] The company rebuilt and they continued to produce lingerie in the form of brassieres and girdles for the Canadian market well into the 1960s.

Their business interest in Toronto only began in 1913, with John Logie as the local manager. The address was on Lansdowne Ave, though this was possibly his

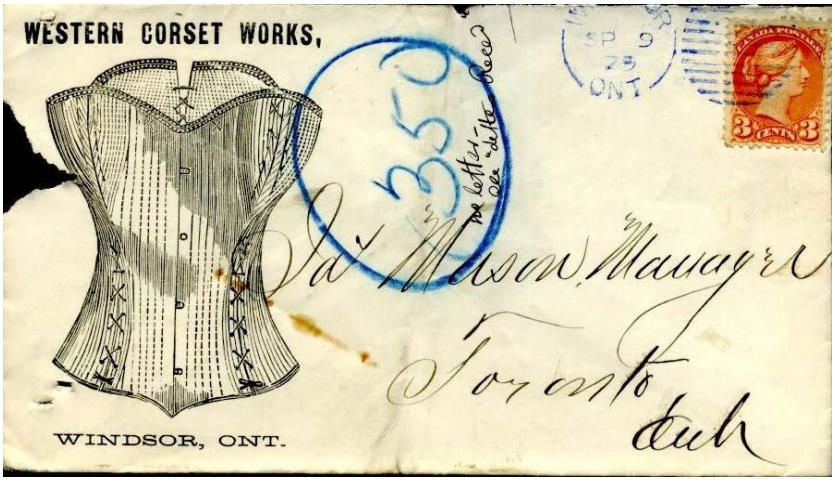

Figure 1-10 Envelope from the Western Corset Works, Windsor, Ontario, c. 1890, showing a corset with adjustable hips. From the collection of Melanie Talkington.

[161] Sheila Hardy. *Women of the 1960s: More than Mini Skirts, Pills and Pop Music,* (South Yorkshire: Pen and Sword Books, 2016): 118.
[162] "Great Fire in Quebec", *The Globe*, (Toronto, ON), June 10, 1909, p. 4.

home address, as Lansdowne did not have many commercial ventures, apart from local neighbourhood businesses. They did have a presence in the city as major department stores sold their products.

There were also myriad corset makers who were not as present in the sources. The Western Corset Works, in Windsor, Ontario, is one example (Fig. 1-10). The only reference to this company that I located was an envelope which is in the collection of Melanie Talkington. In spite of searching for this company, there was no information available. Likewise, at Museum London, a scrap of paper housed with one of the corsets has the note "The Webb French Glove Fitting Corset, 1899, 290 ½ Dundas". Two of the corsets in their collection were made by this local company and amazingly have the price written on the inside with pencil. They are both dated from 1899, and the prices were $4.50 and $3.50, which compared to the prices in Appendix D, were mid-range. Though my research was not able to thoroughly investigate the archives in other cities, there were companies of varying sizes from coast to coast manufacturing corsets, and brokering imports for the women in their communities.

Conclusion

The companies manufacturing corsets in Toronto enjoyed varying levels of success, with work forces ranging from one or two people, to an army of hundreds of seamstresses, and were mostly located in popular consumer and industrial centres, which often over-lapped. Though Greg Keely cites only upward of six corset companies in his book *Toronto Workers Respond to Industrial Capitalism 1867-1892,*[163] there were approximately unique 51 listings for corset companies in the city directories (Appendix A), as well as approximately 225 individuals who were

[163] Greg Keely. *Toronto Workers Respond to Industrial Capitalism, 1861-1892*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980): 310.

enumerated as “corset maker” or “corset manufacturer” with no company affiliation specified (Appendix B). It is likely that these people were all employed by one of the companies in Toronto, but did not declare their employer to the enumerator. Large department stores, such as Eaton’s, also made their own corsets and had their own designers.

Among the business owners in Appendix A, 21 were women or female partnerships. 29 appear to be men, however these include listings for Solomon Vermilyea, John Reading, and John Belcher, who as discussed, acted as fronts for female owners. Counted among these are also the fancy goods establishment of G.W. Dunn, who was in the directory as “corset dealer”, and is always listed as the business of George W. Dunn, with the exception of three years where there is a second business listed for Dunn under the name “Mrs G.W. Dunn”.[164] Six of these 29 are also agents selling goods made outside of Toronto. Removing these businesses, the number of women who owned corset manufactures was on par with those owned by men, though the larger businesses, such as Crompton’s and Telfer, which were owned by men, did experience greater success and longevity. These numbers seem to contradict Leigh Summer’s claim that elsewhere the corset trade was dominated by men, though she does indicate that a few women in England and American rose to the top of production, going so far as to call one woman’s company a “small empire”.[165]

With the exception of these larger businesses, most companies were housed along the popular commercial roads of King, Queen and Yonge, or the growing manufacturing district of Spadina (See map in Appendix E). The only one located outside of the city centre was the final Toronto iteration of the Vermilyea factory. The rest of the businesses were located in the densely

[164] *Toronto City Directory for 1878*, (Toronto: Might and Taylor’s Publishers, 1878): 276
[165] Summers, 31.

populated downtown, making it easy to access for both employees and customers. The map in Appendix E indicates where major businesses from Appendix A were located, representing the whole twenty-three years this study covers. Expansion of production occurred largely up the Yonge St. corridor, and east and west along the major streets from there. Businesses began moving further west and north, so by 1900 there were corset makers as far north-west as Bathurst and Bloor, and as far west as Dovercourt, just north of the Asylum. However, by and large, the majority of businesses were located in the downtown core, between Spadina and Jarvis, and between Front and College. The slow shift indicates a change in production, but also a change in the shopping habits of Toronto residents. The downtown core remained the preferred fashionable shopping district, but as the city expanded, residents likely preferred the convenience of shopping without trekking into the core. By the 1880s, the core of the city still housed light industry, with heavier industry located either in the suburbs, or at the edges of the city. Though the research of Gunter Gad about patterns of manufacturing in 1880s Toronto states that there were only two corset factories in Toronto employing 268 people,[166] the evidence in this chapter shows otherwise. The scope of manufacture ranged from hundreds of corsets being produced every day for national sale by Crompton's seamstresses, to made-to-measure healthful garments by a self-proclaimed corset scientist. As the city's population grew, so did the variety of corset production and the opportunities for employment, especially for young women. The factory owners of Toronto, regardless of whether or not they were cut from the cloth of Marxist ideology of primarily male capitalist villain, provided employment for hundreds of women and men. In spite of the praise of modern factories, like Vermilyea's facility, or the affectation of benevolent paternalism, like Crompton, the conditions under which they worked were often not ideal.

[166] Gunter Gad. "Location Patterns on Manufacturing: Toronto in the Early 1880s", Urban History Review/Revue d'Histoire Urbaine 22, no. 2 (1994): 117.

Chapter 2: "First Class References Required": Employment and Employees

In the nineteenth century, women's labour was considered an extension of their domestic duties, with large numbers employed as domestic servants or seamstresses. Female employment in corset factories, however, went beyond sewing, and especially in factories owned by women included white collar sales work, management, and clerical work. The diversity of positions within these factories provided women in Toronto incomes to financially contribute to their households, whether they were living with their parents and family, on their own, or with their spouse while raising their own families, while also being a critical part of the female economy. Work in nineteenth century clothing factories was difficult, but this did not prevent girls, women and men from seeking employment therein. Previous scholarship on corsets has largely focused on the perspectives and bodies of bourgeois women.[1] When working class women are mentioned, it is often in the context of questioning whether or not they wore corsets at all, as with Leigh Summers' article "Yes, They Did Wear Them", which includes an analysis of extant corsets, advertising, and contemporary stories. Corset advertisements often targeted working-class women, and some companies branded designs specifically for them. One that was mentioned by Summers was marketed to domestic servants, in order for them to be able to engage in their physically taxing work, while still being corseted.[2] However, by and large, the stories of working class women and corsets are distinctly lacking, as well as a discussion about the women who produced them. This is not true for garment workers in general, but perhaps the absence of corset workers was due to the tradition of corsets being considered unmentionables, or because focusing on the body of the wearer is a sexier side of the history, and certainly makes

[1] Steele, Perrot, Waugh, etc
[2] Summers, 68.

for a more heated discussion. The women who worked in the factories wore corsets themselves, made them to be worn by other women, and were an important cog in the female economy Within the greater field of fashion studies, consumption, and even material culture, scholars have largely neglected the topics of labour and production, though they are inextricably tied.[3] Among the scholars who have focused on production, rather than consumption and materiality, Wendy Gamber (1990, about needle-workers in Boston), Nan Enstad (1999, about labouring women as consumers and drivers of political action), Cynthia Amneus (2003, about needle-workers in Cincinnati), and Nancy Greene (1997, about needle-workers in both New York and Paris) create precedent for acknowledging the importance of the labourer over the object. This intertwining of labour, production and material is the commodity fetish at work, where the garment is present in the cultural memory, but the labour, and bodies, of the women who made them are forgotten, hidden by the semiotic power bestowed upon the corset.[4] The stories in this chapter also build on the work of Canadian historians writing about the experiences of female labourers in Toronto, such as of Ruth Frager (1992), Carmella Patrias (2005), and Mercedes Steedman (1997), to name a few of the prominent scholars who have exposed the working lives of Canadian women in factories.

This chapter explores the stories of women and men who were employed in various positions within corset factories. Beginning with an enumeration of people employed in Toronto, and the positions held by both men and women, this chapter argues that the workforce in Toronto's corset industry was overwhelmingly female, and that women held traditionally male positions, such as bookkeeping and other clerical positions, challenging the ideology that women's roles

[3] Agnès Rocamora. *Thinking Through Fashion: A Guide to Key Theorists* (London: I.B. Taurus, 2015): 16.
[4] Anthony Sullivan. "Karl Marx: Fashion and Capitalism". *Thinking Through Fashion: A Guide to Key Theorists* (London: I.B. Taurus, 2015): 41.

were tied to their perceived domesticity, and that they contributed to the economy of the city beyond their roles as maternal consumers for their families. To situate these positions historically, the factory system in Toronto is explored through development of labour policies, the creation of inspectors and the social reform surrounding labourers. Finally, this chapter argues that in spite of the gendered division of labour, men were often presented in the primary sources as the only people employed as corset designers in Toronto, in spite of the fact that, as shown in chapter 1, women were also designers The perpetuation of the male-as-designer narrative is an example of how the official documents and reporting of information created a biased and inaccurate history of female labour in Toronto. Each section of this chapter is illustrated by biographies of employees to put human experiences to the historical narrative. The use of biography, historiographically speaking, was originally used for moral edification, and by the nineteenth century was used to create a "history of great men".[5] By writing about working class women, I am challenging the tradition of their time of writing only about the great artists, businessmen, and inventors,[6] and putting the focus instead on the people who laboured for them.

In enumerating, and naming, the workers, the proposed female economy of the corset trade is confirmed, but also demonstrates that the accepted history that women worked only up until marriage[7] was not universal across all workers. It can be argued that working in corset factories, producing a garment that is problematized as oppressive, gave female workers autonomy in their lives through paid employment. The wages that they earned were sometimes included in the census, though not always. From instances where the income was listed in the census, they were comparable to those of domestic servants. On one page of the 1901 census, there is a corset

[5] Beverly Southgate. History: What and Why? Ancient, Modern and Postmodern Perspectives (London: Routledge, 1996): 40.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Frager and Patrias: 150.

maker (who earned $250), a dressmaker (who earned $200), and two domestic servants (who earned $250 and $200). This is compared to men listed on the same page, where a bartender earned $600, and a traveller earned $1000,[8] or compared to the wages earned by male factory labour at the turn of the century, which was approximately $600 per year.[9] Though this is not an extensive sample, it is representative of the differences in wages. Based on these wages, and according to the cost of corsets (which will be discussed further in chapter 4), a corset cost as little as 25 cents. Based on the salary of $250 per year, and a six-day work week, a corset maker made 80 cents per day, which meant a low-end corset was affordable to the women who made them. However, at the upper end of the market, a corset cost as much as $20, roughly a week's wages, and certainly not an option for a working class woman. Few sources discuss the cost of living for Toronto to provide a context for these wages. Mercedes Steedman describes the cost of living for the 1930s,[10] but due to the intervening years, and the economic influence of the First World War, this cannot be used for comparison. In other articles that deal specifically with the changes in cost of living, Toronto is not one of the sample cities, but rather they use Hamilton as the sample for Southern Ontario. In Hamilton, in 1870, a four room house cost $2.50 per month per person to rent, and if board was included, an extra $2.00 was charged.[11] By 1901, rent for a family of five in Hamilton was on average $102 per year, and after incidentals, up to $175.[12] Assuming that this was similar to Toronto, based on this rate of inflation, rent alone cost a over quarter of a working woman's the wages of 1891.

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[8] 1901 Census of Canada, Ontario, District 118, Toronto West, Sub-District B, No. 33, Ward 4, p. 3.
[9] J.C. Herbert Emery and Clint Levitt, "Cost of Living, Real Wages and Real Incomes in Thirteen Canadian Cities, 1900-1950", *Canadian Journal of Economics* 35, no. 1 (2002), 132.
[10] Steedman, 201.
[11] J.G. Snell. "The Cost of Living in Canada 1870", *Histoire Sociale/Social History*, 12 (1979): 191.
[12] Eric Sager and Peter Baskerville. "Unemployment, Living Standards, and the Working-Class Family i Urban Canada in 1901", *The History of the Family* 2, no. 3 (1997), 274.

“Help Wanted: Young Girls for Steady Employment”

As discussed in chapter 1, Crompton’s alone employed hundreds of people, and with the number of corset companies in Toronto, there were, according to the directories between 1871 and 1914 upwards of 800 people, and twice as many women as men, whose livelihood depended on corset manufacturing. The information regarding employees of corset manufacturers in this chapter is from the City Directories, newspaper articles, and the Census of Canada, used in conjunction as these sources are incomplete when used on their own. For example, the City Directories did not contain listings for employees before 1882. Prior to this, only the heads of companies were named. Using the Library and Archives of Canada Census search tool also proved incomplete. A search for each census year was completed using the term “corset”. However, there were no results for 1871, 1891, or 1911. This is a problem with their OCR search capabilities, rather than of an absence of corset makers during those years. When specific personal names were searched in that period, there was information, including employment as corset maker.

The types of positions people held in the corset businesses is best described in the city directories. From the aggregated data collected from all the directories between 1871 and 1914, again using OCR searches in PDFs of the books, I located a range of job titles, which were sometimes divided by gender. For example, only men were employed as pressers or travellers, and only women were machine operators. Appendix B shows an alphabetical list of all the people in the directories who stated that they were employed in corset making. This list includes their home addresses, which often change frequently and were located across the city, as far east as Sackville Ave., east of the Don River, and as far west as Swansea (west of High Park), as well as the company, and their role therein. The records in Appendix B are further aggregated in Appendix C, which lists how many men and women were employed in the various positions.

Where the list in Appendix B includes duplicate names, the aggregation of jobs and gender in Appendix C does not.

In the largest groups of employees, case of 233 employees (216 women, 17 men), a company name was not provided, and they were simply listed as “corset maker”. Similarly, there were many examples where a company was often named, but no specific position was provided for the individual. For these 216 people (168 women, 48 men), I have chosen to apply the label “worker” in the appendix, based on existing listings that used this title. I have tried to include one listing per person if their employer or job title remained the same, but with multiple home addresses. There are, however, people who are listed multiple times. This is due to variations in their names in the directory from year to year, or due to changes in their employment, either in their position or the company they worked for.

The division of labour in corset manufacturing related to both the kinds of work performed, as well as the length of time an individual was employed. Many of the women enumerated were only listed for a year or two, as young women, and presumably left their positions for marriage, as this was the expected trajectory of the young working girl’s life. Even though the economy was run on the exploitation of young, female workers, the supply of replacements was plentiful, and the narrative of the day expected women to transition from worker to wife and mother.[13]

Based on this information, jobs in corset manufacturing are divided into two sub groups: white collar or office (management, accounting, clerk, stenographer, held by 72 men and 26 women), and manual labour or factory (machine operator, cutter, etc, held by 470 women and 186 men). Higher positions in the offices were overwhelmingly held by males. According to the city directories, managers, vice-presidents, and secretaries, were all positions held mostly by men.

[13] Strange, 39.

Positions that required travel or mobility, such as messenger, porter or traveler, were exclusively held by men. The book-keeping positions were split between men and women, and the clerks' positions were held by 16 men and 11 women. There does not appear to be a difference between male and female factory owners and their hiring policies regarding office staff, though Crompton's, as the largest company, did employ significantly more men.

The tasks of factory workers were also divided by gender, with specific roles filled exclusively by men: carpenters, engineers, pressers, cutters, shippers, and starchers were male. These positions may have required more robust physical strength, or specific training that was not available to women. Though traditionally needle-workers were required to have an apprenticeship as part of their work training, by the time the trade became mechanized in the 1860s, apprenticeships were only available to male employees. Training of young girls often included being "helpers" or basters, and learning one particular machine or aspect of construction, whereas boys were offered extensive training.[14] For example, cutters used of specific tools, like the long knife, which was capable of cutting through 18 layers of cloth. Cutting was also integral to the proper fit of clothing, and as such considered skilled labour, and was left to the hands of trained tailors.[15] However, the overwhelming majority of employees in corset factories were machine operators, and the general "worker". All machine operators enumerated were women, as well as 88% of those referred to as general "workers". Female sales staff outnumbered men two to one. Inspectors, examiners, and finishers were also all women. The only person listed as a "flosser" was a man. All told, there were 755 people enumerated, with 43 discrete positions. 496 of these were women, and 258 were men. These numbers indicate that even though the corset trade was largely staffed by women, there were still positions that

[14] Steedman, 44.
[15] Burr, 156.

were not available to them, and that even the female economy was bound by traditional gender roles within the factory. Of the 496 women enumerated, 457 of them had the salutation "miss", and only nineteen "mrs", and twenty women with no salutation at all. This may indicate the tendency for women to work prior to marriage, or, like some of the women whose stories will be told, never married at all. It is difficult to ascertain from the sources what is accurate, as they were often sexist, and did not collect accurate information.The people listed in appendix B were not prominent members of Toronto society, nor were they acknowledged for contributing to the development of Toronto's economy, however, they deserve to have their names remembered.

Positions in Toronto's corset companies ranged from machine operators to sales people, and this employment was often dependent on a referral from family or friends, as well as by responding to "help wanted" advertisements placed in periodicals. Though sales positions were more desirable, as discussed further in chapter three, there was little difference in pay, and the same prejudices were held toward shop employees as factory employees. Crompton's placed a large number of advertisements in newspapers for various positions. One advertisement for machine operators stated that applicants required experience.[16] Another excluded this line, but called for 35 operators to begin immediately.[17] This advertisement also stated "steady employment", which suggested that the well-known problem in the needle-trades of seasonal down-time,[18] was not an issue for corset manufacturing. Though their advertisements for machine operators called on girls, Crompton's advertisements for sales people always requested sales men. Other companies, however, such as the Corset Specialty Co., advertised a need for lady canvassers "to solicit

[16] *The Globe*, (Toronto, ON), March 9, 1880, p. 1.
[17] *The Globe*, (Toronto, ON), July 26 1881, p. 1.
[18] Frager and Patrias, 37.

orders for the best fitting custom corset made".[19] As will be discussed further in chapter three, many businesses hired specialized sales people, in order to ensure quality of fit, and as Jill Fields describes, there were even corset schools to train employees, though there is no evidence of this practice in Toronto.[20] This policy harkens to the story of the Vermilyea Co. that stated she wished to hire lady canvassers. A similar advertisement from Crompton's for a traveller requested an unmarried man.[21] The marital status of female employees was often a point of discussion, in that girls were expected to leave work to get married, but this was not always the typical narrative, as many women maintained their employment after marriage in all positions within the companies. However, it is also important to note that male employees were not always exempted from these requirements either. The desire to employ single men as travellers ensured that the work was not interrupted by family responsibility. The hiring of single women, on the other hand, was based on the ideology of exploiting them, through low wages, and the rhetoric that women were secondary wage earners, either contributing to a family economy, for pin money, or to supplement the income of their husbands.[22] In other words, men had the right to be paid more because they supported families. Woman did not have this right because they did not. However, with some of the stories below, this was not necessarily the case, as women needed to support themselves and their families, while also receiving poor wages based on their gender.

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[19] *The Globe*, (Toronto, ON), Aug. 29, 1901, p3.
[20] Jill Fields. An Intimate Affair: Women, Lingerie, and Sexuality. (Berkley: University of California Press, 2007): 64.
[21] *The Globe*, (Toronto, ON), Jan. 12, 1881, p1.
[22] Steedman, 40.

Factory work

By 1871 the garment industry was the largest employer in Toronto, and between 1871 and 1900, Toronto was the largest producer of ready-made clothing in Canada.[23] The number of women employed in garment manufacturing was likely much higher than the official statistics suggest, as the factory workers were often supplemented by undocumented labour working from home. In order to save money, work was subcontracted to home-labourers, women who took in work because they had children or other domestic duties that prevented them from being employed in the factory. This type of labour paid even less than the already notorious low wages of garment work because of the number of women willing, or with no other option, than to work from home. The work was paid by piece, rather than by the hour, so entire families assisted, often with young children doing simple work like sewing buttons or basting, in order to increase output.[24] Christina Burr recounts the story of one such family, as visited by William Lyon MacKenzie King in his Henry Mayew-eque exposé of the Toronto working class for the *Mail and Empire* in 1897. MacKenzie King, who was the Minister of Labour at the turn of the century, described a young family, where the mother and two daughters all sewed piece work, making men's pants for twelve cents a pair, and were required to provide their own thread.[25] Home workers worked long hours, since the pay was poor and fines were levied for substandard work. Unfortunately, this exposure did not affect the home-working conditions, and it is still a problem that affects garment manufacture. And much like the garment trade today, the sweated system was plagued by levels of contractors and sub-contractors, middle men who hired women at increasingly lower

[23] Burr, 152.
[24] Frager and Patrias, 27.
[25] Burr, 152.

wages.[26] Because of the cloak-and-dagger style operations of sub-contractors, the labour of home workers was often excluded from the censuses, thus greatly skewing the official number of women involved in the needle-trades.[27] Because of the nature of home-work, I was unable to find evidence of it in corset manufacturing, but it was likely also plagued by the practice. Frager and Patrias claim that this exploitative aspect of clothing production had ended by the start of the Second World War,[28] however, from my personal experiences working in the clothing industry, I completed piece work at home for $3.00 per garment in 2005, for a company who sold their line at Holt Renfrew.

Though the home-work system was (and is) exploitative and horrific, the work performed in factories also contributed to what labour historians refer to as the deskilling of labour.[29] The classification of skilled professions was used in government documents, such as the tax assessment. Tax assessors and other government officials labeled employees "unskilled" (ie: seamstress), "semi-skilled", "skilled" (ie: dressmaker, pattern maker, cutter), "clerical" (ie: book keeper), "business" (ie: agent), and "professional" (ie: manager, owner).[30] Referring to the changes in technology in the mid to late nineteenth century which altered the structure of the clothing manufacturing process as deskilling is based in problematic ideology: the implication that tasks originally performed by men and replaced by female machine operatives were diminished in value. A better term is reskilling.[31] The rise of sewing machines in the 1860s removed the need to have the skilled and quick work of hand-sewing. Sewing machines replaced workers with specific skills, including making button holes and embroidery, and by the 1890s

[26] Burr, 152.
[27] Burr, 154.
[28] Frager and Patrias, 28.
[29] Gertjan De Groot and Marlou Schrover. *Women Workers and Technological Change in Europe in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Century*, (London: Routledge, 2005): 12.
[30] Goheen, 229.
[31] De Groot and Schrover, 1.

had increased in speed to make stitching more efficient, and had feeds to reduce the skill required to guide the fabric.[32] Even the job of fabric cutting experienced deskilling due to technological changes, as in the 1850s machines were invented to cut precise patterns through multiple layers of fabric.[33][34] Prior to sewing machines, tailors and dressmakers, or in this instance, staymakers, relied on specific skills learned over years of apprenticeship and training. Under the developing factory system, skill requirements were replaced by exploiting cheap female labour, and were broken down to an assembly line system, where one person sewed the straight lines of side seams, while another sewed the sleeves, for example. The most skill that is required for this task is guiding the fabric through the machine in a straight line, and quickly.[35] During the time period covered here, there was no major shift in the division of labour. The gendered division was consistent, particularly in the work completed on the factory room floor, and corset manufacture followed the same trends as the rest of the garment trade, where cutters and pressers were men, and machine operators were women. This deskilling also contributed to the gendered associations of different roles within the factory. Though a working girl learning to be a machine operator in a factory did not require the years of apprenticeships that a master tailor had, skill was still required, especially to work quickly with precision when employees were paid by piece rather than by hour, and were docked pay for unsatisfactory work. The ideology of deskilling only aided in the devaluing of work performed by women and created a perception in the eyes of the factory owners that exploitation was justified. [36]

Within the factory hierarchy was the forewoman, whose job it was to oversee the seamstresses, and ensure work was being completed quickly or with order. Minnie Frost and Louise Brewer

[32] Steedman, 47.
[33] Steedman, 47.
[34] Burr, 156.
[35] Steedman 48.
[36] Steedman, 48.

were both examples of factory forewomen. Minnie Frost was born in Canada in 1869, and was enumerated as a "seamstress" in the 1891 census.[37] The census provided very little information beyond this designation. That same year the directory stated simply that she worked for the Vermilyea Company.[38] The previous year, 1890, was when she was listed as forewoman, and boarded on her own at 44 Spadina,[39] south of King St., and down the road from the location of Vermilyea at the time. In the 1890s, Spadina was largely residential, (including the homes of medical doctors, as well as boarding houses with labourers and dressmakers)[40], with a few commercial establishments, including dressmakers and milliners, a hint of the centre of production it became in the ensuing years. Like many other needle-workers, she disappeared from the records after these two years of employment.

Louise Brewer was also a forewoman for Hannah Vermilyea. She lived with her family, first at 85 Woolsley, and a few years later at 23 Woolsley, a residential street of row houses north of Queen, between Bathurst and Spadina. The head of this household, listed under the residential listings, was John Brewer, a labourer. Louise first appeared in 1890, employed as a machine operator at Vermilyea.[41] In 1894 she was employed as a forewoman. The following year, her employment title once again reverted to machine operator. During the initial collection of data, this 1895 listing was not included in the appendix because the company was simply referred to as "Vermilyea Manufacturing co". This same year, Miss Nellie Brewer, at the same address as Lousie and John, was also employed as an operator for Vermilyea. In spite of the fact that a number of family members were named, and were living in Toronto during a census year, a search through the LAC census holdings provided no listing for the Brewers. The only census

[37] 1891 Census of Canada, Ontario, District 119, Toronto West, St. Andrew's Ward, p. 83.
[38] *Toronto City Directory for 1891*, 783.
[39] *Toronto City Directory for 1890*, (Toronto: R.L. Polk and Co., 1890): 709.
[40] *Toronto City Directory for 1891*, 372.
[41] *Toronto City Directory for 1890*, 493.

inclusion for Louise/a Brewer in Toronto was in 1921, who lived in Parkdale and was employed as a forewoman. [42] This clue in the census is confirmed by the 1921 city directory, which stated that she was a forewoman at the Eclipse Whitewear co., and boarded at 49 Fermanagh.[43] She was 45 years old in 1921, so it is possible that this was the Louisa Brewer in question, as she would have been 14 years old at the time of her first appearance in the directory. If this was the Louise/a Brewer who was once an employee of the Vermilyea Co., by 1921 she had never married and continued to earn wages to support herself, challenging the narrative that women and girls only worked to fill time before marriage.

Other women never reached the rank of forewoman, but were employed in other areas, and before factory reform in 1886, were often young. Isabella Ross, for example, had a long career working for both Crompton's and The Corset Speciality Co., over the course of a decade. Her sister May was also employed in corset making. The Ross family, comprised of five daughters and one son, were from Ontario and were of Irish descent. As they were born in Canada, their Irish heritage did not greatly affect their lives or careers, as Canadian-born workers dominated the needle-trades at this time.[44] Isabella demonstrates one of the difficulties encountered while using historic documents to verify information. In the city directories she is named "Isabella" (1894), "Bella" (1897), "Ella" (1905-1906) and the mis-type, "Della" (1898, 1895). Isabella's career began at age 14, in 1894 and she boarded with her sister May at 105 Borden, in the Annex neighbourhood between College and Harbord, which was just as middle to upper class then as it is now.[45] May was nine years her senior, and according to the 1901 census, and had worked as a

[42] 1921 Census of Canada, Ontario, District No. 113, Parkdale, Enumeration Sub-District No. 21, p. 3, Dwelling 22, Family 30.
[43] *Toronto City Directory for 1921*, (Toronto: Might Directories Ltd., 1921): 600.
[44] Steedman, 22.
[45] *Toronto City Directory for 1894*, 1264 and 1263.

tailoress.[46] A tailoress was among the "skilled" needle-trades, and given that stay making was originally a job for tailors, this profession may reflect corset making. It is likely that May, who was employed at Crompton's, aided her younger sister who was then legally of age to work in factories, with securing employment. After 1898 Isabella was not listed as employed in the corset trade, however both she and May were listed as tailoresses, until 1905, when she was employed as a clerk at the Corset Specialty Co. May continued to be employed as a tailoress. Records do not further reveal the trajectories of the Ross sisters. Attempts to locate marriage records were unsuccessful, though their skills and long careers likely ensured ongoing employment in their field.

The Kenny sisters were also employed in factory work, albeit not always as seamstresses. Annie and Elizabeth resided with their widowed father, William, who immigrated to Canada from Ireland in 1873, and was employed as a letter carrier.[47] The sisters were both born in Ontario, in 1875 and 1878 respectively. Their mother died at an unknown date. They first appeared as corset makers in the city directories in 1894.[48] The following year, and in 1902 and 1903 Annie was simply listed as "dressmaker".[49] In 1897, she was employed as a packer at Crompton's. There is a large gap in the directory between 1903 and 1908 during which Annie was not present. However, in 1909 she was employed as a clerk at Crompton's along with her younger sister Elizabeth, who had not appeared in the directory prior to this. William Kenny died in 1912 at age 75. After this, the trail for Annie and Elizabeth is difficult to follow, as the home they shared at 41 Anderson, which ran east and west north of Queen St., between McCaul and University was no longer occupied by William and his daughters. This is a case in which one of the members of

[46] 1901 Census of Canada, Ontario, District 129, East York, Sub-District H, No. 61, p. 9 dwelling 61, family 66.
[47] 1901 Census of Canada, Ontario, District 118, Toronto West, Sub-District B, No. 14, p. 7, dwelling 79, family 87.
[48] *Toronto City Directory for 1894*, 956.
[49] Toronto City Directory for 1895, (Toronto: J.M. Might, 1895): 565, 649, 879, 1902, 1903.

this family had a long career, yet the only key to locating her in the sources was dependent on her father's address. Annie Kenny is also an interesting case, because based on the information in the directory, her career at Crompton's did not include sewing. She worked as a clerk and packer but is never specifically employed in the manufacturing process. The only source which may indicate any skill in needlework was the 1901 census, which enumerated her as a machine operator. The census is generally known as a document that is both classist and sexist in the collection of data.[50] For the 1901 census, enumerators were given instructions to complete specific information regarding the kinds of labour that was done, if a person declared they were an employee rather than self-employed, or if their work included factory work, however there were some problems with clarity between designation of work or job titles.[51] It is possible that when completing the census, Annie stated that she worked at the Crompton's factory, which the enumerator assumed meant as a machine operator, since she was a woman, and the pervasive sexist attitudes led to the conclusion that she could not have been employed in white collar work.

The Currans are another example of multiple family members employed at the same factory, for an extended period of time. They are also an example of the network of relations that women often relied on in order to obtain factory work. In many cases older girls trained their younger female family members at work.[52] The network was especially important for newcomers to Canada, who experience language barriers in attempting to gain employment. Though they did not have the language barrier, they were a large family headed by their Irish immigrant father, Bernard, a shoe maker. The early years of their lives were spent outside of Toronto, namely in

[50] Peter Baskerville and Eric Sager, "Finding the Workforce in the 1901 Census of Canada", *Social History/ Histoire Sociale* 28, no. 56 (1995), 522.
[51] Baskerville and Sager, 531.
[52] Steedman, 18.

Adjala[53] and Barrie[54], before setting in Toronto in 1886.[55] Bernard and his wife Catherine had nine children: Thomas, James, Anne, Matilda, Francis, Catherine, Teresa, Minnie, Ambrose. In 1891, two young children, Minnie and Annie were also enumerated with the Curran family. The matriarch, Catherine, is not enumerated in the family census after 1871, however, there was a woman of the same name, of a similar age, counted among the inmates of the Toronto asylum in 1891 and 1901. Searches for medical records to confirm if this was the Curran matriarch proved inconclusive, beyond the statement of the census that she was of unsound mind.

The children were all employed in one capacity or another, likely to assist their father in caring for the large family. Two of the daughters, Kate and Matilda, were employed as corset makers for between 15 and 18 years. In the 1891 census, Kate was enumerated as a corset maker, and Matilda, a dressmaker. Their first appearance in the directory was in 1894 as corset makers for the FM Holmes Corset Co.[56] They remained in this employment and at the family home at 46 Arthur until 1895, when Bernard died at age 55, of Bright's disease, a kidney ailment, which he had been suffering from for ten years.[57] In 1896, five of the Curran children moved to 176 Markham, near Bathurst and Dundas, which was listed in the residential directory under James Curran. Katy and Matilda continued to work for Holmes, although by then her company had become the Corset Specialty Co. This year they were joined by Caroline and Nellie Curran, also at this address, though census information does not provide details about the relation to the family.

[53] 1871 Census of Canada, Ontario, District 40, Cardwell, Sub-District D, Adjala, p. 48, dwelling 160, family 160.
[54] 1881 Census of Canada, Ontario, District No. 139, Sub-District Barrie, p 14, dwelling 63, family 63.
[55] *Toronto City Directory for 1886*, 370.
[56] *Toronto City Directory for 1894*, 679.
[57] Schedule C: Deaths, County of York, Division of Toronto, 1895.

They moved house once again in 1897, down the street to 149 Markham, this time the residential listing shows Annie Curran as the head of the household. Katie and Matilda were enumerated simply as "operator" with no specific employer that year, however, for the next twelve years after this, their employer was consistently listed as the Corset Specialty Co, consistently as "operator" or "machine operator". The Currans likely experienced the importance of familial connections in order to gain employment, as well as the experience of many Toronto residents, in many family members earning a wage to contribute to their needs, but also that women's employment was not always transitory.

The expected trajectory of paid female employment in the nineteenth century was that women worked for short periods of time, as a means of earning some pocket money prior to marriage.[58] Kate and Matilda Curran demonstrate not only an initial familial need to assist in supporting a large family, but also an absent mother. Once the family aged and moved, Kate and Matilda remained employed by Fanny Holmes for over a decade. The census provided insight into the wages they earned there. The 1891 census does not provide this information, but the 1901 stated that they both earned $100. This was two-thirds of the total income for the home of $300. On the same page of the census, their neighbour, another woman worked as a book-keeper for $150, and male neighbours earned $600 as a carpenter, and $200 as a tailor. No marriage records could be located for either, and there are no census listings for either woman in 1911.

Miss Eliza Douglas was another long-term employee of the Corset Specialty Co., however, unlike the Currans, she was not a corset maker or machine operator. Her first position was in 1897 as a saleslady.[59] Both the sales room and the workspace were located at the same address,

[58] Frager and Patrias, 11.
[59] *Toronto City Directory for 1897*, 647.

though, as with Vermilyea, some saleswomen were canvassers, selling door-to-door. It is not clear which of these sales positions Eliza held. She was also employed as a clerk and a bookkeeper. She was not only an employee of Fannie Holmes, but she also lodged at the same address as Fannie, 246 Shaw St., just south of Dundas, near what is now Trinity Bellwoods Park, and then was the site of Trinity College.[60] Their home was nearly four kilometers away from any of the locations of the Corset Speciality Co. Eliza resided at this address for two years before Fannie. This home was in the residential listing with Oliver St. John, a boiler inspector, as the head of the household.[61] Fannie and Eliza resided at the same address until 1906. Similar to the workplace loyalty demonstrated by the Curran sisters, the fact that Eliza resided with Fanny, and worked in the office of her company, speaks to the environment that Fanny must have cultivated with her business.

The preceding stories challenge the nineteenth century rhetoric of female employment as positions that were extensions of domestic duties, and prove that roles held by women in factories extended beyond needle-work. While certainly many of the women above were machine operators, these stories also include sales ladies, office employees and supervisory positions such as forewoman. They also display a range of domestic situations, which also challenges the ideology of girls living with their families, then getting married. Many of the women did live with their families, but chose to not marry, either at all, or until later in life, and remained living with their siblings. In some of the examples, like Minnie Frost, the women disappear from the sources, possibly an indication that they got married, or simply moved out of Toronto. This disappearance creates a problem in searching for women in archival sources, as

[60] *Toronto City Directory for 1899,* 557.
[61] *Toronto City Directory for 1899*, (Toronto: J.M. Might, 1899): 791.

names changed after marriage, a problem not faced when researching men.[62] Unless a marriage license can be located, it cannot be ascertained if women continued working after marriage, or if they settled into their roles as the angel of the domestic realm. Regardless, these women provide a sample that demonstrates the essentialist nature of women's work and living arrangements as understood by the moral right in their time.

Factory reform

During the late nineteenth century, Canada's primary means of revenue was from agriculture, mining, and fishing, with a very small manufacturing industry, especially when compared to England and the United States. The horrific experiences of British factory workers were never experienced on the same scale in Canada, as Britain had a half-century head start in industry,[63] though Canadian factories were not innocent of abuses. The rapid growth of industrial capitalism brought the introduction of steam and electric powered machines, intense labour processes, higher levels of supervision and discipline, sweated production, and the introduction of women and children into the industrial labour force in large numbers.[64] In 1899, Anne Marion McLean, one of the first female sociologists in America, wrote that between 1871 and 1891, the number of people employed at manufacturing establishments in Canada rose from 187,942 in 1871 to 370,256 in 1891, with a population growth from 3,635,024 in 1871 to 4,833,239 in 1891. That is a 25% increase in population but double the employees.[65] Of the employees in 1891, 70,280

[62] Carole Gerson. "Locating Female Subjects in the Archives", *Working in Women's Archives: Researching Women's Private Literature and Archival Documents* Marlene Kadar ed. (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier Press, 2006), 15.
[63] McLean, 173.
[64] Eric Tucker, "Making the Workplace 'Safe' In Capitalism: The Enforcement of Factory Legislation in Nineteenth Century Ontario", *Labour/Le Travail*, 21 (Spring 1988), 47.
[65] McLean, 173.

(19%) of these were women, and 7,076 (1.9%) were girls under the age of sixteen.[66] The vast majority of these were in Ontario, specifically 32,835 (8.8%) women and 2,482 (0.67%) girls.[67] Twenty percent of the Canadian industrial workforce in 1891 was comprised of women in Ontario, and though she does not cite Toronto specifically, this is still a significant number considering the ideology of the angel of the domestic realm.

Factory legislation to regulate work hours, safety and remuneration was initially attempted in Ontario in the 1870s, however it was not until the 1880s that practical enforcement was finally taken.[68] Factory legislation began in Ontario in 1884 (though it was not enacted until 1886)[69] with the Ontario Factory Act, and continued to be a site of struggle in spite of the fact that it was the most extensive legislation of its kind in all of North America.[70] This legislation only applied to factories, and excluded home workshops, and small factories employing fewer than twenty people.[71] Of the three provisions in the Factory Act, one of them was specifically created to address the needs of women and children employees. These laws indicated that female factory inspectors might be appointed at the discretion of the lieutenant-governor. The first female inspector, Margaret Carlyle, was not appointed until 1895. She presided over factories that employed female-only workforces, and factories that employed women and children in mixed company, including garment factories, and typical of the period, she earned half the amount of her male counterparts.[72] This first set of laws established a standard for work hours in the week. This was set at either ten hours per day, or 60 hours per week, which gave an allowance for longer days during the week for a shortened Saturday. Employers were required to give children,

[66] McLean, 174.
[67] McLean, 174.
[68] Tucker, 48.
[69] Tucker, 49.
[70] McLean, 179.
[71] Tucker, 49.
[72] Tucker, 76.

girls and women no less than one hour for meals, though this time was not included in the ten hour work day (the definition of children was persons under 14 years, and young girls were 14 to 16 years).[73] Overtime was at the discretion of an inspector, depending on the urgency of trade, as long as girls and women did not begin their work days before 6:00am, or continue past 9:00pm.[74] Regarding the sanitary conditions of workplaces, factories were required to be kept free from effluvia from any source, and equipped with proper ventilation. Factories were not to be overcrowded and had to provide separate "closets and other conveniences" for men and women, which presumably referred to separate, gendered restroom and washing facilities.[75] There were also regulations for protection against fire and accident. According to McLean, there were only seven accidents in factories involving women in Ontario before 1896 out of the total 174 reported, which McLean claims is due to the type of light factory work in which women were employed.[76] Women were not employed in rolling mills or foundries, for example, which were likely to have higher rates of accidents. Before the legislation was implemented in 1886, there was an accident at the Crompton factory involving a young lady. According to an article in *The Globe*, the unnamed sewing machine operator somehow managed to get her foot entwined in the machinery, though they do not describe what kind of machinery it was. Her leg was not broken in the accident, however the newspaper made sure to note that the sole of her shoe was ripped off: "It was a very narrow escape".[77] The enforcement of this protective legislation was difficult, especially in the garment trade, due to the prevalence of out-sourcing, and the limited number of factory inspectors. There were only four inspectors in Ontario to deal with the 266,716 workers, or to parse it down further, the one female inspector looked after the interests of 35,317

[73] Tucker, 49.
[74] McLean, 178.
[75] McLean, 179.
[76] McLean, 179.
[77] "Accident", *The Globe*, (Toronto, ON), Feb. 11, 1881, p. 6

operatives.[78] The main crux of McLean's paper rested with her argument that Canadian factories needed to implement more inspectors and prevent factory abuses before they occurred, rather than simply reporting them after the fact. McLean posited that it was "easier to protect strong women than to care for wrecked ones", and that increasing the number of female inspectors was necessary as "the greatest trials and hardships of a factory woman's life can be told only to one of her own sex".[79] Certainly it would have been difficult for a woman of the nineteenth century to report to a male inspector about the misbehaviours of licentious male co-workers, or the whippings and other corporal punishments that were alleged to have taken place as discipline for mistakes.[80] In 1882, the allegations of factory abuses were revealed in a series of letters to the *Daily News*. A forewoman at an unnamed corset factory responded to the letters, in which she admitted that yes, she did whip the girls, but only when it was deserved. She stated "They (ie: the young girls at the factory) are a rough lot, and the fear of bodily pain is the best way to get the work out of them".[81] It was this abusive treatment of the workforce which made the factory reform necessary.

The press and general public criticized the effectiveness of the inspectors, which is not surprising based on their workload. The most serious critique was that inspectors refused to charge factory owners for infringement of the factory bylaws "in order to avoid the untenable spectacle of the state criminalizing the behaviour of the most powerful social class".[82] Again, these four inspectors were not simply enforcing the Factory Act in Toronto, but policing the whole province of Ontario. This particular critique, however, is not unfounded, regardless of their workload. In twelve years, between 1888 and 1900, only 35 charges were ever laid against

[78] McLean, 179.
[79] McLean 180.
[80] Burr, 163.
[81] Burr, 164.
[82] Tucker, 57.

factory owners.[83] The number of factory inspectors did not increase over that 12 year period, in spite of rapid industrial development.

As the Minister of Labour, MacKenzie King led the middle-class reformers who also expressed an interest in the rights of female workers. These reformers were often evangelical Christians, who were concerned that the low wages women earned in factories might force girls into occasional prostitution, and that the strenuous labour, or poor working environments might affect their reproductive capabilities.[84] He argued for factory reform in the 1890s, though these charges were based on Christian principles of helping the poor and underprivileged, rather than that of protecting the rights of workers.[85] In the 1890s, he discovered the plight of women working in garment factories, environments which he referred to as "hell".[86] From this experience he helped to institute changes in wage, hours and sanitary conditions of women making postal bags and uniforms. The Victorian ideals of family and femininity framed female employees as a threat to the moral and physical foundations of society.[87] The perceived delicate nature of women, and the legitimate delicate nature of children, made them more vulnerable to the dangers of factory work. Reformers perceived the strain on the body, and the effects of repetitious work on the psyche as threats to the reproductive capabilities of women, not to mention to the moral decline of men and women working side by side in the factories.[88] For Mackenzie King, reforming factory work was about protecting morality, rather than making the workplace safer.

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[83] Tucker, 59.
[84] Strange, 23.
[85] Frager and Patrias, 94.
[86] Ibid.
[87] See, for example Elizabeth Langland. *Nobody's Angels: Middle-class Women and Domestic Ideology in Victorian Culture*, (Ithica: Cornell University Press, 1995).; Yaffa Draznin. *Victorian London's Middle-Class Housewife: What She Did All Day*, (London: Greenwood Press, 2001); Eric Trudgill. *Madonnas and Magdalens: The Origins and Development of Victorian Sexual Attitudes in Literature and Society*, (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1976).
[88] Tucker, 48.

Lizzie Bray is an example of a corset maker whose story upholds the moralistic concerns of the middle-class reformer, and embodies the trope of the tragic seamstress, a character was made popular in art literature in starting in the mid-nineteenth century.[89] From Thomas Hood's poem "Song of the Shirt" (1843), to the character of Mimi in Puccini's opera *La Bohème* (1896), the poor wages and living conditions that affected needle-workers were brought the attention of the middle class.[90] These stories often involved a young woman who plied needle and thread, and either over-worked herself to death or was tempted into prostitution or otherwise "fell". Though the story of Lizzie Bray deviates from this trope in that she was not lured to prostitution, she did nonetheless portray the fallen seamstress. Born in Ohio in 1869, she moved to Toronto with her sister after they were orphaned when she was 13. They moved in with their aunt, Mary Anne Parsons, at her 69 Walton St. home, where she also rented rooms to boarders. This street is located west of Yonge, between Gerrard and Elm, and had a number of rooming houses, and families of labourers, including dressmakers and butchers. By age 15 Lizzie and her sister were employed at Crompton's.[91] It was this living arrangement that resulted in Lizzie's death in December, 1887. She had been engaged in a relationship with one of the boarders in her aunt's home, John Gamble, a varnisher. Through this relationship, Lizzie became pregnant, which both she and John attempted to hide. When hiding the pregnancy failed, Lizzie told her aunt that she was attacked by a strange man while picnicking. John tried to rent a room with her, posing as her brother as an attempt to save her reputation, and created a story about being abandoned by a

[89] See: Beth Harris, ed. *Famine and Fashion: Needlewomen in the Nineteenth Century*. (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2006).
[90] These stories are exemplified by the 1851 investigative resporting of Henry Mayhew and *London Labour and the London Poor*, in which he interviewed the working people of London, including seamstresses, giving the middle and upper class residence of the city a disturbing view into the difficulties of the lives of the people who worked to provide their comfort.
[91] Strange, 70.

villainous fiancé.[92] They sought to procure an abortion through the underground channels available;[93] however, failing that, John performed the abortion himself, which resulted in Lizzie's death.[94] After her death, *The Globe* reported curious circumstances which cast suspicion on John, who had disappeared. He was described as a married man, who was separated from his wife.[95] Both her doctor, Dr. Ferguson, who had been treating her for natural ailments, and the attending mortician did not initially suspect an unnatural death. The cause of death was signed off as peritonitis, a poisoning of the blood caused by abdominal abrasions. However, at the insistence of Lizzie's aunt the doctors looked into signs for abortion.[96] John Gamble was located, tried and sentenced to death by hanging, on March 6, 1888.[97] Lizzie and John are unfortunate examples of the social struggles faced by the working class, but their individual case study also retells the narrative of the fallen seamstress, and elite (middle-class/reform) narratives arguing that working girls as a group needed to be reformed.

The story of Mrs. Susan Crawford exemplifies the need to work to contribute to family expenses as primary wage earner due to family need. She was born Susan Bonesteel in 1859, and married 23 year old Duncan Crawford in 1879 in Caledon, Ontario.[98] They resided there until they moved to Toronto in 1892, where Duncan was employed as a labourer. The directories indicate that Susan was the primary wage earner for the family, as Duncan himself was seldom listed, possibly due to illness. In 1892 Susan was enumerated as a dressmaker.[99] In 1894[100] she was

[92] Strange, 70.
[93] These channels included druggists providing abortificants, or performing abortions in back rooms. Midwives and doctors also provided these services at a cost. Strange, 69.
[94] Strange, 70.
[95] "Suspicious Death of Lizzie Bray", *The Globe*, (Toronto, ON), Dec. 21, 1887, p8.
[96] "Lizzie Bray", *The Globe*, (Toronto, ON), Jan. 4, 1888, p3.
[97] "Gamble to be Hanged", *The Globe*, (Toronto, ON), Feb. 2, 1888, p5.
[98] Schedule B: Marriages, County of Peel, Division of Caledon, 1879, 200.
[99] *Toronto City Directory for 1892*, 683.
[100] It is not known if Duncan was enumerated this year, as the page Duncan would have appeared on is missing.

counted as employed by Crompton's.[101] It is not known if Duncan was enumerated this year, as the directory is missing the page on which he would have appeared. Another employee of Crompton's in this year, who was recorded as residing at the same address, provided an indication of Susan's maiden name. Miss Olive Bonesteel lodged at the same address as Susan and Duncan, as did Susan's mother Almira, at 96 Gladstone Ave, a house listed in the Residential pages under Almira's name.[102] The following year, the whole family moved to 61 Shirley, a lateral move. For the next two years, Susan was employed by Crompton's, until 1899 when she was no longer listed by employment, simply as "wid. Duncan", which means Duncan died at age 43. Though she continued to appear in the directory under the surname Crawford, she reverted to her maiden name in the 1901 census, and did not have employment listed, though her mother and sister, Olive, were both enumerated as working as furriers.[103] From this census it is also known that Susan and Duncan had five children, four sons and one daughter, born between 1882 and 1889.[104] This means that Susan was working for Crompton's when her youngest child was five years old, thus contradicting the stereotype of women leaving their positions for the sake of raising a family. Susan died in 1936, and on her death certificate her trade was cited as "housewife", likely another example of the sexist and inaccurate interpretations of the lives of women by the census enumerators.

The stories of Lizzie Bray and Susan Crawford differ in every way, however they both represent moral problems that plagued factory workers and personify the social ills that reformers wished to fix. Lizzie was an example of what happened when working girls were not supervised in mixed company, an issue that moral reformers were greatly concerned about. Susan, on the other

[101] *Toronto City Directory for 1894*, 668.
[102] *Toronto City Directory for 1894*, 189.
[103] 1901 Census of Canada, Ontario, District 118, Toronto West, Sub-District B, No. 24, p. 9, dwelling 74, family 82.
[104] Ibid.

hand, was a married woman, but due to her circumstances, was required to earn wage to support her family. This undermined Duncan's ability to care for his family. The moral problem in her family was not with Susan, but rather, Duncan. Even though, as a labourer, his wage was probably not substantial enough to care for his family of five. It is also possible that Duncan's health was chronically poor, as she was widowed at 40. Whatever the reasons, it was, in the eyes of the moral right, the husband and father's position to financially care for the family, allowing the wife and mother to stay home. Like the stories of the other factory workers above, Susan and Lizzie prove that women's lives and work were not as simple as some of the middle class reformers imagined.

Gendered Division of Labour

Large numbers of women worked in the needle trades in part because of the perceived feminine nature of the work, but because employers paid them less than male employees, companies were able to earn higher profits by undercutting a large portion of their work force.[105] This difference in wage is exemplified by a newspaper article about an examination by the Labour Commission in 1888 of the Manager of the Crompton Company. Here, the manager, John Walker, stated that his skilled workmen earned $15 per week, and the best ladies earn $5 to $8 per week.[106] The wording of Walker's statement implies that there were female employees, who were not his "best", who earned less than this. It was also assumed that women in the work force were temporary employees, single young women who earned wages prior to marriage for pin money, widows who relied on this income due to no longer having the financial support provided by a husband, or married women who needed employment while their husbands were ill or

[105] Frager and Patrias, 35,
[106] "Labour Commission", *The Globe* (Toronto, ON), Jan. 27, 1888, p 2.

themselves unemployed.[107] The exploitation of female employees as cheap and unskilled labour was also justified by the repeated middle-class rhetoric of separate spheres, where men were the wage earners, and women remained at home.[108]

Labour disruptions were also divided along gendered lines, not unlike the most famous garment strike in Toronto, the Eaton's strike of 1912, where women who stitched coat linings walked off the job after their roles were given to male colleagues, with no extra pay for the men.[109] From its founding in 1879, the Telfer Company was troubled by labour disputes. Women, including flossers, boners, stitchers, and laundry girls, often walked off the job to protest the reduction of wages.[110] In 1883, at the time of the above mentioned abuse of machine operators by forewomen, 60 female Telfer employees went on strike, again over reduced pay. This strike ended in their favour after two days, and they returned to work at their previous rate of pay.[111] In 1884, Telfer attempted to cut wages in half, from $1.20 per piece to 60 cents. According to the pro-labour newspaper *News*, this was the third time in six weeks that Telfer operators had walked out.[112] The penultimate strike was in June, 1888, when the operators deliberately chose the busy season to demand an increase in pay. Strikers used the newspapers to publicly shame Telfer and his paltry wages, which resulted in the dismissal of a forewoman, who Telfer accused of inciting job action. In addition to the wages complaints, the windows of the factory had been screwed shut in spite of the summer heat to prevent the girls from "flirting with the workmen in the newspaper office across the street".[113] The strike lasted ten days, and once again ended in the

[107] Frager and Patrias, 35.
[108] Burr, 126.
[109] Ruth Frager, "Sewing Solidarity: The Eaton's Strike of 1912", *Canadian Women's Studies/ Les Cahiers de la Femme* 7, no. 3 (1986).
[110] Burr, 166.
[111] Burr, 166.
[112] Burr, 166.
[113] Burr 168.

workers' favour, as well as their short-lived incorporation into the Knights of Labour union, a trade union which often supported needle trades. In 1890, the women of the Telfer plant went on strike for a final time, this time over Telfer's refusal to pay for extra work. Once again the newspaper took up their mantle and headlines cried about the "White slaves"[114][115] of the Telfer Company.[116] The stories of low wages and the middle classes' fear of the fallen factory girl mimicked Henry Mayhew's interviews in London in 1848.[117] Once again, this labour dispute ended in favour of the female employees, with Telfer agreeing to either pay the women for the extra work, or hire someone specifically for the task in question. They opted for the latter.[118]

Even the seemingly benevolent Crompton was not immune to labour disputes. In the 1880s, Crompton decided to move his operations to Berlin (now Kitchener), and to cut workers' pay in half. The workforce walked out in protest, which prompted the return of Crompton's operation to Toronto and the restoration of their wages.[119] In spite of this one strike, the girls of the Crompton factory were allowed to participate in company leisure time, such as the company sports teams. Amateur industrial leagues, complete with uniforms, regularly drew large crowds in Toronto.[120] Crompton's factory had teams in baseball and hockey, and their scores were regularly reported in newspapers. [121] Though they were provided these opportunities to blow off steam on the field,

[114] This term invokes the 1853 Chartist novel by George Reynolds, *The Seamstress; Or the White Slave of England*, which tells the story of a tragic and sickly needle-worker, trying to stay virtuous in spite of her workload and poverty. It also invoked the fears of urban life as young girls moved to urban centres to obtain paid employment. Tales of girls being duped by false promises of employment, and then sold into the white slave trade abounded by the turn of the century. See: Strange, 98.
[115] Strange, 98.
[116] Burr, 169.
[117] Taithe, 87. Mayhew interviewed a number of needle-workers in London to expose the low wages, and the need to turn to occasional prostitution to survive. "God, I was an honest woman, and had the price I was paid for my labour been such that I could get by a living by it, I would never have resorted to the streets for money".
[118] Burr, 169.
[119] Strange, 31.
[120] Strange, 203.
[121] *The Globe* (Toronto ON), Jun 8, 1903, p 9; May 22, 1905, p10; Jan 30, 1905, p8.

this was work sanctioned and supervised. It was a safe form of entertainment, where they were not labeled delinquents for enjoying amusements outside of working hours.[122]

The gendered division of labour often manifests in historic documents as a husband running a business, rather than his wife, as with the story of the Readings in Chapter 1. The story of Emma Purvis and William Loso is an example of reading documents with a critical eye toward who really ran the business. Emma Purvis, from Jackson City Michigan, married William Loso in Lambton, Ontario in 1888. William was born in Ontario to French parents.[123] In his youth, William was employed as a painter,[124] and commercial traveler.[125] They relocated to Toronto within a couple of years of being married, and were enumerated in both the 1891 census and the city directory. That year, Emma was not identified with a career, but William was enumerated as "corset manufacturer" in both sources.[126] In the directory he had a separate workplace from his home, a workshop in the fashionable and high-end shopping district[127] at 87 King W, and he boarded nearby at 68 Shuter.[128] This year, the directory also indicated that he had at least one person in his employ, Miss Lizzie Dulan, who was only employed for that one year. In 1893, William was still employed as a corset manufacturer, this time at 160 ½ King W, and was living there as well.[129] The story changed in 1896, however, as William was no longer listed with employment, but Emma was, as a corset maker for FM Holmes. They both lodged at 674 King W.[130] Emma continued to be employed by Holmes, and later at the Corset Specialty Co., as a

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[122] Strange, 133.
[123] Schedule B: Marriages, County of Lambton, Division of Sarnia, 1888, 279.
[124] 1881 Census of Canada, Ontario, District No. 119 Toronto West, Sub-District A, St. Georges Ward, p 6, dwelling B-4 28, family 11.
[125] Schedule B: Marriages, County of Lambton, Division of Sarnia, 1888, 279.
[126] 1891 Census of Canada, Ontario, District 119, Toronto West, Sub-District A, St. Georges Ward, p. 6, dwelling B-4 28, family 11.
[127] Eric Arthur. *Toronto: No Mean City* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003): 159.
[128] *Toronto City Directory for 1891*, 979.
[129] *Toronto City Directory for 1893*, 974.
[130] *Toronto City Directory for 1894*,1008.

forewoman, until 1900. During that time William worked as a canvasser for the newspaper *The World*,[131] and a traveller. After 1894 the couple lived separately at different residences, until 1897 when they shared the same address again. After this, William was no longer enumerated in the directories. The final time Emma was enumerated in the Toronto directory was 1900.[132] There is no indication of what happened to William and Emma. No death certificates for either were located in Canadian records. The listing for William as a corset maker, in spite of his previous and subsequent career as a commercial traveller combined with Emma's continuing career as a corset maker, point to the possibility that the original business on King St. was actually run by Emma. This complicates our understanding of the history of women's employment and business ownership, as being invisible behind a facade of male dominance.

Corset workers were not only employed by wholesale manufacturers and small shops. The largest department stores in Toronto also had corset makers in their employ. William Hall was one of the only two people, both men, in the data gathered from the directories who had the distinction of having the title "corset designer", though of course, there were many other people in Toronto who were designers, including Hanna Vermilyea. William's career began as a cutter for the Crompton Co., a career that spanned from 1890, until 1899, at which point he became a foreman. By 1900, William took the skills he had honed during his years at Cromptons and began his career at Eaton's, where he started as a cutter. The following year was the first time he had the title of corset designer.[133] He held this title on and off, sometimes being called a clerk, and other times a designer. His son, also named William Hall, resided at the same address, and was also a clerk for Eaton's. It was a stroke of genius for Eaton's to hire William for their corset

[131] *Toronto City Directory for 1895*, 932.
[132] *Toronto City Directory for 1900*, (Toronto: Might Directories, Ltd., 1900): 601.
[133] *Toronto City Directory for 1901*, 687.

department. Having worked as a cutter for Canada's largest corset company for so many years, he would have had intimate knowledge of the shapes of the pattern pieces, and working as a foreman he gained familiarity with the various jobs involved with corset manufacturing. If William did not bring designs with him to Eaton's, he certainly brought his knowledge.

Though my primary focus throughout this dissertation is to bring to light the existence and significance of a female economy, I cannot deny the presence of men and their work in Toronto's corset trade. However, both Williams present the problem of sexist contemporary sources. It is apparent that Emma was the corset maker behind Loso's front, but the enumerator for the directories listed William. It is also problematic that the only two "corset designers" in the sources were men. This harkens back to Chapter 1 and the tradition of stay-making as a male trade and an extension of tailoring. Certainly many of the women in these pages were designers and even held patents. But because of the prestige and skill associated with the title, the only corset "designers" were men. Historians have also taken these sources at face value, which has led to assumptions about women's involvement in the labour force.

Conclusion

During the process of selecting individuals to biography, the list of names changed. This was because even though the information from the directory looked enticing, there was often limited information available. Among these was Mrs. NC Dunning, who was an inspector for Vermilyea in 1891. In spite of this being a census year, no records were found. Not having her first name, or her husband's name, made it extremely difficult to move beyond the one sighting of her. Another, also at the Vermilyea, was Hester Leppington, who was a machine head in 1890. Women with unique names are often a blessing for historical research, but this was not the case

for locating Hester in the documents. The opposite was true for Mary Curran, who had a very common name, which led to the problem of locating her. It is not known if she was related to the Currans above, but their shared address made locating them in further sources easier. Even though Mary was a machine operator for Crompton's for over ten years, searches for her were inconclusive. The Kissock Family, Esther, Exie, and Nellie, worked for Crompton's for seven years, where Nellie held the position of forewoman. Even though their employment fell on a census year, searches for the surname "Kissock" through the LAC and the 1891 census did not yield these first names. The names Exie and Nellie also posed a problem. Diminutive versions of names were often used in one source, but not another, and both Nellie and Exie were both diminutives of several possible names. These are all problems in researching women in historical sources.

The small sample of workers whose stories were told above offers but a few examples of the hundreds of workers, and shows a segment of working-class life for women in Toronto. The majority of the young women were unmarried, living with their families or in lodging houses. It was common for working-class people in Toronto to lodge with another family or extended family in one house, with an elderly relative at the head.[134] Where income was declared for these workers, it is clear that they did not earn great wages. The employees described in this chapter also demonstrated the immigration patterns of the time, English, Irish, Scottish, American, and eventually German, though most were born in Canada.[135] However the collection of information also shows that not all women working in Toronto's corset trade worked at sewing machines. There were a number who worked in sales, or in clerical work, which are typically considered

[134] Goheen, 140.
[135] Frederick H. Armstrong. *A City in the Making: Progress, People and Perils in Victorian Toronto*, (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1988): 163.

masculine professions. Though many women clearly worked for only a short time, others established long careers, putting work before marriage, as seen in appendix B. It is noteworthy that the women who did get married did not do so all at the same stage of life, nor did it necessarily mean the end of their careers. The ages of marriage varied between late teens, and early 40s. Though the commonalities in many of their situations were clear, each of these women led their own unique life, and earned wages outside the home for reasons that are only known to them. The wages they earned contributed to their family lives, and to their own comforts, and perhaps allowed them to enjoy the growing retail sector in Toronto's core, and the amusements the city

Chapter 3: Selling Grace, Buying Comfort, Owning Elegance: Corset Retailing

The women of Toronto had a broad exposure to the sale of corsets, from department stores and national exhibition displays, to advertisements in newspapers, journals, and trade cards. The options of styles available to them were equally large, with not only local companies to choose from, but also a vast array of companies and models from the United States, England, and Europe. The retailers and wholesalers of Toronto had the not insignificant task of convincing customers that their corsets were superior to their competitors'. Advertisements included sales and gimmicks, such as live models and experts to lure customers, and exhibitions displayed the latest in corset technology. Among all this fanfare, was an underlying theme that choosing the correct corset gave women the power to transform themselves into either a mythological beauty or a dowdy frump. The choice, it was implied, was in the hands of the consumer. By entering the market, and through the use of advertisements, the corset was no longer simply a utilitarian device, rather it "change(d) into a thing which transcends sensuousness".[1] Corsets are a prime example of the power of the commodity fetish. The garments are imbued with the power of transformation, both literally through physically shaping the body, and metaphorically, even metaphysically, holding the power to create the feminine ideal out of any woman. One of the aspects which makes commodity fetish so powerful is the distance and invisibility of the hands which produced it. As this chapter will demonstrate, the labourers who made the corsets are seldom mentioned in advertising materials. All the praise falls upon the women selling them to help the customer create her perfect self, and the consumer in making the correct purchase. Even in the existing texts on Toronto labour and corset history, the makers of this product are largely

[1] Marx, 163.

neglected, save for a brief reference to a strike here, or a murder there. Though not unique to Toronto, corsets, like other beauty products, were elevated to a magical item, and this is largely due to the advertising and retailing techniques that were used.

This chapter begins with a history of print advertising, and challenges the existing scholarship about corset advertisements. A detailed content analysis of these from the major Toronto producers provides a foundation for the arguments against Steele and Summer's established theories about the hidden symbolism of advertisements, particularly as they relate to sex and male gaze, and that corset advertisements in Toronto periodicals were not nearly as erotically charged as those described in either of their texts. The importance of patents in corset advertising is also discussed, with examples drawn from newspapers and Supreme Court documents. The uniquely nineteenth century phenomenon of advertising cards and their purpose in trade and hobby scrapbooking is illustrated by extant cards for Toronto companies. This is followed by an examination of the production of national identity through factory production is detailed through the importance of industrial exhibitions, and their use in advertising, as well as a gate-way to sales. This chapter concludes with a discussion of corset retailing, and examines the roles of female employees and the idea of occasional prostitution. Further content analyses of advertisements for retailers are included to identify what was available in Toronto stores in terms of size, colour, make, brands and price. And finally, the role of the corset fitter is discussed, including how they assisted women in navigating changing corset trends, and how to wear a corset in the most comfortable and healthy way.

Advertising

Advertising was in its infancy in the nineteenth century. The American advertising trade began in earnest in the 1840s, however, Canada's began twenty years later, and until 1900, was always slightly behind the progress of American industry.[2] The rise in production mid-century created equality in supply and demand, and the novel problem of competitive selling in an economy of abundance.[3] Before advertisements in publications, businesses used pamphlets, handbills and signs,[4] and trends in dress were shown through fashion plates. It was not until the mid-1870s that companies began buying space in periodicals.[5] Advertising goods in the late nineteenth century became an essential business practice, as an increase in industrial expansion meant more products, which meant more choices for consumers, and advertisements were the primary means of informing consumers why one product was superior to another.[6] Researching advertising in Canada presents a unique problem, in that, according to historian Russell Johnson, advertising agencies and publishers did not keep records of their trade as rigorously as they did in America, or even Britain.[7]

Corsets were among one of the earliest clothing items featured in print advertising. Summers and Steele both discuss corset advertising in their books, both analysing the imagery used. These included themes of classical mythology, biblical allegories, and the growing interest in women's sports and activity outside the home. They also featured themes that appealed to a new woman,

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[2] Russell Johnson. Selling Themselves: The Emergence of Canadian Advertising. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001): 15.
[3] Stephen Fox. *The Mirror Makers: A History of American Advertisements* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1984): 22.
[4] Fox, 28.
[5] Fox 23.
[6] Church, 627.
[7] Johnson, 15.

who was more concerned with education than her figure,[8] and marketed to the growing intellectual liberation of women. In this sense, many different women could see themselves represented through advertisements.

Summers uses post-modern, feminist theorists to unpack the meaning of corset advertisements, in order to "dismantle prevailing perceptions of them as quaint quasi-erotic trivia, and recasts them as significant documents of social history from which attitudes toward sexuality in particular can be gleaned", marking these advertisements as a "major forerunner to the sexual objectification of women in the public realm of the twentieth century".[9] The popular depiction in the nineteenth century of women as the weaker sex certainly contributed to this sexual objectification of women, and has left a legacy through goods that are advertised to women today. The women in corset advertisements, especially after 1900, were quite thin, and as with advertisements today which have affected women in a negative way and caused an increase in eating disorders and cosmetic surgery based on the unrealistic images that are consumed, they communicated messages of unobtainable perfection promised through the purchase of specific products, in this case, corsets.[10] The advertisements were filled with the simulacrum of human experience,[11] which included a range of images, or simply blocks of texts, both which played specific roles in the psychology of advertising. Early advertisements featured simple line drawings of the garment, uninhabited, floating in a negative space. Summers proposed that this was for the sake of public decency, but continues to suggest that the corset on its own is suggestive and revealing, "accentuating the curves of the body".[12] Advertisements, however, were in their infancy, and displaying the garment in isolation was a simple means of showing the

[8] Summers 174.
[9] Summers, 173.
[10] Bordo, 104.
[11] Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacara and Simulation* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994): 88.
[12] Summers, 178.

product, and this method was used for a variety of goods. Also, showing the curves of the body was a result of wearing a corset, and these were still visible when a woman was fully clothed, a state which certainly had its own erotic implications. Summers is creating a no-win situation for women, where they were overly sexualized simply by the image of the garment, and overly sexualized while fully clothed. Summers also implies that though the advertisements were intended for women, they were often in periodicals that were read by both sexes, and would be viewed by men. She then argues, simply by virtue of this fact, that the advertisements were printed for the benefit of male gaze.[13] In spite of this mixed audience, or perhaps also for the enjoyment of male viewers, these advertisements sometimes included more than one subject, projecting a solely homosocial, female environment, a world without men.[14] In the advertisements which I discussed in this chapter, some were printed in journals intended for female-only consumption (such as *The Canadian Home Journal*, *Ladies Magazine*, and *The Delineator*), and in newspapers read by men and women. The implication of male gaze, as posited by Summers, invokes the trope discussed by Jane Juffers of men utilizing *Victoria's Secrets* catalogues as a surrogate for pornography; a catalogue which was published for the consumption of female consumers, but widely enjoyed by men.[15] Relevant to corset advertising, this comparison to *Victoria's Secret*, Juffers suggests that "Bringing together the pornographic with the everyday in a format geared toward female pleasure and autonomy suggests a certain potential for deconstructing the private-public division that has worked to contain female sexuality within a traditional definition of home."[16] This deconstruction is particularly relevant

[13] Summers, 179.
[14] Summers, 178.
[15] Jane Juffer. "A Pornographic Femininity? Telling and Selling Victoria's (Dirty) Secrets", *Social Text*, no. 48 (Autumn, 1996), 31.
[16] Juffer, 31.

within the nineteenth century, where the ideas of gendered public and private spheres were strictly adhered to, though disrupted and challenged as the period progressed.[17]

The advertisements that will be analyzed in this chapter come from a number of Toronto-based periodicals, newspapers, and the city directory, and show a progression in the art of advertising, from the early days of the 1870s to the 19-teens. The advertisements in periodicals were for corset companies advertising their goods directly, but also for retailers indicating to customers the brands that they carried, as well as upcoming sales. These were located through digital searches in the directories, the "Early Canadiana Online" database, and the Proquest newspaper database. In total, approximately 130 corset advertisements for wholesalers were analyzed, and nearly 400 advertisements for retailers. Two advertising flyers were also obtained through archives and museums, and advertising cards through the Toronto Archives, the Toronto Public Library, and private collectors. Though many corset companies in Toronto had at least one advertisement during these years, Crompton's, as Toronto's largest, and longest lasting manufacturer, had the highest volume of advertisements, and provide many interesting points of discussion, both for implications of managing business and

Figure 3-1Advertisement for Crompton's Celebrated Adjustable Corset. From *The Globe,* October 2, 1877.

[17] See Martha Vicinus, *A Widening Sphere: Changing Roles of Victorian Women* (London: Routledge, 1977).

competition, but also for the psychology of advertisements.

The earliest advertisement in the periodicals located for this study was for Crompton's, in 1877 in *The Globe* (Fig. 3-1). This advertisement, featuring an image typical for the time, was on a page filled with other advertisements, for banks, haberdashers, dry goods, pen sellers, grocers, brewers, industrial equipment, sailing lines; a cross-section of economic life in Toronto in 1877.[18] The Compton's advertisement was the most elaborate on the page, and featured a simple line drawing of a curvaceous young woman, with one arm behind her back, and the other resting her hand near her collarbone, looking out of the frame. She was wearing a necklace, chemise and skirt, and other than the accentuated waist and shoulders, no part of her anatomy, in terms of erogenous zones, were exposed or enhanced. The text announced the "celebrated adjustable corset", which was shown in the image as lacing at the hip, and included such lines as "this corset fits the body, not the body the corset".[19] This quote implies that other companies or corsets are uncomfortable, and Crompton's has the best fit. It notes the Canadian manufacture, indicates that each corset was stamped with the company name and patent number, and warns customers to beware

Figure 3-2 Advertisement for Crompton's, celebrating domestic production. From *The Globe*, August 10, 1878.

[18] *The Globe*, (Toronto, ON), Oct. 2, 1877, p3.
[19] *The Globe*, (Toronto, ON), Oct. 2, 1877, p3.

of imitations. Another advertisement with similar text was also printed in *The Globe*, but did not feature the image of the woman.[20]

The image of the woman was used again in 1878 (Fig. 3-2), which stated "Ladies support Home Manufacture", certainly a play on words regarding corsets as support garments, and warned again about imitations.[21] This theme of promoting home manufacture was one which they continued through 1878. Another without the image of the woman, stated "Every lady that buys the Crompton Corset helps to employ our own people". British economist Alfred Marshall once wrote "your body is part of the national capital"[22] and this advertisement puts this literally, by placing national capital directly on the bodies of Canadian women. By this point Canada was just ten years past Confederation, and eager to be an independent nation without relying on goods and services from England and America. At the time of this advertisement, Crompton employed 70 operators, manufacturing four different styles, allegedly producing 420 corsets per day.[23]

Crompton's frequently included patents in their advertising. They owned the Canadian patent rights to an alternative form of boning called Coraline, made from the Mexican ixtle plant. This boning was more flexible than whale bone and steel, and did not rust or break. In 1879, Frederick Crompton severed his business ties with Andrew Telfer. He moved The Crompton Corset Co. to a larger factory, leaving Telfer, and the newly founded "Telfer Corset Co." in their original location. This messy break-up manifested itself publicly through the use of advertisements and subtle attacks therein. An advertisement from 1882 (Fig. 3-3) in *The Globe* shows Crompton's and Telfer advertisements positioned side-by-side, and also introduces Coraline. They claimed that because of the popularity of the Coraline bones, their competition had resorted to the "use of

[20] *The Globe*, (Toronto, ON), Oct. 30, 1877, p3.
[21] *The Globe*, (Toronto, ON), May 18, 1878, p5.
[22] David Reisman. *The Economics of Alfred Marshall* (New York: Routledge, 2013): 33.
[23] *The Globe*, (Toronto, ON), Sept. 21, 1878, p 5.

such poor substitutes as reed and cord, which are equally useless in attaining the desired end".[24] The advertisement ended with a notice, which stated that The Crompton Corset Co. had obtained a patent for Coraline, and that under the Patent Act of 1872, "no other person or Company can make, or sell, or import for sale, the said patented article in any part of the Dominion of Canada".[25] The long advertisement ends with the statement "Any infringement of the Patent will be promptly and rigidly dealt with".[26] Below the Crompton's advertisement is the Telfer and Harold Manufacturing Co. advertisement for the Cordaline corset, which they claim "is not stuffed with grass like the poor imitation that is being sold. There is no patent number stamped on it to gull the people and lead them astray"[27], which is an obvious reference to the Crompton patent claim. Referring to a different Crompton's advertising campaign where Crompton offered $5.00 for every pair that breaks, they stated that they do not offer "buncom[28] reward for every pair that breaks".[29] The Telfer advertisement ended beseeching shoppers to "Note the name, CORDALINE, and beware of poor imitations". These 1882 advertisements from *The Globe* both companies aggressively attacked the other, without explicitly naming names, which took the dissolution of their business relationship to a public forum. In other editions of *The Globe* these same advertisements are not placed as close to each other, making the competition less obvious, but placed side by side, the rivalry between these two business men is obvious.

[24] *The Globe*, (Toronto, ON), May 13, 1882, p 7.
[25] *The Globe*, (Toronto, ON), May 13, 1882, p 7.
[26] *The Globe*, (Toronto, ON), May 13, 1882, p 7.
[27] *The Globe*, (Toronto, ON), May 13, 1882, p 7.
[28] This is a mis-spelling of "buncombe", meaning "insincere".
[29] *The Globe*, (Toronto, ON), May 3, 1882, p 7.

Patents continued to be a point of contention with Crompton in their advertising campaigns. In 1884,[30] he was on the other side of a patent lawsuit when he was sued by Thomas Hobart Ball, Herman Frenslauer and Simon Florsheim from the Chicago Corset Company (also referred to as Balls), and Clinton Ethelbert Brush and Seely Benedict Brush from the Clinton E. Brush & Bro. (also referred to as Brush) for patent infringement. The claimants alleged that Crompton had used a design for an elasticized corset panel which used tubes with metal springs in place of Indian rubber. The patent was owned by The Chicago Corset Co. and was licensed to Brush & Brother to use the patent in Canada. Again, Crompton used advertising (Fig. 3-4) to attack his competition. "We have DEFEATED THE CHICAGO CORSET CO. in an action brought against us by them and their Toronto Licensees, Mssers. Clinton C.E. Brush and Bro. to restrain the sale of our Health Preserving Corset... These Monopolists having

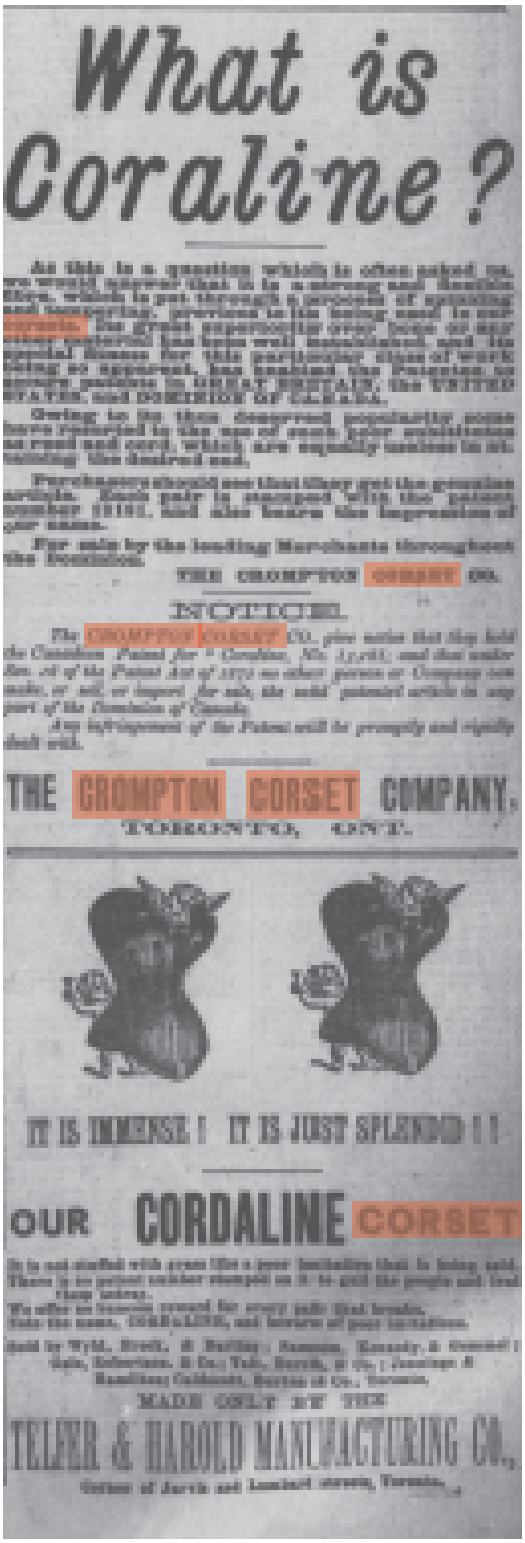
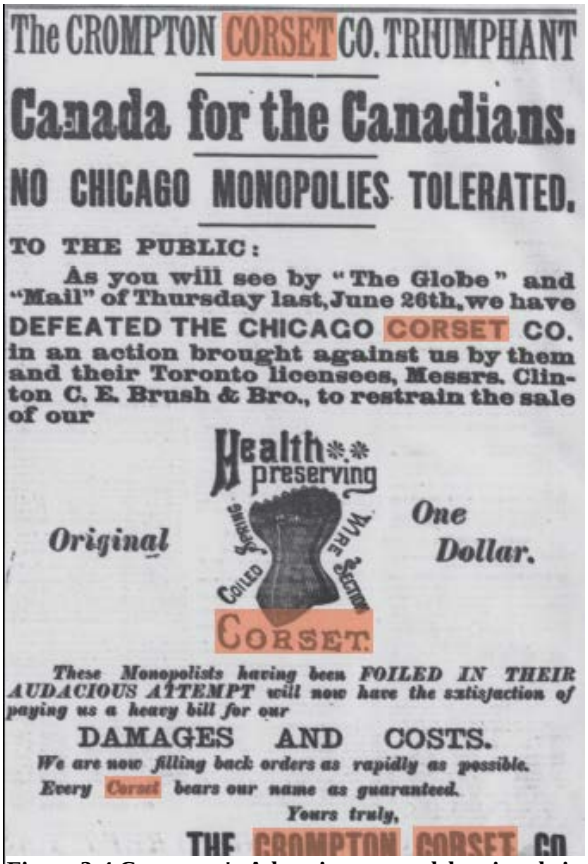


Figure 3-3 Advertisements for Crompton's and Telfer, side by side, advertising their similar boning. From *The Globe*, May 3, 1882.

[30] *The Globe*, (Toronto, ON), June 28, 1884, p 10.

been FOILED IN THEIR AUDACIOUS ATTEMPT will now have the satisfaction of paying us a heavy bill for our DAMAGES AND COSTS."[31] Unlike the Telfer advertising campaign, Crompton named his competition directly, as it was a matter of public record. However, much like the advertising campaign against Telfer, Crompton and Ball advertisements were placed side-by-side, advertising virtually the same products. The Crompton's advertisement began with a list of their patents and awards,[32] including "the highest medal over all American competitors at the Paris Exhibition of 1878".[33] It continued to describe new elasticized "Health" corset that held their shape, did not break, and praised by physicians. The Ball's Corset advertisement described the "coiled spring in the sides" which ensured that corsets did not need to be broken in before being worn. The headline of the advertisement outing the attempt at an American monopoly, again points to the use of national pride to gain the respect of his customers. The Canadian David slew the mighty American Goliath.


The CROMPTON CORSET CO. TRIUMPHANT

Canada for the Canadians.

NO CHICAGO MONOPOLIES TOLERATED.

TO THE PUBLIC:

As you will see by "The Globe" and "Mail" of Thursday last, June 26th, we have DEFEATED THE CHICAGO CORSET CO. in an action brought against us by them and their Toronto licensees, Messrs. Clinton C. E. Brush & Bro., to restrain the sale of our

Health preserving Spring Coiled Hips Shoulders

Original

One Dollar.

CORSET.

These Monopolists having been FOILED IN THEIR AUDACIOUS ATTEMPT will now have the satisfaction of paying us a heavy bill for our

DAMAGES AND COSTS.

We are now filling back orders as rapidly as possible. Every Corset bears our name as guaranteed.

Yours truly,

THE CROMPTON CORSET CO

Figure 3-4 Crompton's Advertisement, celebrating their defeat against The Chicago Corset Co. after a dispute about patents. The Globe, June 28, 1884.

In 1885, the claimants Ball's and Brush & Bros. filed an appeal with the Supreme Court of Canada. [34] By 1886 the Supreme Court ruling stated "I confess that I find a difficulty in seeing

[31] *The Globe*, (Toronto, ON), June 28, 1884, p 10.
[32] A common practice across industries. See: Petra Moser and Tom Nicholas. "Prizses, Publicity and Patents: Non-Monetary Awards as a Mechanism to Encourage Innovation" in *The Journal of Industrial Economics* LXI:3 (Sept. 2013).
[33] *The Globe*, (Toronto, ON), May 10, 1884, p 7.

what remained to be patented as a new and useful improvement in corsets."[35] In the long examination of the letters of patents, which the Supreme Court does not dismiss or disagree with, they state "the defendants have ruminated their contention, that the letters patent of the 29th April, 1881, cover more than the patentee Florsheim had a right to claim as new, and that the several matters professed to be patented were known and used by others before the alleged invention thereof by the plaintiff Florsheim..."[36], and furthermore "it is sufficient to say that a part, indeed, as it appears to me, almost the whole, if not the whole, of the articles thereby patented as novelties were known and in use for more than twelve months prior to the plaintiff Florsheim's application for the Letters Patent granted to him in April 1881."[37] The final judgment of the appeal of *Ball v. Cromtpon Corset Co.* was "The appeal, therefore, should, in my opinion, be dismissed with costs".[38] A month later, Crompton continued this advertising campaign along with the line of Canadian nationalism; "Why should the Canadian Public pay Monopolists one dollar and fifty cents for Coiled Wire Corsets when a better article can now be supplied one dollar!"[39] Another victory for Frederick Crompton, and another success to brag about to their customers. Ironic, indeed, considering the early advertisements threatened legal action to any company who dared use any similar product to theirs, thus maintaining a monopoly on grass-based bones and steam moulded busts.

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[34] *The Globe*, (Toronto, ON), May 25, 1885, p 8.
[35] George Duval, reporter. *Reports of the Supreme Court of Canada, VIII*, (Ottawa: Printed by the Queen's Printer, 1887): 501.
[36] Duval, 502.
[37] Duval, 505.
[38] Duval, 506.
[39] *The Globe*, (Toronto, ON), Aug. 16, 1884, p 8.

After using these early business hiccups in their advertisements, their campaigns shifted from long missives attacking their competition and describing production, to a more simple design. These advertisements usually featured an unoccupied corset, and focused on conveying information about the corsets themselves. This example from an 1895 edition of *The Ladies Journal* (Fig. 3-5),[40] began with a corset-based pun, commanding ladies to "stay" so that they could tell them about their stays. "This is a Strip Corset, designed from the latest Parisian fashions... giving the wearer a neat and graceful appearance". It describes the colour, materials and the type of woman it was best suited for, including lady cyclists. This was likely much more pleasant to customers than being unwillingly involved in their inter-industry conflicts.

Between 1896 and 1897 their advertising campaigns increased in *The Toronto Star*, using the formula of a small advertisement with a

Figure 3-5 A new style of Crompton's advertising, a departure from their advertisements attacking competitors. *Ladie's Journal*, September, 1885.

[40] *Ladies Journal*, (Toronto, ON), Sept. 1895, 34.

small image either of an unoccupied corset, or a woman wearing one. This also marks a shift in change in the Canadian advertising industry, where agencies hired artists to create images specifically for clients, rather than use pre-made stock images.[41] The image of the woman was not dissimilar to the image from their first advertisement in 1877, with a woman in chemise, corset and skirt, with one arm behind her back. However, rather than having one hand lifted coquettishly, this one had her hand resting by her leg. They often focused on one style of corset per advertisement, with a poem or statement of quality, that described the corset itself, or the type of woman the corset was best suited for. One from December, 1897 (Fig. 3-6) told the reader "she can never have true friends who is always changing them. It is so with Corsets! Find perfectly fitting stays and cling to the make that has the most pleasing effect. Try The Victoria the corset par excellence for graceful women".[42] The Victoria corset was clearly named in honour of the monarch, though by 1897 she

Figure 3-6 Advertisement for Crompton's Victoria corset, positioning corsets as a friend to women. *The Toronto Evening Star*, December 16, 1897.

[41] Johnson, 40.
[42] *The Toronto Evening Star*, (Toronto, ON), Dec. 16, 1897, p 23.

did not have a figure that would have been considered graceful. The comparison of friendship anthropomorphises corsets making them loyal companions, who were not trying to alter the wearer, but rather brought out their natural grace. Another corset named Qebeh was certainly meant to appeal to a sense of colonial pride, with a growing interest in Egypt, classicism, and the mystique of Orientalism.[43] Interestingly, the god Qebeh-Senuef was the guardian of the intestines stored in Canopic jars after death, whose name meant "pleaser of bretheren".[44] Though no reason for this name of corset was given, these two facts about this particular god are an interesting coincidence, protecting the abdominal organs while making a pleasing figure for men to see. An advertisement (Fig. 3-7) for this style stated "A sylph-like shape is dear to womankind. As an aid to symmetrical beauty the Qebeh Corset is unequaled, therefore it is a great favorite with stylish ladies".[45] This image used for this advertisement was the empty corset.

Figure 3-7 Advertisement for Crompton's exotically named Qebeh corset, promising a sylph-like shape. *The Toronto Evening Star*, April 23, 1898.

Naming the corset after an Egyptian god, and referring to a spirit of nature in the advertisements gave the impression that consumers would be goddesses in this corset. Other styles were named

[43] Edward Said. *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979): 222.
[44] Patricia Tuner and Charles Russell Coulter. *Dictionary of Ancient Deities* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000): 394.
[45] *The Toronto Evening Star*, (Toronto, ON), April 23, 1898, p7.

"Queen Moo", after the mythical Aztec queen, the Yatisi, which is a region is Greece, as well as more scientific sounding names such as the Magnetic and Contour.

In an attempt to appeal to a wide range of consumers, Crompton's had advertisements that were aimed toward women who were employed in white collar careers, and those with an interest in dress reform. At the top of an advertisement from 1896 (Fig. 3-8), in large text, the words "A business woman..." called out to the reader. "A Business Woman who wears one of our Hygieian Waists, and is thus accustomed to perfect freedom of motion, could in all probability never be introduced to wear a pair of the conventional stays during her working hours. These excellent garments are also very suitable for Cycling".[46] This advertisement tells many things about the corset wearing habits of women. Some women, evidently, had different corsets that they wore during working hours, compared to something that would be worn with

Figure 3-8 Advertisement for Crompton's, showing a corset suitable for business women and cycling, in other words "freedom of motion". ***The Toronto Evening Star,*** **June 9, 1896.**

[46] *The Toronto Evening Star*, (Toronto, ON), June 9, 1896, p 6.

evening wear, or for exercise. This can be compared to today, where a woman would not necessarily wear the same bra to the gym as she would to an evening event. The image used in this advertisement differed from the others that included the corset on its own, this one had a corset with shoulder straps and buttons up the front, rather than the standard style of strapless with a busk closure, certainly making it look less restrictive, as buttons would tear at the holes if laced too tightly.

By 1913, this technique of advertising was the Crompton standard, except rather than the corset on its own or the woman in a state of undress (Fig. 3-9), their advertisements featured fully clothed women in the fashions of the day. These campaigns spoke to the individuality of their customers, and the rapid changes in fashion. “C/C à la Grâce corsets are made to grace every whim of the dictates of Fashion. But every model gives perfect ease and comfort without sacrificing style. The one thing we suggest is that you carefully select the corset best

Figure 3-9 Advertisement for C/C à la Grâce corsets by Crompton. A departure in their advertising, this shows a fully dressed woman, rather than the corset. *The Globe*, April 12 1913.

suited to you".[47] This wording implies a woman's autonomy over not just her corset, but also her dress over all, and punctuates the importance of not only looking fashionable but also being comfortable.

The wording in these advertisements demonstrates the idea of body schema and the suggestion of the transformative abilities of clothing. Though corsets do literally alter the shape of the body, there is also an emotional and mental transformation, where clothing is not simply worn, but what matters is how it is worn.[48] The corsets advertised imbue a sense of grace, and as one stated "a woman may have a pretty figure, but that pretty figure may be rendered shapeless and unfashionable by an ill-made corset".[49] So the corset has the power for positive and negative effects, depending on the brand and style. As a representative of Victoria's Secret said about their products "we are not for men to look at, but for women to feel good about themselves".[50] The wording of these advertisements attempt to do just that, tell their customers that wearing these corsets will improve the way they feel about themselves, and create an ideal of womanhood. This is also indicative of what Steele discussed, that corset advertisements sometimes implied that if a woman looked unattractive it was the fault of a bad corset. As soon as she switched to the right brand of corset her true beauty could shine forth and she would find a husband.[51] Though the mention of husbands was not located in any of the Crompton's advertisements, it is possible that this is strictly Steele's own speculation regarding the goal of advertising.

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[47] *The Globe*, (Toronto, ON), April 12, 1913, pA3.
[48] Mike Featherstone. ""Body Image and Affect in Consumer Culture", *Body and Society* 16, no. 1, (2010), 196.
[49] *The Toronto Evening Star*, (Toronto, ON), June 2, 1898, p6.
[50] Juffer, 32.
[51] Steele, 55.

Figure 3-12 Advertisement for Vermilyea Corset Co. *The Globe,* April 18, 1895.

Figures 3-10, 1,1 and 12 are all advertisements by female-run companies. They were all contemporary to Crompton's, and follow a similar style, with the image of the unoccupied corset to the left of the text. The American Corset and Dress Reform Co. advertisement features very simple text, simply naming their

Figure 3-11 Advertisement for The American Corset and Dress Reform Co. The Delineator, 1897.

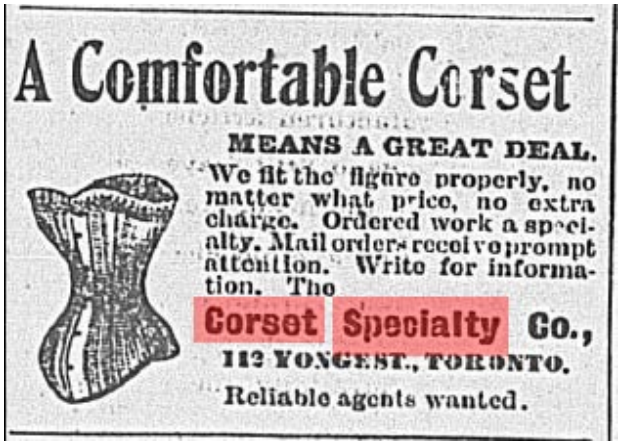

Figure 3-10 Advertisement for the Corset Specialty Co. *The Globe,* February 13, 1898.

products.[52] However the image of the corset, the exact same one which is also featured in a Vermilyea advertisement, features straps, and is undone, revealing the inside. If Summers suggests that a line drawing of a corset devoid of a body is an implication of eroticism based on its shape, an open corset is extremely explicit.[53] It must be acknowledged that though the companies that these advertisements were for were run by women, they were in publications run by men, and likely the images were created by them as well. A Vermilyea advertisement from the same period, following the same formula, used similar language around comfort and

[52] *The Delineator* no. 49, viii.
[53] It may also demonstrate the ease of dressing in the corsets without assistance, creating autonomy.

elegance that Crompton used.[54] And a third, by the Corset Specialty Co., included a brief headline also including comfort.[55] These three advertisements were smaller than those by Crompton's, but they also did not have the financial overhead, and therefore the advertising budget of Crompton. However, they do demonstrate that corset advertisements were not necessarily based on a patriarchal aspect of capitalism, in spite of the theory that in many advertisements the "representations of women inevitably bear the traces of capitalist and patriarchal social relations in which they are produced, exchanged, and consumed".[56]

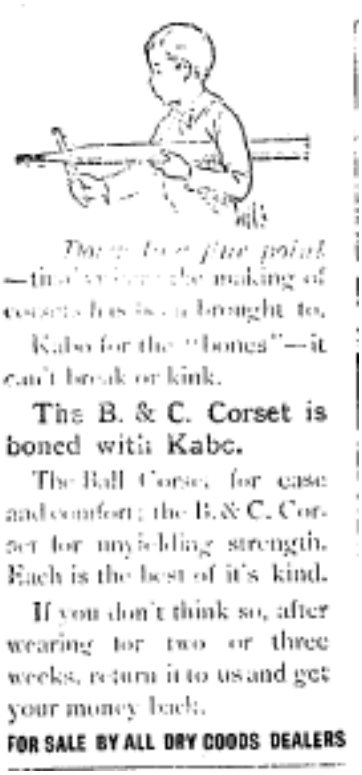

Figure 3-14 Advertisement for Balls, with a pun about making a point. *The Ladie's Journal,* August 1891.

Figure 3-13 Advertisement for Balls, with a pun about breaking in corsets. *The Ladies Journal,* April 1891.

The most fascinating advertisements by a Toronto company were made by the male-owned Brush and Co. at the start of the 1890s, and published in the *Ladies Journal*, which was a magazine created for women with content relating to home, family and fashion, for a middle-class audience.[57]

[54] *The Globe*, (Toronto, ON), April 18, 1895, p6.
[55] *The Globe*, (Toronto, ON), Feb. 13, 1898 p12.
[56] Annette Kuhn. *The Power of the Image: Essays on Representations and Sexuality*, (New York: Routledge, 2013): 10.
[57] Patricia Flemming et al. *History of the Book in Canada: 1840-1918*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005): 301.

They were not related to any of the tropes discussed by Summer or Steele, and appear to be completely unique among the other advertisements encountered. These three advertisements featured scenes at the top of the text unrelated to corsets, and only upon reading the text do they make sense. The first (Fig. 3-13) featured a workman prying open a door with a crowbar. The text reads "Breaking in isn't needed with the Ball corset. It's easy from the start. Coils of tiny wire springs in the sides make it so".[58] After reading the text, it is discovered that the image is a visual pun about breaking in corsets, a problem of having to wear a corset for a period before it became comfortable. The second (Fig. 3-14) shows a young boy whittling a stake. The text is difficult to read due to poor reproduction, but the visual pun is about "making a point".[59] The third (Fig. 3-15) is a drawing of a woman chasing a man with a broom, with the text "Did you ever hear of a woman who had not made up her mind in some way? If you wear a B&C Corset you will make up your mind that it is the only corset you will ever wear in future"[60] The image is less of a visual pun, but more of a social commentary about the strong-headedness of women, quite the opposite of grace and elegance advertised by other companies.

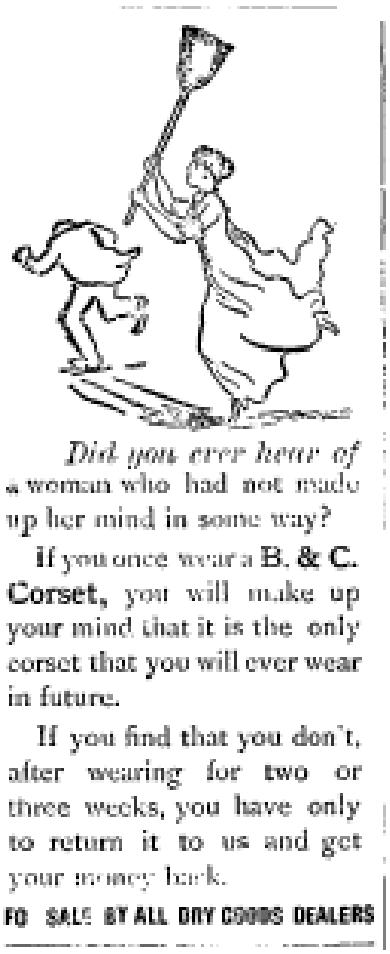

Figure 3-15 Advertisement for Balls about strong-headed women. *The Ladie's Journal*, June, 1891.

[58] *The Ladies' Journal*, (April, 1891), 28.
[59] *The Ladies' Journal*, (Aug., 1891), 28.
[60] *The Ladies' Journal*, (June, 1891), 18.

Advertisements discussed by both Summer and Steele mention a particular use of putti to sell corsets. Telfer, Crompton (Fig. 3-17), and Dr. Warner's corsets in England and America (who incidentally also used Coraline bones), all had identical advertisements using putti.[61] These advertisements show a corset, devoid of a torso, with a putto poking out from the top of the bust.[62] The use of putti is analyzed by both authors. Steele suggests that their presence represents healthy babies, since medical professionals warned against the dangers of pregnancy and tight lacing.[63] She suggests that they were also surrogates for male lovers, which were not acceptable to be shown in these advertisements.[64] Summers agrees with this position, by suggesting that they represent Venus, and her son Eros, symbolizing love and admiration of earthly suitors.[65] However if we remove this from the context of corset

Figure 3-17 Crompton's Advertisement featuring putti, a common image for corset advertisiments. *The Globe,* October 6, 1883.

Figure 3-16 Advetisement demonstrating that putto were a common trope in advertising. The Toronto Star, April 23, 1898.

[61] Summers, 191; Steele, 58.
[62] *The Globe*, (Toronto, ON), Oct 6, 1883, p8.
[63] Steele, 56.
[64] Steele, 57.
[65] Summers, 192.

advertising, which Summers and Steele do not do, and compare to an advertisement from another product featured in *The Star*, (Fig. 3-16) it also contains two putti, lifting a flag, while the text praises Corticelli skirt protectors. While it is easy to read symbolism into such a sexually and morally charged garment as the corset, the presence of putti acted simply as an identifiable and established icon of polite sensibility and taste.[66]

Figure 3-18 Woolnaough advertisement depicting a typically posed woman. *The Home Journal*, October, 1910.

Figure 3-19 Full page Woolnough feautre, positioned next to a text advertisement. *The Home Journal*, October, 1910.

The majority of the advertisements for corsets in Toronto periodicals are nowhere near as sexually explicit as the ones described by Summers and Steele. They did not depict the unveiling of women for the

[66] Jon Stobart. "Selling (Through) Politeness: Advertising Provincial Shops in Eighteenth Century Britain", *Cultural and Social History 5*, no. 3 (2008), 316.

pleasure of men, [67] nor did they depict scenes of female homoerotica,[68] nor did they depict the female figure being sprayed at the groin region with a hose by a nude boy.[69] This perhaps speaks to the Protestant morality of Toronto the Good,[70] or at the least maintaining the appearance that Toronto was a morally superior city. The one advertising campaign that did adhere to some of the discussions of Summers and Steele was from 1910. The Woolnough Corset Company had a series of advertisements in the *Canadian Home Journal*, a journal intended for the consumption of middle class female home makers,[71] in which the woman depicted had her arms lifted above their heads, looking over her shoulder (Fig. 3-18). This pose, Summers argues, was a popular among pornographic images of the turn of the century, depicting corseted, but otherwise nude, women, with their arms lifted above their heads, which spoke to a "contrived sexual availability", with the downturned eyes allowing viewers to look at her body without guilt, in an state of unobserved voyeurism.[72] The text in these advertisements is difficult to read due to poor reproduction of the original source document. Woolnough was also included in a feature article, in 1910, which had a very simple, text-only advertisement set beside it (Fig. 3-19). The placement of these advertisements in a journal which was intended for the consumption of women problematizes the theories of gaze put forth by Summers. Though Woolnough was run by a man, the target audience was women. Unlike *Victoria's Secret* catalogues, which were largely filled with images of women in sexy garments, a man intending to use this magazine for the purposes of arousal would need to turn through pages of sheet music, serial stories, household decorations, stories about the lives of Canadian women, latest fashions for children, a series of very un-erotic items, before coming to the editorial on corsets. Certainly, there is no

[67] Summers, 190.
[68] Summers, 196.
[69] Steele, 58.
[70] C.S. Clark. *Of Toronto The Good: A Social Study* (Montreal: The Toronto Publishing Co.): 3.
[71] Flemming et al, 301.
[72] Summers, 202.

question that the phenomenon of the male gaze exists, and images of women in media have fed this and has been heavily discussed, however, this particular publication, with the image of a woman in a tie and bowler style hat staring directly at the viewer on the cover, does not give the signal of welcoming men into the pages for an erotic journey, like the "come hither" sultry stare of the *Victoria's Secret* cover angel.

The advertisement of corsets in Toronto periodicals followed the basic formula of the time. They focused on themes of elegance and comfort, the development of technology, the appearance of the wearer, and how it could be improved by the advertised products. As sports became more popular, they emphasized the ease with which activity could be performed while wearing specific corsets.[73] The images did not differ greatly from one periodical to the next, and did not seem to alter based on who the intended audience was. Nor did they vary greatly depending on whether the company was owned by a man or a woman. The greatest difference of note was the quantity and quality of advertisement based on the size of the company, with Crompton's leading the way in both.

Advertising cards

Advertising cards were used by business as an alternative means of advertising. Popular between 1876 and 1900, these were small, three by five inch cards used by businesses to advertise goods and services, and were obtained through exhibitions, and small and large retailers,[74] as well as through specific mail-in offers and by canvassers.[75] The images were usually unrelated to the product being sold. The same images were often used by different companies, and were

[73] Steele, 56.
[74] Jennifer Black, "Corporate Calling Cards: Advertising Trade Cards and Logos in the United States, 1876-1890", *The Journal of American Culture* 32, no. 4 (2009), 293.
[75] Black, 295.

customizable with the names of the company, and custom information pertaining to them on the verso. Advertising cards obtained for Toronto businesses often featured Canadian landscapes (Fig. 3-20), or absurd images (Fig. 3-22). They also featured popular stage actors, politicians, and royalty (Fig. 3-23). They were ephemeral items, and were intended to be used for the middle-class activity of scrapbooking, a past-time that combined entertainment with consumption and sentimentalism.[76] Because of this preservation of the material, many have survived. For this research, 17 Crompton's cards were located, as well as two for Balls, and one from E.T. Many others are available online, but these are often posted in online blogs with no citation to the original image source. Even though these twenty cards were obtained through the Toronto Archives, the Toronto Public Library, and the private Talkington collection, the verso is often not provided. This is possibly due to damage from the practice of scrapbooking, or because the front is more visually appealing. Figure 3-21 is an example of the simplicity of the verso. The front of this particular one shows a landscape with a cliff and sailboats on a lake. However the verso is plain white, with simple font, and the claim that Crompton's "certainly are the best". This varies greatly from the complexity and verbosity of their print advertisement, but it is likely they kept them simple because they knew the cards would be placed face-up in a book.

[76] Black, 293.

Figure 3-20 Crompton Advertising Card, featuring Canadian Landscape, c. 1890. Toronto Public Library.

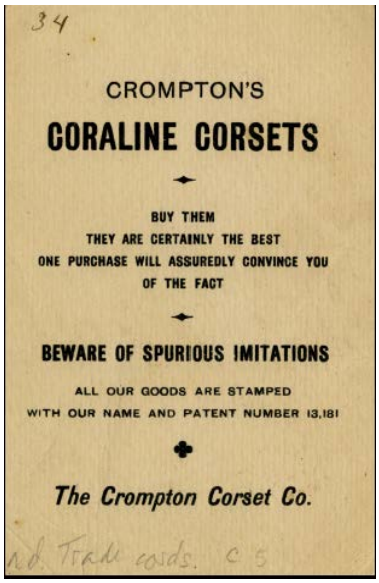

Figure 3-22 Verso of Crompton's Advertising Card, showing the simplicity of the back side, c. 1890. Toronto Public Library.

Figure 3-23 Crompton Advertising Card, featuring a dog, c. 1890. Toronto Public Library.

Figure 3-21 Ball's Advertising Card, featuring Adelina Patti, an example of celebrity endorsement, c. 1890. Toronto Public Library.

Exhibitions

The importance of nationalist production was made apparent as the first Toronto Industrial Exhibition (later the Canadian National Exhibition) opened in 1879. In *Bound to Please*, Summers discusses that corsets were often featured in industrial exhibitions, though she claims that advertising materials used by companies showing in these exhibitions are nearly impossible to locate[77]. This has not been true for many Toronto corset companies, as winning medals at exhibitions was a point of advertising pride. The history of exhibitions dates back to Revolutionary France, with the intention of promoting local industry during struggles with England.[78] However it was the National Exhibition in London, held at the Crystal Palace in 1851 that created the spectacle of the exhibition across the British Empire.[79] The exhibitions hosted in London not only showcased locally manufactured goods, but also acted as a means of displaying the vastness of the Empire, and had pavilions for each colony. The local exhibitions, such as those held in Toronto, among others like Melbourne and Calcutta, were a site to display the strengths of the nations, the local inventions, natural resources, and of course, the fashions of the day.[80] These large industrial exhibitions were held annually in Toronto at the beginning of September, and assisted in creating advertising spectacle, and created a heightened appeal to middle-class customers. Through the images used to sell products at exhibitions, "advertisers also influenced the evolution of national, class and gender identities".[81]

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[77] Summers, 177.
[78] Hermoine Hobhouse. *The Crystal Palace and the Great Exhibition: Science, Art and Productive Industry* (New York: Continuum, 2004): 3.
[79] Hobhouse, 7.
[80] Peter Hoffenberg. *To Create a Commonwealth: Empire and Nation at English, Australian and Indian Exhibitions, 1851-1914, vol. 1* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993): 2.
[81] Church, 630.

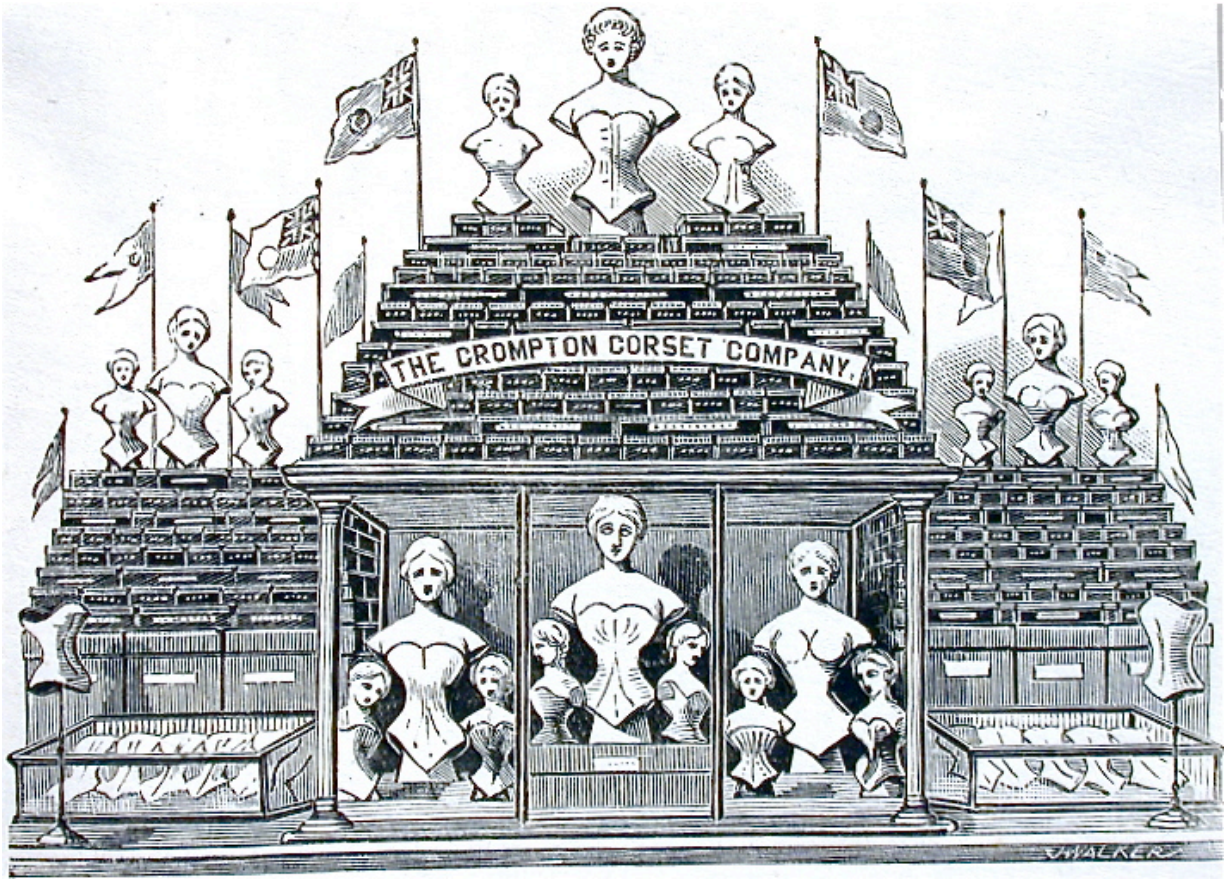

Figure 3-24 Display of Crompton's corsets at the Toronto Industrial Exhibition, 1879. Image from the collection of Melanie Talkington.

For years, Crompton's displayed their goods at the Toronto Industrial Exhibition (Image 37). In the first year of the exhibition, 1879, they displayed the four models that were in production, including one which featured adjustable lacing at the hips, and one which was built for "stout" figures. They won a gold medal annually, which were featured heavily in their advertisements (an advertising convention which is still used today). The Canadian National Exhibition (CNE) and other international displays were an important way for a variety of businesses, from agricultural equipment to electric clocks to corsets, to demonstrate their recent designs and innovations. From the beginning, Crompton's was an Exhibition favourite, featured in articles describing the great demonstrations of Canadian industry which were on display. Among the prizes that were awarded to them were the gold medal for best assortment and best make in

1881.[82] They were also a favorite of the newspapers, as other corset makers even seldom mentioned. In 1884, *The Globe* went so far as to say there was no finer exhibit than theirs, and that any lady who did not take delight in their display "must have been born without appreciation, and have lived without developing the capacity to approve".[83]

By 1887, the same praise for ingenuity was given to London's Featherbone company, whose booth was visited by Prime Minister John A. MacDonald, who expressed pleasure at the use of feather quills as replacement for whale bone.[84] One of the ingenuities of Crompton in this year was the introduction of their Yatisi corset, which was made using stockinette, a stretchy knit material.[85] *The Canadian Dry Goods Review* was far more democratic in their praise of goods on display at the CNE, offering a list of companies with booths, such as E.T., Brush and Crompton's, providing a brief description of the specialities of each house.[86] These exhibitions also allowed retailers to view products before selling them in their stores.

Retail

The increase in department stores, such as Eaton's, Simpson's, W.A. Murray and Oak Hall, as a part of the developing urban landscape located around Yonge and King streets, created another area of paid employment for women outside of light factory work and domestic service. This work was preferred because it was not as taxing on the mind and body as factory work was with its repetitious nature, and provided more freedom than domestic work, which often expected girls to reside with their employer.[87] Retail work was often a next-step in the careers of girls,

[82] *The Globe*, (Toronto, ON), Sept. 12, 1881, p12.
[83] *The Globe*, (Toronto, ON), Sept. 13, 1884, p6.
[84] *The Globe*, (Toronto, ON), Sept. 13, 1887, p10.
[85] *The Globe*, (Toronto, ON), Sept. 13, 1887, p10.
[86] "Seen at the Toronto Exibition", *The Canadian Dry Goods Review* 1, no. 9 (Sept., 1891), 5.
[87] Frager and Patrias, 46.

especially girls who moved from outside of the city for employment, initially obtaining domestic positions.[88] Though Donica Belisle argues that these positions were among the more respectable forms of labour available to girls and women because it was clean work that kept them away from grease and sweat, and allowed them to dress presentably to maintain their chastity,[89] Carolyn Strange suggests the opposite. Occasional prostitution was a moral concern based on the ideology that wage-earning women received such low pay that they needed to earn wages outside of their official employment, and the fastest way to this end was through selling sex. This was a fear of the moral middle class, and an argument in favour of equal wages. The problem with retail work, in spite of the cleanliness, was that the wages were low, albeit generally higher than factory or domestic work, but it also brought the girls into contact with a large number of strange men. Eaton's was the largest employer of women in Toronto by the early twentieth century. Timothy Eaton himself said that he liked hiring young girls because they were better when they were younger, however because men worked harder over time, the wage difference was justified ($6-8 compared to $12).[90] In an 1898 report on morality by the Deputy Attorney General, he stated "Young men tell me that the girls employed by the T. Eaton Co. are many of them prostitutes". He continued to describe how male customers of Eaton's simply needed to become acquainted with the sales girls, to meet them on a few occasions, and then "the result follows". [91] Though the paternalistic intentions of the department store owners led to instruct shop girls not to speak to male customers unless absolutely necessary,[92] this was likely difficult as interacting with customers was the job. The actual occurrences of occasional prostitution are difficult to ascertain beyond the sensationalist fear mongering of the moral good. Just like their sisters in

[88] Belisle, 167.
[89] Belisle, 167.
[90] Strange, 31.
[91] Strange, 89.
[92] Belisile, 168.

factories and domestic work, sales girls were also subjected to constant observation from managers, were faced with the temptation of handling products that they themselves could not afford, and were subjected to the abuse of the public.[93] However, the employment of girls and women in department stores meant that women were at leisure to shop for corsets with well trained staff, in comfortable environs, thanks to the gendered separation of the departments.

The shops in Toronto which sold corsets before the boom of department stores in the 1890s were fancy goods and dress shops, including the early incarnation of Eaton's. The business directory for 1871 listed 22 fancy goods shops and 42 dry goods shops, including RH Grey, who often featured advertisements for their range of corsets. By 1914 there were four department stores in the Directory, 34 dry goods, and 21 fancy goods shops.[94] The decrease in the number of dry and fancy goods shops in spite of the increase in population in the city is indicative of the monopolization of sales that department stores held over the consumers. Some of these shops remained small establishments, but others expanded their businesses, often physically by annexing buildings around their original location, to increase the variety and quantity of goods for sale.[95] However, even by 1880, retail giants Simpson's and Eaton's both had fewer than twenty staff members.[96]

These shops, like the wholesalers discussed above, also used periodicals to advertise corsets to the women, and sometimes men, of Toronto. Searches for advertisements in the *Toronto Star* and *The Globe* yielded thousands of results, due to the fact that many of the stores had daily advertisements. These advertisements provided a fair amount of information pertaining to the

[93] Frager and Patrias, 70.
[94] The four department stores were located on Yonge St. between Richmond St. to north of Queen St., and on King St. east of Yonge. The fancy goods and dry goods stores were located all around the city servicing neighbourhood residents.
[95] Belisle, 19.
[96] Belisle, 20.

corset trade in Toronto, including the price, materials, colours, and brands that were available to women. Due to the volume of advertisements, the search on the Proquest database was set to bring results that were “relevant” to the search term first, rather than chronologically. This provided a random sample, and from there, the first few hundred were selected. Though this technique certainly excluded a considerable amount of data, and likely did not capture all of the retail outlets in Toronto, it provides enough of a sample to gain an understanding of how retailers in Toronto advertised corsets. The data collected is presented in Appendix C.

The early advertisements for retail outlets, like for other products, were very simple. They were simply text-based, with no images, or if any image, just the logo of the store. The information often included a list of items on sale, with “corsets” among them. In the advertisements from the 1870s, one third provided any information about colour or price. The style of these advertisements continued to evolve until 1914, when retailers took out whole page advertisements with information on many items within the shop. These advertisements resembled miniature versions of catalogues, with great descriptions of the items, with colour, price, sizes, and the qualities that a woman might achieve if she were to purchase them.

When the advertisements included sizes they were listed as the waist in inches. The smallest size, which was common across retailers, was 18 inches, which was intended to create a 20 inch waist (as they were worn with a two inch gap in the back). The largest size was 38 inches, which created a 40 inch waist. The largest size that was most commonly available was 30 inches, which created a 32 inch waist. This helps to dispel the myth of the 16 inch ideal waist, and indicates that women of Toronto hoping to obtain a smaller waist size than 20 inches or larger than 40 inches required a custom made corset. As well as finding a common waist size, these advertisements included colours available. White, drab, ecru, black and grey were among the

most popular. However, there were also more interesting colours such as pink and blue, and on one occasion, black with pink and blue brocade flowers.

Perhaps one of the most fascinating pieces of data that was obtained from these retail advertisements is regarding the prices of corsets. The prices did not vary or increase greatly over the 43 years of this study. In fact, the lowest price was 24 cents at Mammoth Fair in 1896, during a sale, where the regular price was 50 cents. The greatest difference in price was at Simpson's in 1903 and 1904, when they offered corsets priced anywhere from 75 cents to $20. The least expensive of these was made by Crompton's, whereas the more expensive was the French brand Le Rève. And certainly at $20, it would have only been a dream for many women. Unfortunately this advertisement did not provide a description of each of these to compare materials, but the more expensive tended to be made with silk, with more delicate decorations.[97] Newspaper advertisements for retailers also included information such as whether these items were one sale, and the reasons for that sale (holidays, overstock, fire or water damage), if a fitting expert was available, and where the corsets originated. Corsets from America, England and France were emphasized, while most local products were downplayed. Many advertisements did not include details about the brands and makes, but sometimes only stated that they had a number of styles on hand, such as one advertisement for Eaton's in 1904 which declared that they had 150 styles.

When these advertisements had images they were either the garment on its own, or a woman in various states of undress posing in the typical corset advertisement poses discussed above. The poses were standardized, as "deportment was part of a fashionable bearing", and clothing affected the stance and posture, especially with corsets.[98] Further to the point that Summers

[97] Waugh, 83.
[98] Caroline Evans. *The Mechanical Smile: Modernism and the First Fashion Shows in France and America, 1900-1929*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013): 220.

made regarding advertisements in places for male consumption, these were in daily newspapers, but were also placed beside any number of products, from baby-wear to men's shoes. However, it should also be noted that shopping, especially shopping for sales and managing the household, was a duty that fell on women.[99] This does not discount the fact that certainly the male gaze was involved in the consumption of these advertisements, but it should be noted that the target shopper was likely a woman.

Catalogues and Fliers

Department store catalogues in Canada began with Eaton's, when in 1884 they produced a 34 page book describing their wares for the Exhibition. This proved to be a wise move as people from outside of the city began ordering goods.[100] The following year, they released a more detailed book, and their mail order business was secured.[101] It was not until ten years later that the Simpson's store entered into the catalogue business.[102] Eaton's, however, was the undisputed king of the mail order catalogue, and is cited for providing rural Canada with the commercial goods that were previously unavailable to them.[103] The importance of mail order, especially with ready-made clothing, meant that women in the far reaches of Canada did not necessarily need to spend time making clothing for their families, and were able to have fashionable silhouettes thanks to mail order corsets. Even women who lived and worked on farms, and did not wear corsets every day, had them for special occasions. Corsets featured in catalogues included images of each style with descriptions including material, colour, decoration, type of boning, and

[99] Angela McRobbie. "Bridging the Gap: Feminism, Fashion and Consumption", *Feminist Review*, no. 55 (Spring, 1997), 74.
[100] Bruce Allen Kopytek. *Eaton's: The Trans-Canada Store* (Mount Pleasant: Arcadia Publishing, 2014): 49.
[101] Kopytek, 49.
[102] Kopytek, 51.
[103] Belisle, 30.

size, and price. The images were usually line drawings of a woman in black and white, in various poses, both looking at the viewer and away, or simply the garment on its own.

Flyers and brochures were yet another way for retailers and corset manufacturers to inform the public of the superiority of their products. In my research, I came across two of these flyers. Because they are not as attractive as advertising cards, and less sturdy than catalogues, they were far more ephemeral, and therefore there are fewer that remain. One is for the Bias Corset Company, from 1913. It is one page, folded, with an image of a woman on the front, wearing a corset, looking into a hand mirror, the strap of her chemise coquettishly falling off her shoulder. The text says "the secret of a good figure".[104] This is a voyeuristic scene, where the viewer is allowed into a private moment of the woman. The inside text expands on the promised secret, describing the sensibility and health of the modern woman, including the fact that "she must have the corsets to choose from or all her intelligence won't serve her". The flyer provides no price or materials, or indeed even colour options, it simply states the quality of the woman who wears a Bias corset. On the verso is another woman, but this time looking directly at the viewer with her arms above her head, with the text "the perfection of style". She has been transformed from the woman on the cover, coy and unaware of the attention, but also concerned with her looks (the mirror) into a bold, intelligent, strong woman who wears Bias, one who challenges the male gaze by looking forward.

The second flyer is for Crompton's, from c. late-1880s. This one is also a single page, folded into thirds, printed on both sides. The front has an image of the Toronto factory, rather than a model, and text that discusses the quality of their steel bones, a departure from their praise of Coraline. The text on the first inner page describes the size of their operations, from the 275 hands

[104] "The Secret of a Good Figure", *Bias Corsets, Ltd*. (advertising flyer). 1913. Toronto Historic Collection.

employed, to the newest machines, and again repeats the Crompton catch-phrase "avoid worthless imitations". The remaining folds describe in detail the 16 styles they had on offer, including the materials used, the different boning and the colours available. These descriptions are accompanied by line drawings of each style, without a model. These also include children's waists and nursing corsets. They do not provide any prices, as they were likely used for the purpose of retail ordering, rather than for the general consumer.

Sales Girls

The position of corset saleslady was desirable enough that a Toronto woman wrote into an advice column in *The Star* in 1907. Though the letter itself was not published, the advice columnist suggested that the best way to become involved in the corset business was to learn it in all its branches, in order to be a better fitter and seller. They suggested applying to one of the corset manufacturers in the city, including Bias, Brush, CBC, Corset Specialty Co., Dominion, and E.T., and provided their addresses. They do not indicate requiring any particular skill, but, in order to be a successful sales person, personality and appearance were important,[105] which was sound advice for careers that deal with the public.

In 1891, a New York corset company, whose name was not provided by the *Dry Goods Review*, created a novel idea for advertising their corsets. They planned to send live models to stores around the country who carried their brand to give daily lectures and exhibitions for three days about the superiority of their corsets, which also included references from medical professionals stating that their corsets were conducive to good health. The article described the luxurious way these "handsome and attractive young women" travelled, and the fact that they were

[105] "Learning the Corset Business", *The Toronto Daily Star* (Toronto, ON), Jan. 17, 1907, p11.

contractually obliged to travel 10,000 miles.[106] The practice of using live mannequins in static positions started in Europe in the mid-1800s, particularly with upscale dressmakers.[107] By the 1890s the models were no longer static, but moved through the show space.[108] Movement was particularly important for corset models to demonstrate comfort and ease of wear. This became a common enough practice that it was included in a plot of the turn of the last century, Toronto-based crime procedural *Murdoch Mysteries*, in which one episode, "The Devil Wears Whalebone", a Toronto corset seller hosted a fashion parade of new and innovative corsets.[109]

Not every corset demonstration and fitting involved live models as displays. It was far more common for them to be on hand to assist customers with personal fitting needs. Articles in *The Globe* and *The Star* described the tenure of corset sales ladies at Eaton's, promoting the Nemo style corset. In 1905, Miss Conklin, from New York, spent "a few days" at Eaton's, assisting women with the "wonderful transformation" of finding a well-fitted corset.[110] Due to radical changes in corsets in the preceding two years, Miss Conklin claimed that women needed assistance navigating the round waist and high bust. She also noted that she did not claim to "transform a shapeless figure into a thing of grace", but could still work wonders with a well fitted corset, with or without the use of padding, depending on the wishes of the client and the needs of the figure.[111] The article ended with a statement about comfort: "One thing insisted on is that the corset must be comfortable. The customer must try both sitting and standing positions, and be able to draw a long breath, for Miss Conklin by no means ignores health, and incidentally,

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[106] "To Boom the Corset", The Canadian Dry Goods Review 1, no. 10 (Oct. 1891).
[107] Evans, 18.
[108] Evans, 24.
[109] "The Devil Wears Whalebone". *Murdoch Mysteries Wiki*. Access April 10, 2017. http://murdochmysteries.wikia.com/wiki/The_Devil_Wears_Whalebone.
[110] "A Well Fitted Corset: The Foundation of a Stylish Gown". *The Toronto Daily Star*, (Toronto, ON), March 16, 1905, p9.
[111] The Toronto Daily Star, (Toronto, ON), March 16, 1905, p9.

she tells her customers how to take certain exercises to reduce the flesh in the abdomen". Where some advertisements mention health and comfort, this article describes exactly how this is achieved. In selling corsets, Miss Conklin was not interested in making her clients as thin as possible.

In 1909 the residency at Eaton's was filled by Madame Nettleton, also from the United States to educate Toronto women about the Nemo corset. Though the article does not specify which city Madame Nettleton was from, it does demonstrate the influence of American fashion in Canada. *The Globe* described the thirteen styles of corset, including one for extremely stout figures, flat figures, and for weak backs. She also demonstrated how to properly put on a corset, and offered fittings.[112] By this time, the curvaceous figure of four years prior was no longer in style, but instead, the corsets Madame fitted accommodated the new style of "sheathlike gowning" of the age, and the desire to obtain a slender, graceful figure, without the use of "old-time makeshifts of pads and improvisers", the hip pads and bust enhancers of the preceding years.[113] Madame Nettleton's tenure at Eaton's lasted for three days.

Apart from publishing articles to announce corset fittings, these events were also announced within the full or half page advertisements for department stores, indicating that a corset expert was on hand to assist ladies with finding the perfect corset for their figure, to accommodate the most recent fashions. In 1904, set between details about a sale on lace curtains and an announcement for a miniature sale on fancy goods was the headline "For the Next Two Weeks We Offer Expert Advice on the Fitting of Corsets". The text continued to announce the arrival of Miss Darnell, celebrated corsetière from New York and Chicago, who possessed a "scientific

[112] "The Nemo". *The Globe*, (Toronto, ON), May 26, 1909, p4.
[113] *The Globe*, (Toronto, ON), May 26, 1909, p4.

knowledge of the human form". It ensured that she would be able to secure a perfect fitting corset, to give "beautiful rounded curves and graceful lines".[114] Though Miss Darnell was specifically there to sell La Marguerite and Kabo corsets, presumably made in New York and Chicago, the reader is assured that she will give her advice on any corset sold at Eaton's. Unlike the articles above, this advertisement is accompanied by an image of a woman in a stylish corset, with one hand raised behind her head, and the other resting on her chest, while she looks to the left, projecting an image of coy availability.

In 1908, a small block of text, with no image, nestled between a large advertisement for rings, and fine leather shoes announced "Free Corset Fitting" at Eaton's, by a New York expert. It is a short statement regarding the residency of Miss Newport, who again represented the Nemo and Smart Set corsets, "worn by thousands of women who aspire not only to comfort, but to elegance and grace", and was available to fit these or any other corsets, with no obligation to buy.[115]

The Nemo corsets continued to send representatives to Eaton's in 1912. This time the advertisement, again devoid of an accompanying image, placed between books for sale, and a sale in the toy department, was an announcement for a "Demonstration of Nemo Corsets". However, this was not simply a consultation with Miss Newport again, this was a demonstration of the innovative designs that Nemo was selling at Eaton's, to accommodate "every type of feminine figure".[116] Of their most interesting designs was a corset that produced "constant but unconscious massage of the abdomen with every movement of the wearer. The result is that the surplus of fat is softened and absorbed and the figure is made permanently smaller".[117] Though they encourage women of all shapes to come, there is certainly an encouragement for women to

[114] *The Toronto Daily Star*, (Toronto, ON), Oct. 15, 1904, p12.
[115] "Free Corset Fitting". *The Toronto Daily Star*, (Toronto, ON), Sept. 14, 1908, p12.
[116] "Demonstration of Nemo Corset". *The Toronto Daily Star*, (Toronto, ON), Feb. 12, 1912, p14.
[117] The Toronto Daily Star, (Toronto, ON), Feb. 12, 1912, p14.

adhere to the tyranny of slenderness that overcame middle class populations at the turn of the century, where fat became an enemy, and physical transformation a priority.[118]

Though Eaton's regularly hosted fitters from the United States at the shop to teach the women of Toronto the correct technique of wearing a corset, The W.A. Murray store always had corset fitters on hand. The large advertisement which took up a third of the page, which also featured the Star's regular "Of Interest to Women" column, also included glass sales, and baby dresses. The advertisement headline read "Corsets and Corset fittings". The text explained that every year women were growing more particular in regard to the fit and shapeliness of their corsets and for that reason they go to Murray's to consult their two expert corsetières, who were always present.[119] This advertisement also served as an announcement for their new corset fitting rooms, and that they had doubled the space allotted to corsets. Because this advertisement was not for one specific company, like the Nemo advertisements at Eaton's, they provided a list of makes and models available, from France, America as well as locally made. This advertisement is accompanied by a drawing of a corseted woman with a comically thin and elongated body (the measurements of the image show the hips as half the width of the shoulders), looking directly out at the viewer, with one hand resting under her chin, and the other awkwardly bent behind her.

Conclusion

It is widely understood that department stores changed the shape of urban landscapes, through city planning and transit development, which allowed residents at the edges of the city to easily access the shopping districts.[120] The growing pastime of shopping also gave middle class Victorian women a means of un-chaperoned entertainment, thus furthering the divide of

[118] Bordo, 185.
[119] "Corsets and Corset Fittings". *The Toronto Daily Star*, (Toronto, ON), May 10, 1911, p9.
[120] Belisle, 20.

gendered public and private space. The retailers of Toronto used the advertising conventions of their day to convince the women of Toronto that certain corsets were better than others. They were advertised to a wide range of women, working women, stout, slender, athletic, wealthy, poor, making sure that all bodies were accommodated. The range and variety of corsets available works toward dispelling the myth of the 16 inch waist, and as seen with the fitter at Eaton's who was concerned about the health of her customers, what was important in the wearing of a corset was not to cinch down to impossible sizes, but rather to possess grace and elegance, and to be healthy. Being healthy, especially at the turn of the century at the start of the craze for thinness, often did involve measures that are mirrored in health crazes today, such as fad diets and gadgets that promise the removal of excess fat. But these were secondary, at least this is what the advertising leads us to believe, to the feminine virtues that could be possessed if women wore the correct corset, to transform them into beauties of mythological standards.

Chapter 4: Presentations of Corsets in Everyday Life

In 1904, Toronto resident Ethel Beemer prepared for her wedding day by being laced into an off-white silk ribbon corset, and attached the long garters to her hose. She was dressed at the height of negligee fashion for her big day. As part of her trousseau, her female family and friends viewed the corset before the wedding, so it was imperative that the corset was beautiful and expensive. This narration of sources speaks to the importance and presence of corsets in the lives of women. However, publications available to the women of late nineteenth century Toronto expressed disparate opinions of the garment through articles about dress reform, as well as articles about how to wear corsets correctly for contemporary trends. In local newspapers, *The Toronto Star* and *The Globe*, women read articles that warned them of the health risks of corsets, and quoted dress reformers from their speaking engagements that encouraged them to remove their shackles. In the same publications, women read fashion advice columns that encouraged them to stay up to date with the latest trends, and gave advice about which style of corset best suited the fashion of the day. As more and more women pursued leisure activities and sports, they recognized that wearing the correct corset was important for comfort, whether they wore one while cycling or enjoying a relaxing summer's afternoon at the beach. The often radically contradictory views of corsets were also included in news stories. Corsets were represented as either instruments of death, a killer set close to the body, or as objects with the potential to save a life. The news of the day, often filled with apocryphal stories, contributed to complicating and obfuscating the actual everyday embodied experiences of the wearers. This view of corsets has filtered down through the generations.

This chapter argues that women of Toronto were presented with opposing views about the healthfulness of corsets, through newspapers, dress reform lectures and advertising, and further insists that some of the negative views have affected the reputation of corsets through subsequent generations. This chapter begins with an argument between two twentieth century scholars, Hélène Roberts and David Kunzle, on the issue of whether or not corsets can be viewed as a feminist garment. This analysis of their debate is followed by a short history of dress reform, including alternative modes of dress presented by reformers. Dress reform arguments were often based on medical information, which blamed corsets for a number of ailments, and claimed that corsets were directly related to a decline in birth rate. The fictions written by medical professionals about corsets were described in news stories; however, the journalists themselves were also often responsible for the creation of corset myths. News items and advice columns from Toronto newspapers are used as examples of how both positive and negative press corsets received, often in the same publication, or even by the same columnist, creating a complicated relationship between women and dress. Advice columns also provided women with information regarding the rapid changes in fashion, as well as advice for the growing popularity of leisure activities, and advised women on how to wear corsets while cycling, at the beach, or hiking. The final analysis of news items in this chapter argues that corsets were framed as protective armour in sensationalist journalism, and that corsets were such an integral part of women's lives that they were used as evidence in identification after violent crimes. This chapter ends with a material culture analysis of extant corsets with provenance tied to Toronto, and stories of the women who wore them, to help understand how women of Toronto wore their corsets, arguing against the 16 inch ideal, and again framing and presenting a variety of styles and choice in undergarments.

In academic writing, these views of corsets are reflected in a debate held in the journal *Signs* in 1977, nearing the end of second wave feminism and the fight against idealized domesticity, between Helène Roberts and David Kunzle. Roberts begins her article "The Exquisite Slave" by making essentialist statements about the differences between men and women's clothing, (serious vs. frivolous; active vs. inactive; strong vs. delicate; aggressive vs. submissive), without stating anything about class or specific changes in fashion during the vague "nineteenth century England and America" which she discusses.[1] She argues that women bore the burden of corsets because they were taught from a young age that pain was a woman's lot, based on the Old Testament and Eve's punishment for eating the fruit from the tree of knowledge.[2] There is the implicit suggestion by Roberts that Victorian women participated in a masochistic relationship with their corsets, where they derived a sexual pleasure from being bound and in pain, a suggestion which she does not approve of, clearly implying that this is not proper. Though she notes that photographs cannot be used as a source to prove how small waists were due to the practice of photo manipulation,[3] she later provides a photograph, with the heading "an example of extreme tight-lacing", which adds shock value to her argument in spite of the fact that the photograph shows an example of extreme body modification rather than the norm, and indeed, could have been altered. She cites medical professionals, and journal articles, which were later repeated by other scholars and popular media, who to this day preach the ills of corsets.

In his response, Kunzle calls Robert's position "antifeminist," and notes that the loudest proponents against corsets were not women themselves, but rather, men.[4] He argues that it was

[1] Helène Roberts. "The Exquisite Slave: The Role of Clothes in the Making of the Victorian Woman", *Signs* 2, no. 3 (Spring 1977), 555.
[2] Roberts, 557.
[3] Roberts, 558.
[4] David Kunzle. "Dress Reform as Antifeminism: A Response to Heène E. Robert's 'The Exquisite Slave: The Role of Clothes in the Making of the Victorian Woman", *Signs* 2, no. 3 (Spring 1977), 570.

not the corset that made women weak and submissive, but the lifestyle imposed on them, through multiple pregnancies, child rearing and household duties, and a cultural focus on sacred maternity. He notes the colonialist rhetoric touted by anti-corset writers, who equated tight lacing with "barbarism", and the ideology that corsets were "both cause and symptom of the inherited degeneracy of the Anglo-Saxon race".[5] Though the prevalence of tight-lacing as a practice is contested, reformers blamed all of womankind for the decline in the birth rate. Kunzle also takes exception to Robert's moral stance about the masochistic sensations surrounding tight-lacing, an argument that he supports with correspondences in *English Domesticwoman's Magazine*, wherein women wrote of the pleasing sensation they felt through being laced in. Kunzle rightly points out that this form of body modification was not simply the realm of women, but that men too, enjoyed tight-lacing. Most importantly, Kunzle defines "tight-lacing" as a practice that cannot be defined by a waist size, and indeed that there "is reason to suppose that far fewer women actually practiced tight-lacing... than the dress reformers made out, exaggerating the habit for polemical reasons".[6] This conflating of the practice of tight-lacing and regular corset wearing is where history is muddled, and where the idea of the Victorian woman as an exquisite slave is perpetuated through the generations. This confusion led to the popular rhetoric of corsets as harmful, as repeated in journal articles such as the 1982 article "Corsets and Conception" or indeed even as late as Leigh Summers 2001 book *Bound to Please*.[7] The anti-corset propaganda machine was long lasting and vocal well before 1977, and found its way to the women of Toronto, though not with any great degree of success, as corsets were still made, advertised, sold,

[5] Kunzle, "Dress Reform", 572.
[6] Kunzle, "Dress Reform", 574.
[7] Summers includes a chapter called "Corsets and Reality of 'Female Complaints'", wherein she argues that medical professionals refused to advocate for the removal of corsets because they dismissed the medical complaints of women.

and as this chapter will examine, worn on a daily basis by the majority of women and some men in Toronto.

Dress Reform

Popular fashions for women have long been a topic of debate, beginning with religious morality in the Middle Ages and lasting into the nineteenth century. This rhetoric stated that good Christians should be happy with the natural bodies that God gave them, and that to dress fashionably or extravagantly was sinful.[8] After the Industrial Revolution, the concern of dress reformers shifted to social and health problems caused by dress. Corsets, crinolines, and heavy skirts were targets for reform, and were cause for reformers to cite health and safety concerns. The first attempt at a creating a reform costume to replace the existing fashion was in the early 1850s, with the Bloomer (or American) costume, named for Amelia Bloomer, one of several American feminists who donned the costume.[9] This outfit was essentially a full skirt with a Turkish-style trouser, cut wide with the fullness gathered at the ankle, underneath. Bifurcated garments for women were an attempt at disrupting the set social roles of men and women, and challenged the role of clothing in the negotiation of power between the sexes.[10] Though popular media decried the use of tight corsets and the size of crinolines, the ire that women in Bloomers received in the same media was filled with even more vitriol, through accusations of immodesty and inversion.[11] The Bloomer costume demonstrated a catch-22 for women that followed dress reform through the nineteenth century and beyond. Critics of women's fashion did not want them wearing corsets. When an alternative was presented the women who adopted reform dress were

[8] Alison Matthews David. *Fashion Victims: The Dangers of Dress, Past and Present*. (London: Bloomsbury, 2015): 16.
[9] Aileen Ribeiro. *Dress and Morality* (Oxford: Berg, 2003), p. 133.
[10] Gayle Fischer. *Pantaloons and Power: A Nineteenth-century Dress Reform in the United States*. (Kent: Kent State University Press, 2001): 4.
[11] Ribeiro, 133.

criticized for being immoral and overly masculine. Dress reform, it became clear, was less about concern for women's health, but rather about controlling and problematizing women's bodies, and using their perceived frivolity and desire to be fashionable as a scapegoat for other social and medical problems.

Women continued to promote bifurcated garments throughout the rest of the century, and a victory was eventually won through the adoption of the bicycling outfit, which was still initially quite shocking, as a bicycle riding lady in Toronto's working-class East End caused enough of a stir that there was a story in the *Toronto Star* in 1894: "A Sackville street widow who rides a bicycle has introduced bloomers into Toronto. She is quite a curiosity in the East End".[12] Dress reform was not simply an attempt to remove women from corsets, thus magically solving all of society's ills, but also included rational dress, through the adoption of loose fitting clothes, wool undergarments, and natural dyes. Rational dress literature framed modern dress as unhealthy, and insisted that without health there could not be beauty.[13]

The umbrella topic of dress reform included three popular themes: heat regulation, the effects of tight clothing on organs, and the unnaturalness of fashionable clothing.[14] The wearing of fashionable clothing, it was argued by reformers, caused Canadian women to introduce social and moral problems, such as defective genes, poverty, and crime. The argument towards defective heredity, however, was framed as undoubtedly the fault of corseted women. Medical literature from Queen's University cited congestion of the blood and displaced uterus as a hazard

[12] "Bloomers in Toronto", *The Toronto Evening Star* (Saturday, June 30, 1894), 1.
[13] Kimberly Wahl. *Dressed as in a Painting: Women and British Aestheticism in an Age of Reform*. (Durham: University of New Hampshire Press, 2013): 17.
[14] Eileen O'Connor. "Constructing Medical Social Authority on Dress in Victorian Canada", *Canadian Bulletin of Medical History/ Bulletin Canadien d'Histoire de la Médecine* 25, no. 2 (2008), 393.

of fashionable dress.[15] A Canadian almanac, compiled by "Leading Canadian Men" called *The Family Physician or, Everyman his own Doctor*, from 1889 warned readers of the dangers of prolapsed uterus from tight lacing and heavy clothes (an unlikely concern for the "everyman" of their readership), wherein the pressure placed on the abdomen caused "the uterus to press down the vagina until it sometimes comes out externally".[16] This was just one of the many possible illnesses that medical professionals of the nineteenth century blamed on corsets, a list which also included "stupidity".[17]

One of the greater problems that the anti-corset set faced was the marked decline in birth rates in the decades on either side of the turn of the century. By wearing corsets, reformers feared that "millions" of babies were potentially killed in pregnancy or after birth, causing the death of the upper and middle classes, with one American female doctor, Alice Stockham, stating that this would "leave the propagation to the coarse grained but healthy lower classes".[18] This statistic regarding birth rate was examined by Mel Davies, a male professor whose main academic interest was in Australian mining history, for the *Society of Comparative Studies in Society and History* in 1982. His article "Corsets and Conception" begins with a list of possibilities for the decline in birth rates, including greater knowledge of contraception, women marrying later, changing roles of women in society, and a conscious decision by families to have fewer children for economic purposes.[19] However, he dismisses all these options and quotes historian Lorna Duffin, asking, "Why was there an apparent explosion of female disease in the second half of the

[15] O'Connor, 396.
[16] O' Connor, 396.
[17] Mel Davies. "Corsets and Conception: Fashion and Demographic Trends in the Nineteenth Century", *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 24, no. 4 (Oct. 1982), 628.
[18] O'Connor, 398.
[19] Davies, 614.

nineteenth century" if not because of corsets.[20] This argument ignores the use of lead in cosmetics,[21] arsenic in a number of clothing and decorative items,[22] and mercury in hats,[23] among other environmental poisons and toxins, as well as contageons of everyday Victorian life which affected the health and wellbeing of women. His argument is supported by a study that measured photographs and fashion plates to prove that the problem of tight-lacing was common, in spite of contemporary sources citing the average waist size was between 25 and 28 inches. Because of the alleged categorical proof of images, Davies argues that the average waist size was 17 to 21 inches.[24] The use of photographs, and more troubling, illustrations, is problematic because of their ability to be altered or falsified, and presenting an ideal rather than a reality invoking Barthes' statement that "the Photograph is an extended, loaded evidence- as if it caricatured not the figure of what it represents, but its very existence".[25] Davies also cites an article which was used as evidence by Roberts, and was published in Norah Waugh's *Corsets and Crinolines* (likely where they both initially read it) which tells the story of a young woman at a "fashionable London school, where young girls had their corsets tightened one inch per month until the desired size was achieved". What both Davies and Roberts both conveniently leave out is the final line, "I have never suffered any ill effects myself, and, as a rule, our school was singularly free from illness".[26] Regardless of the fact that prestigious London schools were not the norm for the majority of the population, Roberts and Davies cherry-pick the sensationalist statement of attempting to achieve a small waist, omitting the moral of the story that no harm came to the author. Also troubling is that fact that both Roberts and Davies cite

[20] Davies, 623.
[21] Matthews-David, 23.
[22] Matthews-David, 81.
[23] Matthews-David, 44.
[24] Davies, 618
[25] Roland Barthes. *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*. (New York: Hill and Wang): 115.
[26] Waugh, 141.

Havelock Ellis, a vocal proponent of eugenics, to support their arguments. Furthermore, Ellis was on record as being pro-corset, as, according to him, evolution had created a woman who was too weak to be supported on her own, and thus required the garment to fix the feebleness of the female form.[27] By focusing only on the publications of dress reform, and by skewing data and citations, historians like Roberts and Davies have perpetuated the rhetoric of corsets as instruments of death, and certainly these tales make for far more interesting reading than women who were comfortable in their dress. However, this rhetoric incorrectly assumes that all women practiced tight lacing, rather than wearing their corsets to create a moderate shape.

The literature surrounding dress reform, as well as the lectures by social reformers, were loaded with statements from medical professionals, warning women of the ills that might befall them if they were foolhardy enough to be more concerned with their appearance than their health. In 1876, a dress reform book was printed in Montreal, called *Dress and Health, or How to be Strong, a Book for Ladies*. This book was a compilation of works, including essays and lectures by American dress reformers. The tone of this book from the outset was one of anti-feminist rhetoric, stating that dress reform should not be conflated with the "ill-odored Women's Rights Movement", nor should it be confused with earlier attempts of dress reform such as the Bloomer costume and the mannish garb associated with it. [28] Though the introduction states that the information was obtained by four female medical professionals, the first chapter begins with a long quote by a male doctor, who apart from the unspecified "unhealthfulness" of the corset, states that it is "palpably ugly",[29] a rhetoric often repeated, as it was understood that the role of women was to be visually pleasing for men. Furthermore, he states, the dress of women was

[27] Fields, 358.
[28] *Dress and Health: or How to be Strong, a Book for Ladies* (Montreal: John Dougall & Son, 1876): 5.
[29] *Dress and Health*, 12.

complicated, and took too much time to arrange, which took women away from their domestic duties, deprived them of sleep, and indeed gave them no time for intellectual pursuits.[30] The third chapter surrounds the writing of a female doctor, Mary J. Safford-Blake. She tells several stories, tinged with nationalistic tones as demonstrated through the statement, "The physical degeneracy of the mothers will leave its impress upon sons as well as daughters; and in the end, the national strength languishes under the weakness of inheritance".[31] She also includes anecdotes about her medical practice as evidence of the need for dress reform. In one she described performing an autopsy on a woman in Vienna, who died after a brick house collapsed on her. This woman was of interest to Dr. Safford because she was not corseted. Much to her surprise, however, the deceased woman's liver had been severed in two, her ribs overlapped, and the womb, which as every medical practitioner of the nineteenth century knew, wandered about the body, was nowhere near its intended location. This displacement of internal make-up was due, not to the fact that a building had collapsed on her, but rather, because this particular Viennese woman laboured while wearing a tight belt.[32] If a belt could do such horrors, she argued, imagine what a full torso experiencing compression would look like.

Thirty years after Dr. Safford examined the body of the Viennese house collapse victim, an article in *The Globe* described a lecture by dress reformer, Dr. Jennie Grey. After listening to Grey lecturing about how men are far healthier than women because of their dress, an audience member asked her why women live longer than men, if men's dress was so healthful. Her answer was "women do not use tobacco or whiskey so much".[33] The topics of temperance and dress reform were often championed by the same people. For example, in 1901, Mrs. Carrie Nation

[30] *Dress and Health*, 14.
[31] *Dress and Health*, 19.
[32] Dress and Health, 20.
[33] "Pretty, but Unhealthy: Corsets Create Fat and Trains Nurture Germs". *The Globe*, (Toronto, ON), April 12, 1905, p. 14.

"Famous saloon smasher", concluded her talk at Massey Hall by stating that corsets "were the instruments of the devil for squeezing the life out of women and destroying the natural beauty of their form".[34] The concept of "nature" and "natural law" which is present in most dress-reform propaganda invokes a sense of Darwinian theory, which again speaks to a eugenicist branch of medical intervention, which was not uncommon for the period.[35]

Corsets were not the only article of clothing worn by women that received the ire of reformers, whose complaints were often contradictory. The tightness and weight of dress was considered problematic to women's health, as were the number of layers worn, but also the thinness of garments. Veils, false hair, high heels, garters, skirt trains and the length of skirts were also called into question. The ideal outfit for a woman, according to the reformers cited in the pages of *Dress and Health*, was not too long, but also not too short, had few layers, but of materials that could provide enough warmth, was loose enough but still following the curves of the body to show a woman's natural beauty, with the weight distributed at the shoulders, rather than from the waist, and no elastic anywhere (Fig. 4-1).

Figure 4-1 Suspender solution for skirts and garters, designed to take weight off of the waist. *Health and Dress*, 1874.

Though the arguments of nineteenth century dress reformers were based on writings of medical professionals of the era, this was a time in medicine which was particularly difficult for women's bodies. Menstruation, pregnancy and

[34] "Go, Smash, Says Carrie". *The Globe*, (Toronto, ON), Sept. 19, 1902 p. 12.
[35] Angus McLaren. *Our Own Master Race: Eugenics in Canada, 1885-1945* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Inc., 1900): 23.

menopause were considered chronic disorders, and childbirth was viewed as a surgical procedure.[36] While at the same time reformers called for the return of natural female beauty, the doctors whose medical opinions they were repeating were pathologizing biological functions associated with the female body. The Victorian doctor is partly responsible for the "cult of female invalidism", wherein the educated, leisured middle class woman was ideally transformed into a sickly waif in need of constant medical attention through suggested illnesses, and blood-letting to cure them.[37] This invalidism was intended to keep her out of politics and social issues, and ensured that she was, if not bedridden, then at least too weak to participate in vigorous activities. This goal was not always met, as more women participated in sports and leisure activities outside of the home, and as will be discussed later, had specific corsets to wear for each. Scholars have theorized that many illnesses were psychosomatic,[38] and this, combined with the lengthy lists of illnesses allegedly caused by corsets, made it easy to imagine how a woman could believe she was more ill than she actually was. Indeed, medical professionals even blamed corsets for the pain of childbirth, as though it were not a naturally painful process.[39] This is not to discount the fact that there were women who experienced discomfort through dress, or that there were women who were legitimately ill, nor is this diminishing the roles dress reformers played in early feminism, or the fact that body autonomy was not an option for many Victorian women. However, it is important to note that the treatment of women's bodies by medical practitioners at this time was horrific, and that the deaths in childbirth, the infant mortality rate, and the invalidity of women was easier to blame on women being foolishly dressed, than on medical ineptitude, especially if the medical practitioners were men.

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[36] Mary Poovey. "'Scenes of an Indelicate Character': The Medical 'Treatment' of Victorian Women". *The Making of the Modern Body: Sexuality and Society in the Nineteenth Century*, Catherine Gallagher and Thomas Laqueur, eds. (Berkley: University of California Press, 1987): 137.
[37] Shorter, 249.
[38] Wolf, 224.
[39] *Dress and Health*, 88.

Newspapers and mass-circulation periodicals frequently published horror stories about the ills of corsets, and these relied on the medical ignorance of the general population of the day. For example, one story from 1903 described how a woman in Niagara Falls, New York, who died from a piece of corset steel entering her heart. However, this was not a quick, violent death. Rather, it was discovered during her autopsy that two 8-inch steels had been worked to a razors' edge by the movement of her body. The doctors assumed that the steels had entered her body over time, either by being swallowed, and working their way from the intestines to the heart, or else had been absorbed by the body, and "worked around until (the heart was) found".[40] Neither of these possibilities sounds plausible without a great deal of discomfort and knowledge, and the latter implies that her corset had never been removed for laundering, or for bathing, but had been worn long enough for her body to grow around the errant steels, which then worked their way through her ribs. In another example, from 1905, the aforementioned Dr. Jennie Grey claimed that wearing corsets, rather than reducing the waist, actually caused "unhealthful fat".[41] The article did not elaborate exactly how Dr. Grey described this production of fat, simply that she preyed on the vanity of women who wore corsets to keep themselves slim by telling them their corsets were why they had body fat. Perhaps the most damning false tale of a doctor warning against corsets comes from 1913. *The Globe* reported that an English doctor, Dr. Herbert Patterson, spoke in Chicago about an operation performed on a stomach, replacing an inactive pylorus (the opening between the stomach and small intestine). The newspapers claimed that the pylorus had become inactive, according to the surgeons, due to tight corsets.[42] One week later, however, another article was printed, this time quoting Dr. Patterson directly, stating " I

[40] "Steel in her Heart, A Remarkable Discovery During an Autopsy", *The Globe*, (Toronto, ON), Oct 31, 1903, p. 5.
[41] *The Globe*, April 12, 1905, p. 14.
[42] "Physicians Warn Against Tight Corsets and Belts: Remarkable Operation by a London Surgeon at the Clinical Congress". *The Globe*, (Toronto, ON), Nov. 25, 1913, p. 2.

performed an operation, the technique of which was described in the press rather well, but they went on to quote me as ascribing the condition of the patient to the wearing of corsets. And now I find that there has been published all over America and, I fear, also in the old country, a denunciation by myself of the evils of tight lacing as producing the condition which I found in the case in Chicago. I was rather shocked at this, for I never mentioned corsets. And I have no doubt that the man I operated upon will be very angry too."[43] The original article had created facts which did not exist, and indeed the operation was not even performed on a woman. It begs the question how many articles were written that involved fictionalized accounts, or re-imagining of truths, for the sake of propaganda, and never had retractions printed.

Because of the controversy surrounding them, corsets were a popular topic for Agony Aunt[44] columns in newspapers, as the women of Toronto wrestled with the information received from books such as *Dress and Health*, from speakers urging them to remove their shackles, possibly from their doctors, or even their husbands and friends. In 1911, Rose Rambler, Agony Aunt for *The Globe*, received the question "Do we women ask for and get the hats that we really want? Are we the mistresses, or are we the slaves of what we are pleased to call the style?" Her response used a statement from the opponents of suffrage in that "if women cannot dress sensibly, how can they be expected to vote sensibly?", and that women are often ridiculed in joke columns for their "extreme and ridiculous" fashions. She told the reader that many fashions were designed by men, and claims that "a man, too, is responsible, it is said, for the use of corsets, one having invented them somewhere around the Middle Ages, as a punishment for his wife".[45] A couple of months after this, Rose Rambler once again gave fashion advice, this time from a

[43] "Put Word 'Corsets' in Surgeon's Mouth: Ingenuity of American Reporters Staggers Mr. Patterson". *The Globe*, (Toronto, ON), Nov. 26, 1913, p. 8.
[44] An Agony Aunt is a newspaper columnist who receives letters asking for advice, and the responses and letters are published.
[45] Rose Rambler. "The Dress Problem", *The Globe* (Toronto, ON), Feb. 11, 1911, p. 11.

woman asking why the harem skirt was so unacceptable, ending her note with "Why are we so afraid? Let us wear it if we want to". Rose replied "the name damns it... it would mean greater freedom with a greater measure of health", but ultimately it had not stuck as a fashion, not because of the colonialist ideology against harems, rather because "the men don't like it".[46] She did, however, make an accurate prediction in that "the women of the time (the future) will look upon the dress of to-day as we look upon the iron-ribbed corset of good Queen Bess", that is, confused by the sartorial trappings which allegedly limited their existence.

At the same time that Rose Rambler was giving advice about dress reform, Amelia Sedley was telling readers that corsets were not such a great social evil. "A German Girl" wrote in to *The Globe* to ask if wearing a corset was injurious, as she had never worn one before coming to Canada, and since she began wearing one which reduced her waist by four inches, she did not have her health or work affected. The response Amelia gave was that "I do not think it is injurious at all", as the corset style of the day was far different than the "almost criminally injurious" corsets of the past.[47] The following week she received another letter arguing with her about the nature of corsets, at which point she changed her story, and stated that indeed, no healthy girl needs a corset, but that not all girls are healthy, and this is not from wearing improper clothing, but rather invokes Havelock Ellis, stating that "it is part of their birth-heritage, often the result of too heavy labour", and to these women, the corset was indispensable.[48] These Agony Aunt columns demonstrate the complexity of the corset problem, and a few of the contemporary arguments for and against the practice.

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[46] Rose Rambler. "Shall We Wear the Harem Skirt?", *The Globe* (Toronto, ON), May 9, 1911, p. 5.
[47] Amelia Sedley. "A Question in Dress", *The Globe* (Toronto, ON), July 17, 1911, p. 5.
[48] Amelia Sedley. "The Dress Problem", *The Globe* (Toronto, ON), July 21, 1911, p. 5.

Missing from many arguments about the demise of the corset is the tyranny of slenderness, as Susan Bordo calls it, which had been engrained in the North American cultural psyche, through fad diets, and of course the ever present corset, from the end of the 1890s. Exercise for women and healthfulness had also become common place, and the idea of using corsets to create an artificial slenderness was beginning to be replaced with a call for exercise instead. An article from *The Star* in 1896 titled "For Stout Women" described a Toronto woman weighing 200 pounds, but who did not appear to weigh more than 150 pounds. She was the president of the Physical Culture and Correct Dress Club, and stated that corsets should be discarded in favour of physical culture, particularly for stout women.[49] Interestingly, the article that followed was about bicycle suits, and the divided skirt; a healthful activity and the clothing that accommodated it. 17 years later, this encouragement of exercise in lieu of corsets continued. This article included advice from a Dr. Woods Hutchinson on how to reduce fat and keep lithe. She stated "Contrary to the popular impression, corsets do not make waistlines. We had a waistline before corsets were invented..." She continued to describe that the way to obtain waistlines was to exercise the "great front group of muscles" (abdominals), which were usually hidden by fat, and which tend to go out of use. She described in detail exactly how one should go about activating these muscles, through a series of exercises targeting them. Dr. Wood Hutchinson concluded that these exercises can be done alongside tennis, swimming, horseback riding, golf and mountain climbing, as these were also exercises that aid in the development of those front muscles. Most importantly, they should be "carried out in the open air and with enough enjoyableness about them" that they will be repeated.[50] These statements advising exercise and healthfulness were more positive ways of encouraging women to remove corsets. Rather than placing the demise of

[49] "For Stout Women", *The Toronto Evening Star* (Toronto, ON), April 25, 1896, p. 3.
[50] "On Keeping Lithe", *The Globe*, (Toronto, ON), May 13, 1913, p. 5.

civilization on the shoulders of womankind because of their desire to be fashionable, these writers emphasized how exercise could have a positive impact on a woman's life. However, as Valerie Steele notes, by the 1970s to the turn of the twenty-first century, "the hard body replaced the boned corset"[51], and the tyranny of slenderness continues through diets and plastic surgery, and rather than the corset being exterior, the corset is a muscular interior. Once women removed corsets and girdles in the 1960s, the internal corset was created through fitness.

Due to the prevalence of dress reform in the media, corset companies responded by making products that catered to the growing concern over corsets and health. This propaganda is seen through the names of companies, such as the American Corset and Dress Reform Co., and the Corset Scientist, discussed in Chapter 1. Though many companies offered alternatives to their more standard corsets, Crompton's advertised theirs in a way that demonstrated the concerns of dress reformers. One advertisement which first appeared in the *Toronto Star* in 1897 (Fig. 4-2) features an illustration of the Hygieian corset, a name that alludes to the classical Grecian figure, which resembles their child and adolescent models with straps and button-front closure, albeit illustrated as being as shapely as their other adult styles.[52] The illustration also shows the corset with boning channels, though it is likely that they had cord rather than bones, as it was less rigid. The advertisement is laid out with the corset displayed on the left side, and a poem on the right side. The poem extols the virtues of wearing a Crompton's

Figure 4-2 Advertisement for Crompton Hygieian corset, ideal for women interested in dress reform. *The Toronto Daily Star*, December 2, 1897.

[51] Steele, 165.
[52] *The Toronto Daily Star*, (Toronto, ON), Dec. 2, 1897, p. 30.

Hygieian waist, stating that it does not rely on padding or bustles to give it "style". It laments that if only women understood the "mischief" of a tight corset that they would allow "Dame Nature have her way". There are many ironies in this advertisement, among which is the fact that this company became successful, and remained successful, because of women "staying" their waists. Every other advertisement for Crompton's adult corsets were for shapely, heavily boned garments. Further, the poem in the advertisement is shaped like a heavily corseted woman's body, pinched in at the centre, and wider above, like the chest and hips.

Fashion Advice

Though it may appear that dress reformers had taken over the pages of Toronto's newspapers and periodicals at the turn of the twentieth century, they were not the only authors of corset related articles. Toronto's newspapers also published stories about corsets unrelated to dress reform, which ranged from the mundane to the sensational. Articles described them as an aspect of everyday life included corsets as a prize for a flower show, where "the prizes... include two pairs of corsets, a pair of bloomers, and a ton of coal".[53] Many columns explained changes in fashions and discussed how to wear corsets to accommodate the latest mode, how to dress different figures, or summer corsets. With the rise of activity and leisure pursuits, articles about how to dress for activities were prevalent. Bicycle riding in particular, was a popular topic of discussion. *The Ladies Journal* suggested in 1895 that corsets should not be worn while cycling, instead hygiene waists should be adopted for this purpose.[54] This article also dismissed that "mannish costume of knickerbockers and jackets which originated in Paris, and is burlesqued by the prints in the press". Instead they suggest "A distinctive, modest and comfortable costume

[53] "Sir Casimir Opens the Flower Show", *The Toronto Evening Star*, (Toronto, ON), Nov. 24, 1896, p. 1.
[54] "Another Champion of the Wheel", *The Ladies' Journal* (May 1895), 7.

should be decided upon for the wheel". The author suggested instead, wearing "the woven equestrian tights, a pair of easy fitting tan shoes and stockings of the same shade... a dress of any dark shade of cloth with a 'sweater' of fine ribbed wool, and a silk sash and visor cap of crimson. This costume is comfortable and neat". As is often the case with publications making statements about taste, four months later, the Paris Bicycle Outfit was featured in *The Ladies Journal*. Here they stated that in lieu of a corset, a leather ceinture should be worn with the Paris bicycle outfit. In spite of these suggestions, or perhaps because of them, companies began making bicycle corsets which were looser fitting and had elasticized panels for ease of movement.

Another activity that women participated in larger numbers was swimming. Toronto's location on Lake Ontario, the presence of Toronto Island, and the growing popularity of vacationing at any number of Southern Ontario's lakeside resorts or cottages, meant that the city's population had no shortage of beaches at which to enjoy a summer's afternoon. As well as the moral quandary of men and women enjoying a leisure activity together in a state of relative undress, this also posed a problem of wardrobe, particularly, the question of whether or not a corset should be worn with a bathing costume. One article discussed the latest trends in bathing attire, including fabrics used, such as silk, mohair and serge, necklines, collars and skirts, rubber caps and knotted kerchiefs to cover hair (Fig. 4-3). Regarding corsets, it stated, "while corsets should not be worn in the water, there are girdles on purpose for stout people, and if one is not able to secure those a good, strong cotton underwaist, plain and close fitting is the next best thing; thin people may add some fullness here and there in the making, so that when wet the garments cling too closely, and reveal the bones."[55] A few years later, another article stated, "the suit which combines the waist and skirt, and is worn over a black union suit, is the simplest and most

[55] "Fashion's Features", *The Globe*, (Toronto, ON), June 13, 1908, p. 23.

convenient" style of bathing costume. And again, this article does not encourage the use of the corset, as "a corset is uncomfortable to wear in the water" and encouraged instead "a more satisfactory way is to have the bathing suit cut with a stout and well-fitted lining. This should be fitted with darts and fastened down the front".[56] Unlike bicycle corsets, companies did not provide the beach-goers of Toronto with an alternative to being un-corseted. Perhaps even they knew that a wet corset would not be a pleasant sensation.

Figure 4-3 Image of swimwear worn withuth a corset, and with a kercheif covering the hair. *The Globe,* June 13, 1908.

Such articles not only advised Toronto women how to dress for sport with their corsets, they also gave practical advice for changing fashions, or, for those who were not prepared to throw away corsets, suggestions for how to wear them in a healthful, and still stylish, manner. One doctor, in 1895, suggested that ladies of Toronto, should they wish to fight wrinkles, pale cheeks and dull eyes, change their dress to include, among other items, easy fitting corsets.[57] These ideas echo the teachings of dress reformers, but without removing the corset altogether. The rapid changes in fashion also required some explanation of how they best worked with corsets. In 1904, "tight dresses (were) in fashion again", and readers of *The Globe* were advised that

[56] "Fashions in Bathing Suits", *The Globe*, (Toronto, ON), Sept. 12, 1912, p. 5.
[57] "Particularly for Women", *The Toronto Evening Star*, (Toronto, ON), March 1, 1895, p 2.

the straight fronted corsets of the previous year no longer worked with these fashions, as they "spoiled the shape by rounding the shoulders because of lack of back support".[58] The following year, however, the lines had changed to accommodate a more rounded figure, with dresses still cut close to the body. In previous years, blouses (shirt waists) were worn that were not cut close, and, as one article stated "the shape of the corset did not matter so very much, and the focus of the corset maker was on the hip".[59] To assist with this transition, and because "flesh cannot be grown at fashion's demand overnight", bust padding and enhancers, as well as hip padding were required to create a more curvaceous figure, much like padded bras and underwear worn to emulate a fuller figure today. Indeed, the fashions of 1905 demanded "a goodly padding of flesh upon one's bones" as "the days of beautiful bones are over".

Though, fashion, ever the fickle mistress who changed her mood quickly, declared in 1907 that "no one will be fat... curves will be unfashionable and hips impossible".[60] And, of course, this relied on a good corset to provide the straight figure with no hips that 1907 silhouettes demanded. A well fitted and up to date corset ensured that "there is no need of any woman appearing fat unless she is lazy and wants to so appear". With these constant and disparate changes in fashion from year to year, it is no wonder that dress reformers thought that corsets affected the mental well-being of women, who one year were being told their curves were chic, and the next being told that they were fat.

One of the issues that current critics of corsets seem to forget is the fact that corsets were a foundation to the clothing of the nineteenth century. By not wearing a corset a woman risked not

[58] "Tight Fitting Clothes", *The Globe*, (Toronto, ON), Nov. 19, 1904, p. 14.
[59] "The New Corset and the New Figure", *The Globe*, (Toronto, ON), Jan. 14, 1905, p. 14.
[60] "No One Will be Fat", *The Globe*, (Toronto, ON), Sept. 11, 1907, p. 8.

performing according to social decorum, as Erving Goffman's theories suggest.[61] To refrain from wearing a corset would be to risk sanctions from fellow members of society. This was not in a sense of women's subordination, but it would have been equally untoward for a man to dress outside of the sartorial norm, and indeed it is the fear of social censure that explains why cross-dressing happened in private clubs (as well as the fact that stepping outside of heteronormativity was a criminal offence, both in the eyes of the law and God).[62] Consider the current state of women's dress. It is legal in Toronto for women to go topless in public; however, this mode of dress is seldom seen because it is considered contrary to the decorum of contemporary society. For a woman to go un-corseted in the early twentieth century meant risking being treated differently, negatively, by people around her, as she stepped outside of a behavioural norm.[63] While this was fine for some women, such as dress reformers, who were willing to accept the brunt of abuse, and who had the economic capital required to flout decorum, being socially different was not necessarily an acceptable result for many women whose lives were difficult enough as they were.

Tying into Crime

Corsets were not simply a fashion item, or a physical embodiment of the controversy surrounding the control of women's bodies. They were also a frequently used as a clue in crime reporting. Toronto publications reported several instances where corsets were involved, directly or indirectly, in the prevention of crime, or used to identify victims of crimes. Lawsuits over corset patents, as seen in previous chapters, were a regular news story in Toronto papers, as the intellectual property and ingenuity of design was an integral factor in business success. In 1891,

[61] Erving Goffman. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (New York: Double Day, 1959): 108.
[62] Lyle Dick. "The Queer Frontier: Male Same-Sex Experience in Western Canada's Settlement Era", *Journal of Canadian Studies* 48, no. 1 (Winter, 2014), p. 20.
[63] Goffman, 112.

inventiveness and crime prevention merged in one corset. Though it was allegedly a French invention, *The Canadian Dry Goods Review* wrote about it twice, in June and November of that year. The first article framed it as a new invention, a patented corset with a whistle attachment, which "when pressure is applied from the outside it shrieks loudly".[64] The intention of this invention was to prevent young ladies from experiencing physical harassment from men. *The Review* did not approve of this invention, and called the creator simple minded. The second article puts into question whether or not this invention actually existed, as it was framed as an anecdotal story. This time the story originated in Moncton, New Brunswick and is a retelling of a news story from *The Moncton Transcript*. It tells of a bashful young man who had been calling on a young lady of the town but "could never summon up courage enough to pop the question". Evidently one evening as they sat in a dark parlor in silence, a loud whistle was heard around 10:00 pm, and when the girl's father rushed in and turned up the gas, he found the pair in an embrace. The young man told the father of his intentions, and the pair were engaged. Later the young man learned that the tell-tale shriek had originated from the "recently patented electric corset provided by her father, which when pressed sounded the alarm".[65] These stories, while humorous, perpetuate the idea that women's bodies were the properties of the men in their lives, whose chastity must be preserved at any cost. I have never seen an advertisement for this whistle corset, nor have I read about it in any text. It is likely that this corset was apocryphal, cast as a real invention, and a reminder that women's bodies were a site of purity that needed to be protected. Such stories that get passed through the generations as evidence that corsets were an object of control. They are reminiscent of the tales of women having ribs removed in order to have a smaller waist, which were mentioned in lay press articles. There is no medical evidence

[64] *Canadian Dry Goods Review* 1, no. 6 (June 1891), 11.
[65] *Canadian Dry Goods Review* (Nov. 1891), 10.

indicating that this procedure ever took place, yet it remains one of the most strongly held beliefs about women's bodies in the nineteenth century.[66]

Humorous stories of crime prevention did not overshadow legitimate crimes involving corsets. Crimes perpetrated by women showed what the condition of modernity did to allegedly degrade women's minds, and crimes against women cast them as damsels in need of saving. In 1898, Toronto resident, Mrs. Eliza Young, was brought to trial for defrauding Miss Mary McCallum, and numerous other women. She had led her victims to believe that their friends or relatives had ordered corsets and sent her to collect money, $1.00 or $1.50. Her scheme was uncovered, and Miss McCallum turned her into the authorities.[67] The article does not specify where the alleged family and friends had ordered corsets from, or if Mrs. Young was posing as an agent or corset maker. Corsets and theft also paired well together through shoplifting, as one story from 1903 tells. Two young women, who the newspaper noted were finely dressed, were arrested for stealing from Eaton's. These two women were allegedly the first female prisoners to be entered in the books of the temporary police station at City Hall. They were caught attempting to steal a box of bonbons, and upon examining their other packages, the officers discovered a tooth brush, combs, fur, silk skirts, corsets, three gowns, and a pair of gauntlets. Mary Sherman and Edith Squire, it was discovered, were well versed in the practice of shoplifting, and the article notes that from their demeanour it was clear they had both been arrested before, with one of them stating that the prison cell reminded her of the reformatory.[68] The act of shoplifting was an alleged by-product of the burgeoning consumer culture. Women, it was thought, were seduced by pretty objects which they could not afford. Seen as a type of hysteria, the act became less

[66] Steele, 73.
[67] "Fraud in Corsets", *The Toronto Evening Star*, (Toronto, ON) March 23, 1898, p. 2.
[68] "Wholesale Shoplifting", *The Globe*, (Toronto, ON), Jan. 6, 1903, p.12.

about obtaining goods that women needed, and more about how pretty objects made women mad, and the thrill of the act.[69] Middle-class women were generally not considered capable of criminal acts, but the consumer desires and the machinations of capitalism allowed these gendered limits to be challenged, creating a rise in consumer crimes committed by women.[70]

One unexpected and interesting trope that emerged from news stories involving corsets was one that cast the corset in the role of hero, an indispensable item that could save a life, and one that emerged in the newspapers multiple times during this research. In 1871 *The Globe* reported a story from Brockville, a town about 300 km away from Toronto, wherein a father and son, for reasons unknown, shot into the home of another family. The reporter opened the story by stating that Elliot and his son lived in a tenement house "for the poorer classes". They fired through a window at the Sheridan family with horse pistols. One of the shots hit the 17 year old Sheridan daughter in the back. However, she was not killed, because the bullet struck her corset steel "which broke the force of the ball".[71] Another story from 1912 demonstrated how news reporting had evolved and provided more details, creating an intriguing tale of jealousy, lust, and attempted murder. A burlesque performer from Chicago, named Agnes Cartello and her manager David Gillespie, were travelling from Toronto to Hamilton by automobile, after a recent engagement at the Ziegfeld Moulin Rouge. While in Toronto, Cartello received a wire from her husband, Clarence Abenstein, who was a comedian on the burlesque circuit, in which he threatened to kill her. He pursued Cartello and Gillespie by auto, and a few miles outside of Toronto caught up with them, shooting Cartello, and turning back to Toronto. Rather than go back to Toronto for medical attention, Gillespie continued on to Hamilton, where Cartello was

[69] Perrot, 65.
[70] Krista Lysack. *Come Buy, Come Buy: Shopping and the Culture of Consumption in Victorian Women's Writing*. (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2008): 10.
[71] *The Globe*, (Toronto, ON), Sept 1, 1871.

treated by Dr. Hopkins there. The report stated that Cartello had been shot in the left breast, but that the bullet had struck her corset steel, and deflected it. “The corset-steel probably saved her life”. This story could not be confirmed with police records as “the matter was not reported to the police”, despite the fact that it was reported to the newspaper, and with such detail.[72] The same story, published on the same day in *The Day Book* from Chicago, ended with the pair seeking medical treatment in Buffalo, rather than Hamilton.[73] Though the outcome of these two stories is the same, they differ wildly in many ways. The victims, both women, both saved by their corsets, are on separate ends of the moral spectrum. The first, Miss Sheridan, was an innocent girl, shot for unknown reasons. The second, Ms. Cortello, a burlesque dancer travelling with a man who was not her husband, was shot out of passion and jealousy. I was unable to confirm if either of these stories were true. The moral of the story is, no matter what dress reformers said, a corset might be what stood between a woman and being shot to death.

In the previous stories corsets saved lives, but after a woman had died, her corset could be used as a means of identification. A now famous unsolved murder, colloquially referred to as The Barton Murder, took place in October, 1905, and was reported in *The Globe*, as a special dispatch from Hamilton, 60km west of Toronto. Three boys discovered the body of a woman, partially covered by brush in Marshall’s Bush in Barton Township. She had been shot in the head, and her handkerchief had been placed in her mouth, as though to silence her. Witnesses saw a man and woman enter the woods in the morning, and others had seen the pair throughout the town. The body of the victim was displayed in a standing position at a funeral parlour to see if anyone could identify her, with locals as well as Toronto residents attending. The clothing of the woman was the only hope police had in identifying her, as her corset had the stamp of

[72] “Chorus Girl Shot Nearing Hamilton”, *The Globe*, (Toronto, ON), August 31, 1912, p. 2.
[73] “Man Shoots Wife”, *The Day Book*, (Chicago, IL), Aug 31, 1912, p. 3.

"Gimbel" on the interior. The American Lady Corset Company's office in Detroit confirmed that they sold goods at two Gimbel Brothers locations, one in Milwaukee, and the other in Philadelphia, and that none of their products were sold in Canada.[74] Two years later, a private detective traced the corset to the Milwaukee Gimble Brothers location.[75] In spite of leads and witness statements, the murder, and the identity of the victim, remained unsolved.

There are several other notable examples of corsets, among their other clothing items, being used to identify the unknown bodies of recently deceased women. One happened at a Niagara hotel in 1901, when a young lady checked in and took a lethal injection of morphine. Among the clothing items listed (which were detailed down to every last ribbon and braid) was a corset from the Kalamazoo Corset Co.[76] There was no follow up article with her identity. The second was a suicide on Toronto's island. A pile of clothing was located at the edge of the water by a group of cottagers in August, 1910. The clothes had been removed and neatly arranged by the water.[77] Among the clothing items listed was a corset. Its wearer's body was not located until September 7, when it was discovered floating in the Island lagoon by a sailor on his yacht.[78] The body was that of Mrs. Margaret MacWillie, a widow with three adult sons.[79] She had evidently removed most of her clothing, and paced the along the water, as indicated by the footprints along the shore noted by the police. The removal of her clothing is a symbolic gesture. In attempting suicide, wearing all of her clothing, which would have become heavy with water, would have assisted in pulling her beneath the surface. Freeing herself from the trappings of existence, such as clothing,

[74] "Detectives Puzzled by Murder Mystery", *The Globe*, (Toronto, ON), Oct. 18, 1905, p. 10.
[75] "Barton Murder Mystery", *The Globe*, (Toronto, ON), Feb 2, 1907, p. 7.
[76] "An Unknown Suicide", *The Globe*, (Toronto, ON), June 21, 1901, p. 2.
[77] "Another Mystery on the Island Sandbar", *The Globe*, (Toronto, ON), August 15, 1910, p. 7.
[78] "Woman's Body in Lagoon", *The Globe*, (Toronto, ON), September 8, 1910, p. 4.
[79] It is interesting to note that her residence before her death was at 378 Victoria St, on the site that Jorgenson Hall at Ryerson University is currently located.

and especially a corset which may have felt suffocating under the pressure of suicidal thoughts, may have assisted in freeing herself from this mortal coil.

Performing OCR searches in the leading newspapers for crimes related to corsets yielded no results from *The Toronto Star*, but *The Globe* had many, which likely speaks to the fallibility of OCR searches, rather than newspaper content, from the ones retold above, to a prisoner in Sault Ste. Marie attempting to slit his own throat with a sharpened corset steel.[80] Some stories were far-fetched and seemed unlikely, while others told of the importance of corsets in daily life of women, to the extent that they were used to try to identify victims of crime. Clothing became both identity and identification since it was an article almost all women wore, and even where it did not help in identifying or linking a specific woman to her clothing, it attests to the universality of corsets. Corsets served a dual purpose in crime reporting, much like fashion related articles: on the one end, the corset was an indispensable item for identifying crime victims, and on the other end it was used as a tool of death.

The Corsets of Toronto

The discussions in the previous pages provided many examples of how women of Toronto experienced corsetry through their lives in a large urban centre. However, the images in advertisements, and the biased, political and exaggerated newspaper articles, or even the words in history texts do not give a complete understanding of the size of corsets and how they were worn or repaired by the women who owned them. Due to the nature of the garment, that is the materials used, daily and aggressive wear, difficulties in washing, rusting from steel bones and findings, there are not many surviving artefacts directly relating to Toronto. As fashions changed rapidly, and corsets were an item worn daily, they likely wore out, or were not an item that

[80] *The Globe*, (Toronto, ON), Dec. 16, 1901, p. 1.

families kept for memories. Keeping grandmother's wedding dress for the memory is one thing, but keeping her underwear is something else entirely. Urban spaces also did not afford much room to keep generations of garments, so the items that are saved are from wealthy families, or items that were put away and not located for generations. However it is still important to examine these extant pieces, because "of all the methodologies used to study fashion, one of the most valuable is the interpretation of objects".[81] By looking at the object itself, it reveals the sizes worn, dates from patent stamps, materials, and repairs, and it creates a corporeal connection to the wearer. Examining the garments also aids in "unpack(ing) the multifaceted narratives embedded within" them, and echo the cultural norms of the time, in a way that written texts or images cannot.[82]

I conducted research at seven collections and museums in Montreal, London, ON, Cambridge, and Toronto, and contacted private collectors (Appendix F). The five corsets in Museum London are not useful for this chapter, as they were all made in London. However, they provide prices, and names of manufacturers outside of Toronto. Of the three corsets in the Fashion History Museum collection, only one was initially deemed useful for my inquiry, as I was initially told that it held provenance with Toronto. However, after eighteen months of attempting to follow-up with the museum, I was unable to obtain confirmation about the donor, and original owner. This corset, dating from 1900, had a hand-written initial and surname on the inside, but without the corroborative information from the museum records I cannot make assumptions about the owner. The other two included a 1919 Crompton corset, which according to curator Jonathan Walford, belonged to a Crompton employee, was received from her employer as a wedding present. The corset had never been worn. The other was a fitters' sample from Spirella in Niagara Falls from

[81] Valerie Steele. "A Fashion Museum is More than a Clothes-Bag", *Fashion Theory* 2, no. 4 (1998), p. 327.
[82] Mida and Kim, 16.

1939. The McCord Museum had seven corsets. Three were ET corsets, of the same model, “La Déesse 679” in sizes 16” to 22”, and one was a PC nursing corset, both companies from Quebec. Two had stamps on the inside with the company name worn off, but the statement “Made in Canada” visible. Of the seven, one was a Crompton corset, made in Toronto.

Within institutions in Toronto, it is most likely that the corsets donated were worn by Toronto residents, however, without provenance this is only speculation. The Ryerson Fashion Research Collection houses six corsets, ranging from a homemade ribbon corset, two silk ribbon corsets from America (one from the New York department store John Wanamaker), one grey steam molded Dominion, and one by Gossard. The latter is of particular interest because it was purchased at Eaton’s, and includes a bill of sale with the name and address of the woman who purchased it. This corset did not have a date, and was assumed to be from 1910, however, upon searching for the original owner, it was actually purchased after 1938. Even though this is out of the date range for this study it will be discussed below, because it provides interesting historiographical data. The four corsets housed at the City of Toronto Historic Collection all had provenance to a leading Toronto Family, the Austins of Spadina house. They will be examined further. The Royal Ontario Museum provided me with 13 corsets from their collection, ranging from c. 1870 to 1913. Among these with Toronto provenance are a c.1913 Crompton C/C à la Grâce corset in the original box (as well as a Dominion D&A La Diva also in a box, but the provenance cannot be confirmed). Other than this, there are two which have provenance to Toronto residents. The others either had no label or stamp, or were made elsewhere (as with the black and blue P&C from Belgium), including a nursing corset. Finally, the Seneca Fashion Research Collection had six corsets in their collection that were relevant. They had corsets as late as the 1930s, as well as children’s corsets. One of their corsets is allegedly from 1860, however,

it looks like a later model based on the shape. Unfortunately, they were not made in Toronto, nor was there provenance indicating ownership.

In spite of the fact that only 10 out of the 45 corsets examined have confirmed ties to Toronto, the other 35 are still able to provide some information about how corsets were worn. Based on the advertisements in the previous chapter, I noted that the sizes did not vary greatly in terms of waist measurements available over the 43 years of this examination. The mean measurement of the corsets I examined is 22 inches, which creates a 24 inch waist allowing for the two inch gap.[83] This average was taken from a range of measurements from 16 inches to 42.5, with a median measurement of 21 inches. This helps to disprove the myth of the 16 inch waist. Again, these garments likely belonged to wealthy women, members of the leisure class who could afford, in terms of lifestyle, to tight lace, indicating that the regular practice of corset wearing was not as extreme as tight-lacing, and that the two were indeed separate practices.

Figure 4-4 Reta Mole's Gossard corset features from lacing, c. 1938. Ryerson Fashion Research Collection. FRC 2013.06.001.

Ryerson Gossard Corset

The corset housed at the Ryerson Fashion Research Collection is included here because it provides an important lesson for research. (Fig. 4-4) This pink herringbone corset, has a

[83] At 5’9 in height, and with a 27” un-corseted waist, this is the size that I wear.

32” waist, with lacing at the front, which is situated next to a busk closure, and elastic panels below the bust. It was donated to the collection unworn, still in its box and with the bill of sale, which provided the name of the customer, her address, and the price. From these it is known that Mrs. Moles, residing at 5 Crang Ave. paid $9.50 for this corset. As mentioned above, the date was presumed to be in the 19-teens; however, upon inspection of the city directories for this decade, there was no one by that name at that address. There was, however, a Captain John W. Moles, living two blocks away on Glenholme Ave. Both of these streets are located in the St. Clair and Oakwood neighbourhood of Toronto. Upon searching the directory for every year, Mrs. Moles, the widow of John Moles at 5 Crang Ave., was not present until 1933. Mrs. Reta Moles was a teacher at Alexander Muir public school on Gladstone Ave. between Dundas and Queen, was employed there until the 1960s, and remained living at the same address. The inclusion of Reta’s unworn corset here, in spite of being twenty years too late, is indicative of how similar corsets from the early years of the 19-teens were, in comparison to girdles from the 1930s and 40s. This similarity is also seen with two corsets from the Seneca collection, compared side-by-side. The grey one is from c.1913, while the pink one is from the 1930s. It can be difficult to tell the difference between these two styles, as they were so similar. Both used steel bones, were sewn with machines, and may have included elastic panels. Both had garters attached. The main indication for the date of this

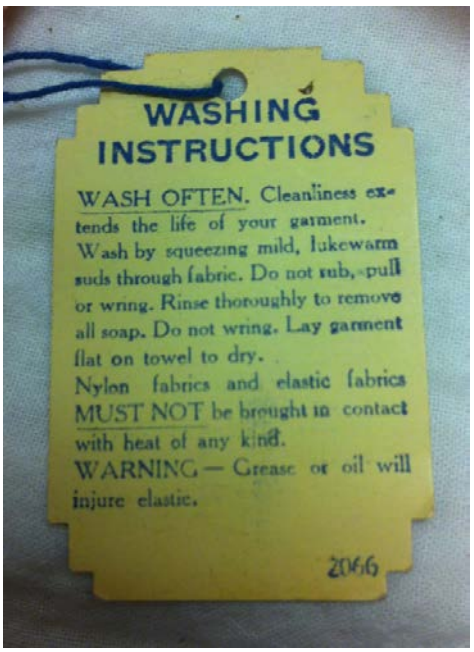

Figure 4-5 Washing instructions for the Gossard Line of Beauty. This label indicates that it is made of nylon, an indication of when the corset was made. Ryerson Fashion Research Collection. FRC 2013.06.001.

garment, upon closer inspection of the care tags (Fig. 4-5) that were still attached, is the tag with washing instructions with the fiber content. This states that the corset was made from Nylon, which was not invented until 1938.[84] This corset, or girdle, proves that even seasoned fashion historians can be mistaken, and even a researcher such as myself, who firmly believes that corsets did not disappear, can be taken by prejudice that corsets were relegated to the years prior to 1920. This example of mis-reading an artefact based on historical assumptions, rather than performing a close reading of the object, typified historian Giorgio Riello's views on material culture. That is, the material object not only provides historians another layer of document, albeit not a written one, to challenge the "broad narratives that preside over history as a subject", but also is a tool to further understand the past.[85]

Ethel Love and the Ribbon Corset

Ribbon corsets were a unique styled corset worn for sport or negligee purposes, and are often included in trousseaux for this reason.[86] They are so called because the main body of the corset is built from strips of fabric or ribbon. This particular one, (Fig. 4-6) housed at the ROM, is off-white silk, with a two inch vertical centre front panel, with five pieces of three inch-wide

Figure 4-6 Ribbon Corsets from Ethel Love's wedding trousseau, c. 1904. Royal Ontario Museum. 936.38.2.

[84] Mary Humphries. *Fabric Reference*, (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2000): 22.
[85] Giorgio Riello, "Things that Shape History: Material Culture and Historical Narratives", in *History Beyond the Text: A Student's Guide to Approaching Alternative Sources*, ed. Karen Harvey, (London: Routledge, 2009): 24.
[86] Waugh, 88.

ribbon connecting to the three inch side panel, and another three ribbons connecting the side to the three inch wide back panel. Ribbon corsets only have boning at the vertical sections. The shape is given by the cut of the ribbon panels. The focus of ribbon corsets is on the waist, rather than stomach, hips or bust, so bottom and top edges of the corset curve to be narrower at the waist. This corset has a napped fabric lining the busk, and a large bow at the top. The waist is 21", with a 10" centre font. The centre front also features two 12" long garters. There is no label on the inside indicating the maker, but there is a size stamp, and other stamps indicating model number. It was donated to the ROM in 1936, at which time it was dated at 1904 by the donor.

This corset belonged to Ethel Love (nee Beemer), who was also the donor. It was likely worn at her wedding, in 1904, where she married a contractor named Fred Love.[87] He was 28, and she was 27. They only had one child, named for his father. Fred Sr. died in 1908 of colitis, and Ethel never remarried. It is not determined how Ethel earned her income after Fred's death as afterward she is simply included in the directories as his widow, however prior to marriage she worked as a nurse at the Hospital for Sick Children.[88] During her marriage, and after she resided in the Yorkville neighbourhood with addresses on Avenue Rd. and Bedford Rd., both of which are upscale. This address is reflected in the quality of the silk corset in her trousseau. The quality of Ethel's corset, and the lack of wear indicates that she likely only wore it for her wedding day. As it was considered a negligee item rather than a utilitarian one, it is not the best indication of what Ethel's day to day corsets were like in terms of size or material.

[87] Schedule B: Marriages, County of York, Division of Toronto, 1904, p. 343.
[88] *Toronto City Directory for 1901*, 300.

Mary Austin

The corsets that are housed in the City of Toronto Historic Collection belonged to the Austin Family, the proprietors of Spadina House, located south of St. Clair at Spadina Ave., on the Davenport escarpment, looking over the city. This neighbourhood is known for its wealthy properties, including Casa Loma nearby. The city of Toronto is built on is a glacial lake bed, which created a hill sloping up away from Lake Ontario. A very steep hill marks the ice-age geography. From this lookout the city lies below, and was a perfect location for wealthy families to build homes, away from the hustle and bustle of the city centre where they could both literally and figuratively look down on their social inferiors.

The four corsets at The Toronto Historic Collection are all from around 1910-1914. Two of them were made in Boston, though the others did not have labels or stamps indicting make. They were all of a similar style, the long-line style that did not support the bust, but instead focused on flattening the stomach and hips. They were either pink or off white (off-white floral brocade; peach dot brocade; light pink stripes herringbone; pink duck) single-layer of fabric with applied boning casings, all had six garters, lacing at the back, and a busk closure at the front. They all had wide lace decorating the top, and gussets of elastic at the hips. Though the Austins were among the wealthiest families in Toronto, the corsets have indications of repairs

Figure 4-7 Repairs to Mary Austin's corset, c. 1910. Toronto Historic Collection. 82.7.1190.

(Fig.4-7), particularly at the top and bottoms of the boning casings. The artefacts themselves are in fragile condition. They had clearly been kept in a box or drawer from the time they went out of use to the time that the Austin collection came into the possession of the city in 1978. However, the repairs done to them are not due to damage from storage, but were repairing damage from wear, from steel bones rubbing through the fabric and poking out. This conclusion was drawn by the fact that the repair sites are all at the top and bottom of the boning channels, with thick layers of new fabric laid over top of the edge of the corset. Even though this was a family who could have purchased a new corset, the culture of repairing damage was prevalent. The repairs are bulky and clumsily done. There is also indication of alterations made around the rib cage to alter the size, suggesting that they were worn and re-used, as opposed to purchasing new ones with changes in weight, or as they wore out.

Mary was born in Perth, Ontario, in 1860, the Daughter of Dawson Kerr, a prominent member of Perth society. She married Albert Austin in 1882, and spent their first few years of marriage in Winnipeg.[89] They returned to Toronto in 1894, and re-integrated themselves in Toronto society.[90] She and Albert lived a luxurious life at their Spadina House manor, had five children together, and enjoyed life and parties available to the upper classes. The measurements of Mary Austin's corsets vary greatly from those of the others that were measured. While the other corsets measured between 17 and 27 inches, Mary's corsets ranged from 39 to 42 inches. Advertisements of the period, as seen in chapter 3, and the anti-corset propagandists, presented corseted women as willowy, breathless, and young. Yet Mary's corsets show that even matriarchs whose bodies have been shaped by having multiple children and a life of leisure and plenty wore corsets, presenting a contrary image to the frail waif.

[89] Austin Seton Thompson. *Spadina: A Story of Old Toronto*. (Toronto: Pagurian Press, ltd., 1975): 156.
[90] Thompson, 167.

Wedding Trousseau of Helen Warren Band

Among the collection at the ROM is a garment that is labeled in their database as a corset. When it was donated in 1982, the cataloguer identified the garment as "women's corset. Worn below bust to waist". The garment is made from dotted net, with five rows of jacquard satin ribbon transversing it (Fig. 4-8).

Figure 4-8 Brassiere from a wedding trusseau. Labeled in the collection as a corset, this serves to show the evolution of corsets requiring separate bust support, c. 1914. Royal Ontario Museum. 982.104.5.

It measures 31 inches wide, and is 7 inches tall. The back is laced closed with satin ribbon, and the front has a snap closure. It has a satin ribbon strap over each shoulder, and vertical boning at the sides of the front and back. Rather than a corset, however, I suggest this is a bust extender, a form of early brassiere. As corsets evolved to no longer support the bust, and focused more on the waist and hips, starting around the turn of the century, women required a second garment to provide bust support. As the fashions of the first decade of the twentieth century involved a "pigeon chest" style, the bust was supported and enhanced by garments that were boned to create a dome over the bust, and were used for shape as well as support.[91] Though this style did not last into the decade, it normalized corsets that did not provide bust support, and the need for a

[91] Colleen Hill. *Exposed: A History of Lingerie* (New Haven; Yale University Press): 51.

secondary garment for this purpose. The garment at the ROM was dated to 1914, and donated as part of the wedding trousseau of Helen Warren Band. As corsets at this time focused on the waist and hips it is likely that this delicate ribbon and net garment served as a brassiere.[92]

Indeed, records confirm that Helen Warren was married in 1914, at age 25, to 28 year old Charles Shaw Band. There was no occupation for Helen in any of the directories or censuses, so it is possible that she did not earn wages. Charles, according to their wedding registry, was a grain importer, and in 1914, the year of his marriage, he and his brother were in the city directory at an address on the very fashionable Jarvis St.[93] This address implies that they both came from fine enough families to be able to afford fine up-to-date fashions. It was the responsibility of the bride's family to provide her with a wedding trousseau, which included the wedding dress and lingerie, but also household linens.[94] This practice was only available to families of significant means.[95] The trousseau also included items which symbolically brought the bride from girlhood to wife,[96] so the lingerie, especially here the brassiere, is significant to this practice.

Figure 4-9 Crompton ribbon corset. This style was often included in wedding trusseaux. Musée McCord. M992-58-1.

The final two corsets do not have

[92] Ibid.
[93] *Toronto City Directory for 1914*, 468.
[94] Barbara Penner. "A Vision of Luxury: The Commercialization of Nineteenth-Century American Weddings", *Winterthur Portfolio* 39, no. 1 (Spring, 2004), p. 6.
[95] Penner, 17.
[96] Penner, 7.

provenance or a story attached to them, however, because they bear the Crompton stamp, it is known that they originated at the York St. factory in Toronto before making their way elsewhere. The first is another ribbon corset, housed at the McCord Museum in Montreal (Fig. 4-9). Ribbon corsets do not vary in style because of the requirements of the cut, so like the one worn by Ethel Love, this one has three vertical panels, at centre front, centre back and side. The side and back both measure three inches, and the front is wide enough to accommodate the busk steel. The side panels have six quarter-inch bones, and the centre back has four bones, and the lacing eyelets. Also like Ethel Love's corset, the ribbon section has five three-inch wide pieces at the front, and three in the back. The ribbon of this corset is a monotone beige floral satin jacquard. There is a large silk ribbon bow at the top of the busk. The busk itself has five hooks, two placed closer together to provide more strength to the stomach.

The other Crompton corset is housed at the ROM, and is one of two corsets they have which were donated with their original boxes. Unfortunately, unlike Reta Moles' corset, these did not come with a bill of sale. This corset is a c.1910 Crompton's a la Grâce model, stamped with Crompton guarantee "will not rust".[97] It is made of white twill, and has six garters, two at the centre front, and two on either side of each hip. This style is a

[9]**Figure 4-10 Box for a Crompton corset. It features information about style, size, and prominently states it was made in Canada, c. 1913. Royal Ontario Museum. 2015.15.2.1**

long-line underbust, designed to focus on the stomach and hips of the wearer. The waist is 19”, with a 14” centre front, and 18” long centre back. There are 12 quarter inch bones on each side. The waist of the corset is five inches down from the top, as indicated by a twill waist tape.[98] The top line itself is decorated with two inch wide lace trim, with a thin ribbon woven through it, and a bow at centre front. Because of how far down over the hips this garment was intended to be worn, the bones end two and a half inches above the bottom hem, so that they did not create discomfort in sitting. The centre front of the bottom curves up from the hips by five inches, as does the centre back, albeit with a less severe curve. This shows that the focus was the hips. The busk ends three inches above the hemline, with an extra hook and eye below the busk steel. The corset has no indication of wear, and due to the fact that it has the original box and tissue paper, it is likely that it never was worn. The box itself is cardboard, with the words “Made in Canada” on the end of the lid. The same end of the box has the C/C a la Grâce logo (Fig. 4-10), and stickers indicating size and model number. The tissue paper on the inside is printed with three models of corset available, and advertising texts in both French and English, a sign they were sold in Quebed, stating that “The corset is the foundation of the gown” and “none

Figure 4-11 Tissue paper from inside the Crompton's box. It shows three styles of corsets available, in both French and English, c. 1913. Royal Ontario Museum. 2015.15.2.1.

[98] A waist tape is a built in belt which provides more support and stability of the waist.

genuine unless stamped C/C a la Grâce" (Fig. 4-11). This packaging speaks to continued pride of national production, and ownership of design that Crompton's has held since the beginning. The style and cut of this corset also show the evolution of silhouette, between the hourglass figure of the late nineteenth century and the straight bound garçonne of the 1920s.

Conclusion

The relationship that women of Toronto had with corsets was a complicated one, as evinced by publications from the period. While it was the sartorial norm to wear one, dress reformers were loud in their quest to dress women in what they considered a more sensible way. Even if a woman did not attend one of the lectures about rational dress, articles in the newspaper relayed the general message, and women may have even been advised against wearing corsets by their doctors, or religious leaders. Most of the women of Toronto, however, continued to dress according to the status quo. As fashions changed, so did the style of corset to accommodate the new lines. Where in the 1880s and 1890s, a curvaceous figure with a defined waist was in style and corsets were made to accommodate this, the new century saw a long, slender figure, often with exaggerated bust, in vogue. The corsets changed to no longer provide bust support, but instead focused below the waist, creating thin smooth lines over the hips and stomach, with the bust supported by bust enhancers or brassieres. The material culture evidence, though it does not represent a full spectrum of women in Toronto, shows that corsets were worn according to the fashions of the day, and were not worn to an extremely small size. The relationship that women had with their corsets did not seem like one which troubled the majority of the female population. It was the reporters from newspapers and periodicals who complicated the relationship, by printing news articles without fact checking, perpetuating myths and fear mongering that corsets were a silent killer, or by making news stories sexier with the inclusion of

women's undergarments. Just as all women during the sexual revolution did not burn their bras, neither did all Victorian women burn their corsets shouting, "We will die as God made us".[99]

[99] *The Canadian Dry Goods Review* 1, no. 9, (Sept. 1891), 10.

Chapter 5: Fetish, Fashion, and Corsets Today

After decades of wear, and being ever present in the lives of women, the common narrative is that corsets fell out of fashion by the 1920s, when the hour glass figure, which emphasized a small waist, and curvaceous hips and bust, was replaced by the garçonne silhouette, which preferred a straight figure. However, the spirit of corsetry remained through girdles, cinchers, and other mechanical means of controlling the figure well into the twentieth century. Lingerie production declined slowly in Canada as companies eventually closed their doors in favor of overseas production. The most successful of these post-Victorian lingerie companies was the Canadian Lady Corset Company, which became Wonderbra.[1] The classic idea of the Victorian corset, however, is currently alive in Toronto, albeit not on the scale of industrial production that it once was. It is often relegated to the fringes, in fetish and counter culture, though thanks to recent celebrity endorsements, the corset has made a cautious return into popular fashion.

This chapter will explore lingerie production in Canada starting in the mid-twentieth century, continuing to the present day. The research in this chapter was primarily conducted through interviews with company owners, including Larry Nadler, the former president and the son the founder of Wonderbra, Dianna Dinoble and Andrea Johnson, who both own corset companies in Toronto that have been in operation since the early 1990s. Two of the three interviews were completed in person, while the Lovesick interview was via email. I prepared a set of questions designed to gather information about the history of their businesses.[2] Follow-up questions were based on their responses. Di Noble and Johnson were asked the same set of questions, whereas

[1] Larry Nader (former president of Canadelle) in discussion with the author, April 16, 2016.
[2] Sue Jones. "Depth Interviewing", in *Social Research Methods: A Reader*, Clive Seale ed. (London: Routledge ,2004): p. 252.

Nadler was asked a unique set. As I was seeking specific information, interviewer bias could not be avoided.[3] The two in-person interviews were recorded with the participant' permissions, and detailed notes were taken. The interview with Nadler presents the problem of mass production and international trade in a changing economy that favours over-seas production, while having to stay current in the changing fashion industry. The Wonderbra story spans roughly 60 years of shifts in fashion, women's changing attitudes toward their bodies and how they dress them, and particularly the drastic changes in foundation garments during that time. The interviews with Dinoble and Johnson, as well as an autobiographic examination of corset wearing and creation, offer a perspective that is vastly different than the Wonderbra story, as they both run small businesses that sell a garment which was considered subversive when they initially began their businesses, but is now re-entering popular fashion. The chapter concludes with an autoethnographic reflection of my own experiences wearing and making corsets. Because the previous chapters include life histories of women and their experiences with corsets, it was important to connect their stories to the "private sphere of the self", through self-narrative.[4] This chapter attempts to trace the timeline of when corsets went from popular fashion, to the fringes of subcultures, and back into the mainstream, through an examination of subcultural dress theory, and the multi-cultural influences appropriated by the Western fashion industry.

Wonderbra: The Canadian Lingerie Success

The most famous Canadian lingerie producer was the Wonderbra Company, originally established in 1939 by Moses Nadler in Montréal, Québec as The Canadian Lady Corset Co.[5] Based largely in Québec, the story of Wonderbra acts as a temporal bridge between nineteenth

[3] Jones, 259.
[4] Heewon Chang. *Autoethnography as Method*. (Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press, 2008): p. 44.
[5] Unless specified, all information in the section was stated by Larry Nader (former president of Canadelle) in discussion with the author, April 16, 2016.

century underpinnings, and their current descendants. Though geographically distant in the same way as E.T. and Dominion were from Toronto, the story is one of Canadian production, and also features many of the same themes as the Toronto companies, namely male founded businesses using female labour, as designers, makers, and models as well as themes of immigration and globalization. The information in this section was obtained through an interview in Montreal with the former president of Wonderbra, and the son of the founder, Larry Nadler. His father, Moses Nadler was born into a poor Jewish Romanian family, who moved to Canada at the turn of the twentieth century. He grew up in a household with upwards of twelve children. At the age of 12, he quit school to work in a dry goods store to help support his family. A year later he was promoted to itinerant salesman, and travelled with goods to remote villages in Quebec. Many years later, he opened his own store in the town of Mont Laurier. However, due to the small-town heterogeneous nature and due to Nadler being Jewish, he initially had a difficult time with sales and integrating into the community. Eventually he befriended the village priest, who encouraged his parishioners to

Figure 5-1 Early Wonderbra design, featuring diagonal slashes which helped movement and wear. Musée McCord. No accession number assigned at time of printing.

patronize Nadler's shop. His first foray into selling undergarments was through long underwear. As this was Northern Québec, it was a popular product. Possessing natural business acumen, he sold these at a lower price than his competitor, which resulted in higher sales.

Nadler eventually sold his stores, and went into the dress making business with a partner, until the late 1930. In 1935 he bought the patent for a brassiere by American designer Israel Pilot. It was with this patent that Nadler entered the business of women's lingerie. By 1940, he traveled across Canada selling this bra, using his wife as a model. At this time he had a factory on Rue St. Laurent in Montreal's garment district, and also used subcontracted home-workers to sew hooks and eyes, and complete the finer details.[6] The innovation of this bra was that it did not use elastic materials, but rather had cups cut on the bias, and included a "double-slash" above the cups to increase ease of movement, which was an ideal use of material, due to the war-time restrictions (Fig. 5-1). The design was so successful that Pilot never designed again, and was able to live off the royalties from his Wonderbra patent. For new product designs Nadler hired mostly women in Montreal.

The comfortable and innovative Wonderbra grew in popularity throughout Canada and Europe; however, due to contract negotiations with Pilot, Nadler did not own the trademark for Wonderbra in the United States, South Africa or South America. Because of this, his market remained largely European and Canadian.

In 1968 Canadian Lady Corset Company changed their name to Canadian Lady-Canadelle Inc., and was sold to Consolidated Foods, or The Sara Lee Corporation. Nadler's son, Larry, remained as the company president until 1980. After Larry left the company, it was bought by Haines.

[6] Henry Mintzberg. *Tracking Strategies: Toward a General Theory*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007): 121.

While still under the Nadler's control, the company experienced success by selling at large department stores, such as Eaton's, The Bay, and Simpson's, and small lingerie shops, treating both types of retailers equally. Independent retailers were charged the same wholesale price as large department stores. However, they had a focus on upscale shops, and did little business with low-end chains, preferring a shop where they could train the staff to do fittings with their product. Though their price point was initially mid-range and viewed as a practical item, Larry sought an upmarket clientele, with new designs including French lace; the Wonderbra became a luxury item, rather than simply a practical garment. Under Larry, they charged fifty-cents more than their competitors for each bra, which allowed them to invest in a quality product, as well as advertising.

Prior to the sexual revolution of the 1960s, Canadian Lady produced a variety of lingerie items, not just bras, all under the "Wonderbra" label. The sexual revolution, and the changes in fashion that this brought, meant that fewer women wore girdles, and miniskirts introduced the development of pantyhose. Eventually Canadian Lady stopped advertising girdles, and after a couple of years, production on their line of girdles ended completely. The sexual revolution also brought the idea of women's "freedom" from bras, and while, according to Nadler, Wonderbra's competitors decided to diversify their products in anticipation of women no longer wearing bras, Wonderbra continued production. Rather than diversify their line of products, they only produced bras.

The result of this research stemmed from a bra that Nadler bought in France. He liked the design; it looked good, but it did not fit well. He hired French-Canadian designer Louise Poirier to lead a re-designing of this French bra, which became their best-selling bra, style 1300 "Plunge" in the early 1960s. The research completed at this time also demonstrated that their products needed to

be divided by lines of age, where older women had different requirements and needs from their undergarments than younger customers did.[7]

Wonderbra was a market leader partly due to the business acumen of the Nadlers, and partly because they were constantly on the cutting edge of marketing and technology. As demonstrated with the innovative design of the original bra, Wonderbra never shied away from pushing boundaries. They were the first company to use automated cutting, which was more accurate than the industry standard dye-cutting. Automated cutting involved an automatic knife, which cost the company one million dollars to purchase and implement. They were also the first to perfect molding technology. A company in France, Huit, used steam molding to shape the cups of bras, but they were unable to create consistent sizes, and the fit was awkward. Wonderbra attempted to buy the license of this technique in Canada, but Huit refused. Larry then created a task force to develop a more effective steam mold. This consisted of physicists and textile experts, and after one year, the Dici bra was created; a seamless bra for women aged 15 to 25, which favored comfort over sex appeal. There were initially problems with the steam molding technique, including shrinking and inconsistency of fit. Ultimately, many of these problems were solved by molding, then cutting, whereas previously the fabric pieces were cut first, then molded. The steam molding technique was also applied to regular Wonderbra, which eliminated the seam in the cup altogether, and cut down on labour time during production.

Their marketing strategy was also innovative. While famous for the 1994 “Hello Boys” advertising campaign, Wonderbra pushed the limits of advertising 26 years before this. In 1968 bras were not allowed to be advertised on television on a live model. Censorship regulations

[7] Henry Mintzberg. *Mintzberg on Management: Inside our Strange World of Organizations*. (Toronto: Simon and Schuster, 1989): 126.

required that all bras advertised on television be displayed on a static mannequin. However, when these regulations loosened slightly, Wonderbra were the first to show a bra on a live model on television, creating sex appeal in their advertisements.

After Larry retired, Haines purchased the company, and reduced the research team, keeping only the best designs, rather than continuing to research innovations in lingerie. Eventually the market changed as well. The Nadlers preferred to keep production in Canada, with factories in Montreal, Québec City, Lac-Mégantic, and Hawksbury, Ontario. All the cutting was done in Montreal, and the pieces were sent to the satellite factories for assembly. At their peak, they employed 1000 Canadians. All of the designing (after Pilot) and sewing were completed by women, while operations, cutting, and top management were men. In the early years of the company sewing was mostly completed by French-Canadian women, and after the Second World War, Italian and Greek women were also employed. In Larry's words, these were good jobs for new Canadians. Eventually the economy shifted and new national policies were introduced with change that affected businesses. According to Larry, in the 1990s the Government of Canada gave up subsidising garment manufacture in exchange for the sale of oil (it was certainly the case that global trade agreements made during this time favoured raw materials as an industry in Canada over production).[8] Wonderbra was presented with the choice of moving production overseas, or selling the business. They chose the latter, and maintaining local production became the purview of small companies.

[8]Jaydeep Balakrishnan, Janice Eliasson, Timothy Sweet. "Factors Affecting the Evolution of Manufacturing in Canada: An Historical Perspective", *Journal of Operations Management* 25 (2007), 267.

Corsets in Toronto Today

Body shapers are not a rarity in today's fashion trends. Products such as Spanx provide women with a foundation to off-the rack garments that are made to fit a set range of sizes to which most bodies do not conform. Body shapers come in a variety of styles, and can target specific areas. They may be specifically for the thighs, cut like tight shorts, or extend to the underbust to maintain the mid-section. They are cut as dresses, skirts, and tubes, and are comparable to girdles and shapers worn by women from the 1920s through the 1960s, though made from contemporary materials. Garments referred to as "waist trainers", which target the waist specifically, much like corsets, have also made a resurgence, available in Toronto at major department stores and lingerie shops, as well as through companies such as Stella's Corsets.

Stella's Corsets was opened by Luz Stella Torres in 2002. The company website states that when she moved to Toronto from Colombia in 2001, Torres brought a corset with her. When new colleagues in Canada began complimenting her figure she decided to sell them. While she calls them corsets, they are not the rigid, heavily boned garments that are associated with the name. They are more similar to girdles or spanx, or garments from Columbia called *fajas*. Her website offers slimming orthopedic latex corsets, moulding control, exterior body control, light corsets, weight loss assistants, fitness thermal corsets, and a line specifically for men. The fitness thermal corsets are elongated pants that claim to "help remove the excess fat in waist and tummy" through "thermal action",[9] which harkens back to corset advertisements of the nineteenth century, and the plethora of innovations for healthful corsets.

[9] "Fitness Thermal Line". *Stella's Corset*. Accessed April 4, 2017. http://www.stellascorset.com/articles.asp?ID=292.

In 2012, an article in the *New York Times* described *fajas* as a new trend in body shaping influenced by Latin American culture, where women desire curvaceous figures. The word "fajas" means "wraps", and refers to garments which are now colloquially referred to as "corsets". These were initially worn as a post-liposuction device for minimizing swelling and ensuring skin heals correctly. Eventually, women in Colombia began wearing *fajas* without the liposuction. One company from New York, who used to sell to spas and medical supply stores, stated that orders from the fashion world began in 2007.[10] They are quoted in the article that, initially, it was just Latina and black women who purchased *fajas*, but at the time of the article there was an increase in white women purchasing them as well,[11] possibly due to the rise in fame of Kim Kardashian and a desire for women of all ethnicities to mimic her small waist, large breasts and exaggerated posterior.

2007 was the year that Kim Kardashian became famous. The Kardashians, who also advertise weight loss supplements, cellulite treatments and self-branded workout videos that are intended to "tone the body, while allowing you to 'flaunt your curves'",[12] extol the virtues of these garments. The Kardashians have an exclusive contract with Ann Cherry, a company from Colombia with international reach. Kim Kardashian uses waist trainers to exaggerate her already extreme curves, allowing her to further "capitali(se) on a body that in her case is positively marked as 'exotic' without any of the burden that typically also accompany that designation".[13]

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[10] Sastre, 123.
[11] Sarah Maslin Nir. "Rediscovering a Shortcut to an Hourglass Figure", *The New York Times* (May 15, 2017). Accessed April 4, 2017. http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/16/nyregion/with-fajas-tight-as-corsets-shortcut-to-hourglass-figure-is-rediscovered.html.
[12] Alexandra Sastre. "Hottentot in the Age of Reality TV: Sexuality, Race and Kim Kardashian's Visible Body", *Celebrity Studies* 5, no. 1-2 (2014), 130.
[13] Sastre, 131.

Kardashian cites her Armenian heritage as a means of straddling ethnic lines, between black and white, and attempting to mimic Latina celebrities and the range of ethnicities they are able to encompass through their heritage.[14] She is "manipulating her own heritage as a tool in her performance of 'otherness'".[15] This can be compared to a celebrity from the 1980s, Bo Derek, a white woman who wore her hair in cornrows, using her trend-setting position as a movie star to popularize aspects of "otherness" that have historically been points of criticism and change. Susan Bordo cites Bo Derek and compares her cornrows with the practice of black women straightening their hair. Derek used her privileged position of whiteness to set a standard of normalizing the appearance, even if at the time it was still relatively taboo for a black woman to wear her hair in cornrows or leave it natural.[16] This manipulation of heritage makes Kardashian's exclusive contract with Colombian company Ann Cherry more significant.

Before the introduction of *fajas* to Toronto, and well before the Kardashian fame, corsets were popular among members of counter culture and fetish communities, made by independent, local designers for decades. Today there are a number of new fashion designers who make corsets, at varying levels of skill and price-range. These can be found at specialty markets such as Renaissance fairs, pirate festivals, the alternative market Bazaar of the Bizarre, fetish markets and Science Fiction and Fan conventions. In spite of the fact that these are niche markets, there are Toronto designers who have broken through this niche and make corsets for the mainstream. Now located in Los Angeles, Toronto-born Puimond has been making corsets since 1997 and his clients include high profile celebrities such as Madonna and Mamie Van Doren.[17] Love Sick Corrective Apparel has been making corsets in Toronto since 1996, and has been featured in

[14] Sastre, 132.
[15] Sastre, 132.
[16] Bordo, 254.
[17] "Bio". *Puimond: Progressive Corset Design*. Accessed April 4, 2017. http://puimond.com/bio.

editorials in print magazines such as international editions of *Vogue*.[18] Likewise, Starkers! is also still based in Toronto, and has been featured in *Flare* magazine, and worn by celebrities such as Ashley Greene.

Dianna Di Nobel and Starkers! Corsets

Figure 5-2 Starkers! corset, 2009. From the private collection of Alanna McKnight.

Dianna Di Nobel started her company Starkers! in 1992 while living in Peterborough, Ontario. She was an art student in high school who made her own clothing, and developed an interest in corseted garments through an appreciation of historical paintings, and through the goth subculture community.[19] She taught herself the art form in the early days of her company, with the assistance of the boning supply company Farthingale, based in Stratford, Ontario. She eventually enrolled in the Sheridan College fashion program where her skills were honed, and her aesthetic interest became academic. The Sheridan College library introduced her to the classic texts on corsets, such as Norah Waugh's *Corsets and Crinolines*, and David Kunzle's *Fashion and Fetishism.*

Making corsets during the rise of third wave feminism in the 1990s was a natural progression in Dianna's life. She says that she was raised by a feminist mother "complete with the 80s power suit", and the idea of wearing corsets did not occur to her as an item of patriarchal power. The 1990s feminist mentality afforded her and other women the opportunity to enter into wardrobe

[18] "Lovesick Corsets". *Lovesick Corrective Apparel*. Accessed April 4, 2017. http://lovesickcorsets.blogspot.ca.
[19] Unless specified, all information in the section was stated by Dianna DiNobel in discussion with the author, November 9, 2016.

choices with total agency, and Dianna was also supported by the punk and goth aesthetic. During the mid-1990s, IRC chat rooms spread images of alternative fashion and music online and proliferated an acceptance of corsets in counter-culture, which, as stated by Dick Hebdige, eventually trickles up into mainstream fashion.[20] But ultimately, she states, wearing corsets is a choice, even in the fetish community. When a submissive partner wears corsets it is their choice, though it may be perceived as an order from the dominant partner.

In her 25 years in business, Dianna has created custom corsets for a range of clients, both men and women of all body types, for a variety of purposes, including medical, such as assisting with scoliosis. She utilized them herself after pregnancy to help her posture after carrying a baby in a sling. However, she feels that many people wear corsets to exaggerate the figure that was already there, or to create a fantasy figure. Unfortunately many new customers approach her for custom garments thinking that they will assist in weight loss, due to the false information being promoted through current body shaping rhetoric. Since starting her business, and while wearing corsets herself, she has experienced very little hostility or anger from outsiders commenting on her product. Among people who have expressed any disdain for contemporary women wearing corsets were young women, feminists whose ideas regarding women's rights have not yet fully developed to understand the idea of choice and body autonomy, and whose anger is often directed towards appearance, toward other young women whose aesthetics do not conform to their ideas of what a feminist looks like.

Dianna states that women today purchase corsets to assist with the presentation of confidence that corsets can provide. She posits that modern audiences view historic photos of corseted women and museum displays with pity because these media do not show the confidence that

[20] Dick Hebdige. *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*. (London: Routledge, 1979): 95.

corsets afford women. She points to film as an example of the power bestowed by corsets. Corsets are used in film with strong female characters, even when they are under clothes, stating that they act as armour.

Starkers! Corsets are all made in Dianna's Toronto home studio. It is a point of pride that her international client-base receives high quality products that are made in Canada, from locally sourced materials where possible. However, she also uses materials from Europe or other places in North America. She notes that with production being moved overseas in clothing manufacturing, most industrial spaces in Toronto have become condominiums, and materials have diminished in quality. However, small-scale lingerie companies such as hers are afforded the luxury of local production, and custom clients.

Andrea Johnson and Lovesick Corrective Apparel

Figure 5-3 Lovesick Corrective Apparel corset, 2005. From the private collection of Alanna McKnight.

Like Dianna, Andrea Johnson made her first corset in 1992.[21] She grew up in small town Saskatchewan, and as a young teenager in the 1980s shopped at thrift stores, which often included girdles, medical corsets, and on occasion 1960s bullet bras. An infatuation and fascination with corsets began when she first saw the cover of The Nails album "Hotel for Women" which featured black and white fetish photos of women from the 1920s to 1940s, including women in corsets, and tight-lacers, with extreme high heels, bondage and blindfolds. The allure of the photos for her was the

[21] Unless specified, all information in the section was stated by Andrea Johnson in discussion with the author, November 20, 2016.

unfamiliarity and how they were dissimilar to anything from her surroundings, and due to their suggestive nature. The images seemed sexual and forbidden. With an affinity for Punk and New Wave music, and leaning toward that aesthetic while living in a town with a population of 5000, this image gave her hope that other realities existed outside of the familiar. Even the pornography at this time was filled with a uniform type of woman, whereas these vintage fetish images expanded that group. Andrea notes that as a young woman viewing photos of women with implications of humiliation and helplessness was both psychologically confusing and arousing, as she grew up as an outsider in a small town, and experienced humiliation and harassment from her peers. The addition of a sexual element to humiliation was intriguing. She wondered about the women in the photos, about their clothing, the photographer, and their personal relationships. She was confused about an attraction to the photos, wondering if it was to the women, the situation, the photo styling, or the clothing. She felt that there must be secret places that sold these items, and spent her adolescence trying to find them.

Andrea moved to Toronto and Montreal at ages 17 and 18 respectively, and found small leather shops there. One in Toronto, called Leathercraft, sold mostly coats and pants, but had a small room that contained various bondage items, including a bustier. The staff of this store would not allow her to try it on, and though it was not the item she was looking for it was the closest she had found outside the Saskatchewan vintage store girdle.

In 1986, at age 18, Andrea started ordering catalogues that were advertised in the back of Harper's Bazaar, including B.R. Creations, who claimed to make "The world's most beautiful corsets". B.R. Creations had been making corsets since around 1975 in San Francisco, and offered one style of corset, a "Victorian under-bust". Andrea received her first B.R. Creations catalogue, and apart from the photographs and models which she described to me as tacky, these

were the small-waisted corsets she had been looking for since seeing The Nails album years earlier. At this point, the cost for a basic B.R. corset was $220.00 USD, and a few years later a boyfriend bought one for her. After years of longing for this item, she was thrilled to own it, but was disappointed by the materials and finish. However, through this disappointment, this garment taught her effective corset construction, and compelled her to try her hand at making her own.

The first attempt at making a corset came in 1992. Andrea lived in Vancouver, attended Emily Carr College of Art and Design, and worked at a Fetish store called Mack's Leather, where they sold bustiers, but nothing near a tight lacing corset. Working there de-mystified working with leather. She quit this job due to dismissive bosses and licentious male co-workers, found a leather coat at a thrift store for $4.00, and using a deconstructed merry-widow as a pattern, she made her first approximation of a corset. She now says that this garment was terrible in every way, but it inspired her to create more, and experiment with how to improve. She enrolled in a community college fashion program in 1993 to learn drafting and to improve her sewing skills.

In our interview, Andrea contemplated the fact that her design and conceptual inspirations came from a pornographic context. She was interested in the garments as an aesthetic object, but also the fact that they changed the body temporarily. She liked the taboo, that these were considered the worst thing a woman could be forced to wear. She cited several vintage fetish magazines that she had located while living in Vancouver, *House of Milan*, and *Centurion*, which were 1970s bondage pornography, and *Exotique*, which showed scenes of women dominating men while wearing tight-lacing belts, extreme high heels, and pencil skirts. She also found a book of vintage catalogues from Frederick's of Hollywood. Her first copy of the Norah Waugh classic text *Corsets and Crinolines* was photocopied for her by a classmate in college.

While living in Vancouver, Andrea was introduced to Ivan Sayer, one of the most prolific private clothing collectors in Canada. He welcomed her to see his collection, where she was able to compare what she had been making to antique corsets, and thereby improved her technique. In the early days of her corset making, she says they were thick and over-built. From my own experiences in assisting fashion students with corset making, or observing new corset makers, this is a common error, assuming that the garment needs to have many layers, and be stiff and thick in order to form the body. I made this error myself as a beginner. Andrea notes that she was astonished at how lightweight the antique corsets were. Further to Sayer's collection, Andrea also turned to eBay to view antique corsets for details.

Before the internet, her research was based in mail-order catalogues, ordered from the back of adult magazines, or through "corset clubs" with newsletters. Her first corset client was obtained through one of these, a man in Seattle, who cross-dressed and had an affinity for 1930s and 40s girdles, similar to what Andrea had been inspired by in the thrift stores of Saskatchewan. The late 1980s also saw a rise in the concept of body modification, and publications such as *Piercing Fans International Quarterly* often had images of tight-laced women, and interviews with Ethel Grainger, a Guinness World Record holder for tight-lacing down to 13 inches. The publication *Body Play* was also influential to Andrea. This was published by Fakir Musafar, a performance artist who experimented with suspensions, piercings, scarification and tight-lacing. In the 1990s, there was a proliferation of corset makers, and Andrea cites Dark Garden in San Francisco, and Versatile Fashions, also in California, both of which are still operating today. The fetish community also started printing polished publications, such as *Skin Two* out of the UK. She cites *Skin Two* as containing looks that were inspirational to a younger, more alternative fetish crowd.

The clientele that Andrea has catered to over the past twenty years has largely been women, but has ranged between 14 year old girls and 80 year old men, and mostly white. Of the cross-dressers she has created corsets for, she notes that most have been heterosexual men, with no introspective desire to understand the position of women in the world, simply to emulate a feminine ideal of beauty. She now identifies herself as a feminist, though the journey to this affiliation was fraught with struggles, being an art student in the early 1990s, where she cites the feminists in her classes as caricatures of man-hating, butch feminists. As a woman who was interested in looking glamorous, she felt that she was not a part of this feminist community, in spite of taking women's studies courses and believing in women's right. As her business grew and magazine editorial stylists requested garments from her for spreads, Andrea became further conflicted in her sense of feminism, as she was creating garments which were worn by overly thin teenaged models who were exploited for their looks, and who were expected to maintain impossible standards of thinness and beauty by any means, and who, through their images in magazines, promoted an unhealthy, unattainable body image for other young women. Further to this, stylists often fetishized clothing that approximated surgical garments, such as leg or neck braces, items which Andrea has made for clients who have legitimate disabilities and require these items to walk, sit, or be comfortable. Yet, she made similar items for magazines, wherein able bodied young women wore them, glamourizing and fetishizing the disabled body.

While wearing a corset in public (ie: during daylight hours, not in a fetish or club context), Andrea described how strangers often approached her to ask questions about the garment, her body, and other questions that are inappropriate to ask strangers on the street, or indeed to tell her that she was dressed inappropriately, and that her garment was dangerous and damaging. Through wearing a corset during the first decade of the twenty-first century, her body became

public and visible. She has noticed a change in the past ten years regarding fashion. Where she was once criticized for her dress, she notes that shoes that were once only available at specialty fetish shops are now available at mainstream shoe stores in every mall. Due to upheaval in her life, Andrea has not dealt with private clients as often as she has in the past, but she gets many requests for waist training corsets, such as the "herbal cleanse quackery Kim Kardashian kind".[22] The popular use of corsets has also led to knock-offs of quality items from China and Pakistan, and waist training "fiction", as Andrea calls it, marketed for spot reducing, or body sculpting, in order to attain the shape of popular celebrities.

Autobiographical Corsetry

Figure 5-4 Nocturnalia corset, 2001. From the private collection of Alanna McKnight.

The experiences of Dianna and Andrea are similar to my own journey into corsetry and corset making. Both were informed by counter culture of their youth in the 1980s and 1990s, including goth and punk cultures. Both women were raised in small towns, and likewise I was raised in a suburb 45 minutes north of Toronto. My inspiration to make and study corsets came out of the dark romantic sub-set of goth culture in the 1990s. Anne Rice made vampire culture mainstream, Nine Inch Nails had heavy air play on the radio, and movies such as *The Craft* made goth aesthetic accessible. Mainstream stores in malls sold clothing that could

[22] Andrea Johnson in discussion with the author, November 20, 2016.

easily be considered goth with the right accessories, and often included lacing details, which my peers referred to as “corseting”. Anything that laced up was a corset in their nomenclature. As a teenager, around age 15, my friends and I travelled to Toronto on the weekends to shop and loiter, trips which always included visits to Silver Cross (now Borderline), Siren, House of Ill Repute, and later Heretic, where I worked. The clothing by big companies such as Lip Service, Heavy Red, and by independent designers sold at these stores were prohibitively expensive. Using pre-existing sewing skills I began making my own versions of the flowing velvet or tight PVC garments, and accessories for sale in Toronto. In grade 12 I had the opportunity to do a co-op class, where we were employed for school credit. I found my own placement with a Toronto clothing company called Nocturnalia, owned by Nicole Cooper. Before working for Nicole, I attempted, like Andrea, to reverse engineer garments found at thrift stores, and though I did not own merry-widows myself, I did have friends who let me try theirs on. Working at Nocturnalia was my first experience with making corsets. Nocturnalia sold clothing in stores around Toronto, in Stratford, and at clothing shows and science fiction conventions, but made most sales through custom orders. On the last day of my co-op placement, Nicole and I made a corset which she gifted to me (Fig. 5-4). It was an over-bust style, with a hidden hook and eye closure at the front, made out of purple satin with a black lace over-lay, and a 20-inch waist. I wore this corset to a local punk show in my suburban town one night with a pair of skin tight PVC pants, and was immediately told by a friend that I was bringing women’s rights back by one-hundred years. Like Andrea and Dianna, the aesthetic fascination came first, but this attack made me want to know more about the history.

I continued to make corsets through my education in costuming at Dalhousie University. I worked for Nocturnalia off and on until 2004, when I began a career as a theatre costumer. This

led to small opportunities in film, such as making a corset for the Edgar Allen Poe film, “The Raven” (2012), starring John Cusack. I stopped making corsets professionally, as the market is very saturated, and clients expect the quality of a well-trained professional, but the price of an eBay knock-off. I will now only make custom orders on a case-by-case basis. New corset makers are constantly emerging, with varying levels of skill and price-points. American corset blogger Lucy Williams has a list of corset makers from around the world on her website. She lists 13 in the Greater Toronto Area,[23] and this list excludes others that I know of such as Northbound Leather. Though I possess the skills required to make corsets, I prefer supporting businesses like Starkers! and Lovesick, and have owned corsets made by both (images above). I still continue to make corsets for myself, though I do not have many occasions to wear them frequently. However, when I do it is usually in an academic setting. Like Andrea, I do get asked questions by strangers, or worse, am touched by strangers. Questions are often relatively harmless, such as “how can you breathe in that thing!”, or “isn’t that uncomfortable?”. I am always polite in my response, as education is more effective than anger. Once a classmate criticized and challenged me for only wearing a corset during a presentation, and taking it off immediately afterward. I explained to her that the seats in our seminar room were not designed for this type of rigid position, and that it becomes extremely uncomfortable to sit in a car, or sofa, or any modernly comfortable chair for any length of time while wearing a corset. Further, though I have a great appreciation for the aesthetic, and find them beautiful as pieces of art, being alive today affords choice of whether or not to wear a corset. That is for me to decide. My daily clothing is not made to be worn with corsets as a foundation or for proper fit, and corsets now are worn as an accent

[23] “Corsetiere Map”. *Lucy’s Corsetry*. Accessed April 4, 2017. https://lucycorsetry.com/research-corset-brands/corsetiere-map.

piece on the outside, rather than as a foundation garment. It is interesting that I have been criticized for both wearing and not wearing corsets by other women.

Conclusion

The evolution in attitudes toward corsets in media is reflected in Dick Hebdige's seminal text *Subculture*. As the stories of Dianna and Andrea, and my own personal experiences, attest, merely twenty years ago corsets and waist training were relegated to the realm of counter culture: goths, punks, and fetish culture. The media has been steadily normalizing corsets, and every few years headlines in fashion publications declare the return of the corset. Pop stars are often dressed in corsets for music videos and editorials, from Janet Jackson, to Madonna, to Brittney Spears in the 1990s, to Rhianna and Dita Von Teese now, pop stars dress in outfits that, even thirty years ago, were relegated to fetish pornography. As Hebdige suggests, the media incorporates aspects of subculture or historical fantasies in stories, or in fashion editorials, which expose an audience to these fashions.[24] The proliferation of counter-culture fashion into mainstream and high fashion begins with small companies, like Starkers! and Lovesick, with one or two-person manufacturing, which are then translated into commodities and made available. Both companies have had garments in major fashion publications, and as such have been involved in this creation of mass interest in corsets. The Kardashians selling waist trainers is equivalent to Punk fashion being incorporated into a 1977 edition of *Cosmopolitan*.[25] Both Dianna and Andrea mentioned in their interviews that there is also an increase in poorly-made, cheap corsets sewn overseas and sold on eBay, or on websites like corsetstory.com. The parallels of subculture that Hebdige wrote about and the integration of corsets into common fashion are

[24] Hebdige, 97.
[25] Hebdige, 96.

based on youth culture, but also race. The Teddy Boys which influenced the ska scene were themselves influenced by black culture in England, but became a realm of white working class boys, just as now white women are emulating Latina fashion with *fajas*.

Corsets as art pieces have also graced the runways of haute couture fashion shows, and have been a favorite garment for designers of the past 30 years, such as Alexander McQueen, Jean-Paul Gaultier, Thierry Mugler, Christian Lacroix, and Vivienne Westwood, who all have their own personal take on the corset, as either part of an elegant evening gown by Lacroix, a part of a racy stage outfit for Madonna by Gaultier, or a hard leather armour by McQueen. These designers have contributed to re-normalizing the presence of corsetry in the media, and in the collective consciousness of consumers.

Conclusion

Before I began the research for this project in earnest, a professor at Ryerson offered to put my research question out to their Victorian Studies listserv, which was comprised of faculty across North America whose work centred around the nineteenth century. I received very few responses, but many were articles that generally focused on women's experiences, such as mourning dress, and female criminals. They associated corsets with the negative experiences of death and criminality, rather than focusing on other aspects of daily life for Victorian women, or even the consumer nature of dress. One response exemplified how women's experiences with corsets are understood today, even by academics. This professor, I do not recall his institution or department, suggested that I compare women's roles in corset manufacturing to women working in pornography today. He did not specify if this was in the sense of women being in possession of their own bodies, and choosing a career which uses those bodies as a form of empowerment, or, more likely, if it was in the sense that women's bodies are subjugated and pornography is viewed as devaluing women for the sake of masculine power.[1] Though I was initially shocked and rather disturbed by this suggestion he was correct in one sense. Both pornography and corsets have provoked lasting debates between feminist scholars, and indeed even among the general population, about whether they are harmful to women, or empowering.[2]

When I proposed this research I had my own biases, as my own experiences with corsetry had provided me with an income, and I certainly felt the positive satisfaction and confidence as what

[1] Karen Ciclitira. "Pornography, Women and Feminism: Between Pleasure and Politics", *Sexualities* 7, no. 3 (2004), 283.
[2] Ciclitira, 284.

Flügel called the "supported type" of dresser.[3] From my previous research I knew that the needle-trades were populated by an overwhelmingly female majority, but I was not expecting to uncover the number of women employed in corset manufacturing, and shaping Toronto's economy, the economies of their families and earning their own incomes in a wide range of roles, from management, production, and sales.

The structure of this study was informed by social-cultural anthropologist Arjun Appadurai's edited collection *The Social Life of Things*, due to the tendency to anthropomorphize corsets as good or bad, as though they had specific intentions to help or harm. Specifically, Igor Kopytoff's chapter "The Cultural Biography of Things", which asks "What, sociologically, are the biographical possibilities inherent in its 'status' and in the period and culture, and how are these possibilities realized? Where does the thing come from and who made it?... How does the thing's use change with its age, and what happens to it when it reaches the end of its usefulness?"[4] The chapters were designed to follow the life of the corset from conception in the minds of the factory owners and designers, to their existence embracing the women of Toronto and their afterlives in museum collections, in other words, where it came from to the end of its usefulness. Chapter one argues that men and women owned approximately equal numbers of companies though there was a tendency for women to be hidden in the backgrounds of businesses. The study of the female economy of corset making in Toronto relied on archival research to tell the stories of each business, their owners, and the specific businesses practices and corset innovations that either made them successful or short-lived, often punctuating a lack of availability of information for female owners and their businesses.

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[3] Flugel, 198.
[4] Igor Kopytoff. "The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process", in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998): p. 67.

Chapter two argues that the labour within the factories was predominantly female. Again, archival sources uncovered that women were not simply employed as seamstresses, but rather were salespeople, book-keepers, and managers, white collar work that complicated the narrative that women's work was generally an extension of their home duties. These positions were read within the context of factory reform, and changes in production. Each argument of this chapter was illustrated by stories of men and women living and working in Toronto whose lives were affected by these reforms and work environments in order to prove that these topics were not simply theoretical issues in the past, but affected the lives of real people.

Chapter three argues that corset retailing and advertising greatly influenced corset wearing in Toronto. In-shop assistants helped the customer find the perfect fit, as retailers knew that comfort was a priority, as certainly women did not want to wear uncomfortable garments. Sales and gimmicks encouraged the women of Toronto to buy new styles, and displayed the significant retail presence of corsets. The chapter concludes with aggregation of information regarding corsets available in Toronto, with regards to price, material, and most importantly, size, arguing that the practice of tight lacing was not a priority. This chapter argues that the transformative powers of corsets were advertised and sold to the women of Toronto.

Chapter four follows the life of the corset as it was worn by the women after purchase. It argues that women were faced with both negative and positive news stories about corsets, including apocryphal stories, notes of lectures by dress reformers, and fashion tips. The advice in periodicals changed frequently, and often criticized the corset of the previous year for being too tight, or too curvaceous. From one year to the next news articles berated women for being too thin, or too fat, and they were expected to keep up with these rapid and extreme changes in preferred body shape. The advice columns then prove that corsets were not the same from year to

year, and that the desired shape of the body was constantly changing. This chapter includes a material culture analysis of extant corsets in museum collections, and attempts to connect the women who owned and wore them with the issues surrounding corset wearing. This analysis reveals that the small sample of women were not prone to tight lacing and that corsets were worn by women of all ages. This type of analysis reveals that the corsets that end up in museums belonged to wealthy women, or were worn for special occasions like weddings. They do not necessarily represent daily wear, or the majority of the population. A wider range of corsets by a greater population is ideal for a more detailed analysis, however, this is not the reality.

Chapter five argues that women have never stopped wearing corsets, though the name has changed, and materials advanced. Body shapers and foundation garments evolved to the point where they have come full-circle and some women are now choosing to wear waist trainers daily thanks to celebrity influence, or steel-boned corsets as part of a counter-cultural movement. The rage of clothing available, and the acceptance of all bodies affords women the ability to choose corsetry, or, as the majority, to not.

This study ends in 1914, marking the start of the First World War, and the changes in fashion that war-time rationing created. I chose this date in order to avoid complicating the history with the social and sartorial upheavals of war. However, this date does not mark the end of corset wear. Foundation garments that formed the body were worn and produced in Toronto in the decades after this, and those stories still remain untold. However, the stories in this study are also incomplete. This research reveals a greater problem around the visibility of women in historic sources. Ideally, the stories of every person in the appendices would be told, and their work and lives celebrated. The sources also lacked accounts of wear and embodied experiences, and the testamonies in newspapers cannot necessarily be read as fact, as we cannot verify authorship.

These stories may be lost forever, as we can only work with what is in the sources. Even speaking to current practitioners of corsetry is not enough to speculate how Victorian women viewed their bodies and dress. The absence of women's voices is exemplified by Joanne Entwistle's statement that "the existence of the corset and its connection to moral discourses about female sexuality tell us nothing about how Victorian women experienced the corset, how they chose to lace it and how tightly, and what bodily sensations it produced".[5] Again, this absence of voice indicates a lack of representation in women's history, and the history of women's experiences and their own voices leave interpretation open to speculation.

Toronto's corset manufacturers were owned by both men and women, on a small and large scale. The business-owning women were at a disadvantage due to their gender and were sometimes running the company under the front of their husbands, but were still able to establish longevity in enterprise. They contributed to the ingenuity of design through patent ownership. The women employed at their factories and workshops held a variety of positions, as clerical and managerial staff, as well as factory labourers, assembling the corsets to the sound of whirring machines and steam irons. These women controlled production, and through labour disruptions had the power to affect the financial gains of their employers. They existed as ordinary women, living with their families, or boarding in rooms next to other needle workers. Some were married, others eagerly anticipated marriage, while still others did not seem concerned about that goal. The women who worked in this industry set standards for women's rights to employment and body autonomy, but chose this work because of their skill with sewing, the availability of work, and their need for an income. Their labour was inscribed in the garments they made, and complicated by the problem of women's dress reform, labour that begs the question of whether or not the women who fought

[5] Joanne Entwistle, *The Fashioned Body: Fashion, Dress and Modern Social Theory*. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000): p. 24.

so hard against corsets considered the women working in factories as they encouraged their sisters to unlace. The topic of corsets and feminism will likely be debated *ad infinitum*, but it cannot be disputed that historically the women of Toronto drove the industry, through ownership, employment, and as active and informed consumers.

Appendix

Appendix A: Businesses

The following table represents findings from the city directories, regarding the variety of corset companies that were active in Toronto. Information incudes an alphabetical list of company or individual names, years in operation, as well as the corset companies' addresses. The final column indicates how companies were described in the directories, but it by indication of the type of maker (hoops and corsets, "French stay maker", etc), and the names of the managers or owners, often indicating female ownership. This information serves to provide a geographical understanding of where corset companies were located and how often they moved, as well as the variety of the 51 discrete companies operating in Toronto, be they small workshops, large factories, or sales agents.

Company name	**Years Active**	**Address**	**Description**
American Corset & Dress Reform	1892-1900	316 Yonge St	Ward & McKenzie
Belcher & Snider	1902-1904	489 Queen w	John Belcher & John Snider
Bias Corsets ltd	1901, 1909-1912	31-33 Britain	
Bias Corsets ltd	1905	489 Queen w	
Bias Corsets ltd	1913-1914	41 Britain	
Bias Corsets ltd	1906-1908	221 Queen e	
Bondidier, Miss Catherine	1871-1872	32 Shuter	French Stay Maker
Bondidier, Miss Catherine	1872- 1881	30 Shuter	French Stay Maker
Bondidier, Miss Mary	1882-1889	30 Shuter	French Stay Maker
Bondidier, Miss Mary	1890-1892	36 Shuter	French Stay Maker
Brennan, Mrs Catherine	1879-1881	95 Lombard	corset factory, wid. M
Brush & Co	1886	33 Front St W	Seely B. Brush
Brush & Co	1887-1905	54 Adelaide W	Seely B. Brush
Brush & Co	1906	130 Pearl	Seely B. Brush
Bullack, Mowitt & Co	1878	54-56	corsets, hoop skirts etc

Company name	Years Active	Address	Description
		Wellington	
Canada featherbone co	1899	6 King w	
Canada featherbone co	1900	19 Melinda	
Canada featherbone co	1902	46 Richmond	
Canniff, JW	1885-1886	391 1/2 Queen W	
Canniff Star Corset Co	1887-1888	392 1/2 Queen W	
CBC Corsets	1905-1907	355 College	JD Belcher mgr (1905), James D. Cooper mgr (1906)
Chubb, Miss EJ	1891	426 1/2 Yonge	
CL Bullack & FM Crane	1877	20 Wellington	Corset and panier manufrs
Corset Specialty co	1894-1896	426 Queen w	Fannie M. Holmes mgr
Corset Specialty co	1897, 1899-1906	112 Yonge	Fannie M. Holmes mgr
Corset Specialty co	1907-1909	104 King W	Fannie M. Holmes mgr
Crompton Corset Co	1879	78 Jarvis	corset manufacturer
Crompton Corset Co	1880-1914	78 York	corset manufacturer
Dominion Corsets	1893-1899	50 Bay	
Dominion Corsets	1900, 1902-1905	65 Yonge	
Dominion Corsets	1901, 1906-1914	78 Bay	
Dunn, George W	1871-1874	206 Yonge	Hoops skirt and corset dealer
Dunn, George W	1875-1878	39 Yonge	Retail
Dunn &Co	1875-1878	212 Yonge	Mrs. GW Dunn, wholesale
Eatons	1896	19-21 King W	
ET Corsets	1888-1892	59 Bay	Hallett & co agents
ET Corsets	1893-1900, 1902	57 Bay	Hallett & co agents
ET Corsets	1901	34 York	
ET Corsets	1904	72-74 Bay	
ET Corsets	1905-1907	10 Melinda	
ET Corsets	1908-1913	77 York	
ET Corsets	1914	56 Wellington	
Eve, Mme Marie	1901	608 Yonge	Corset scientist
Marie, Mme Eve	1912-1914	608 Yonge	corset maker
Gunning, JF	1897	117 Grange	Corset manufacturer
Hasslett, Mrs J.T	1884	368 Yonge	Corset manufacturer

Company name	Years Active	Address	Description
Juno Corset Co	1889	210 Queen W	Benj McQuay
Konig & Stuffman	1902	509 Wellington	
Livingstone, Miss Sarah	1898	455 King w	corset manufacturer
Livingstone, Miss Sarah	1899-1900	51 Lombard	corset manufacturer
Loso, William	1891-1893	87 King w	
M&W corsets	1901	706 Queen w	CW Millward, Mgr
MacKay, Hallet & co	1888	59 Bay	corsets
Mallory, Mrs Helen and Eliz Walker	1881	266 Yonge	corsets etc
Mallory, Mrs.	1882	266 Yonge	
Marie, Mrs Ada	1901	555 Bloor	corset maker
Membry, Mrs Ellen	1890	11 Richmond W	corset manufacturer
Millward, Charles	1897	73 Adelaide w	corset manufacturer
Parid Kid Glove and Corsets	1890-1891	11-13 King E	
Parisian Corset Mfg Co	1913-1914	120 Wellington	
Peabody, FE	1914	794 College	corsets and orthopedics
Rayworth, Miss E	1896-1898	571 Yonge St	corset maker
Rayworth, Miss E	1899-1900	569 Yonge st	corset maker
Rayworth, Miss Elizabeth	1901	1277 Dundas	corset maker
Reading, J	1871-1874	204 Yonge	Hoop skirts, corsets, fancy goods
Reading, M & co	1875	204 Yonge	
Royal Corset Co	1895	50 Bay	Sherbrooke Que.
Spirella Corset co	1901	36 Toronto	
Strachan, Mrs A	1895	forum bld, 387 Yonge	Dressmaker and corset mnfg
Telfer Manufacturing co	1880- 1884	76-78 Jarvis	corsets
Telfer Manufacturing co	1885-1898	6 -10 Johnson	corsets
Tomkins, William R	1882	169 Hope	corset maker
Toronto Ordered Corset Co	1892-1895	466 Yonge	corset manufacturer
Toronto Ordered Corset Co	1896	276 Yonge	corset manufacturer
Toronto Ordered Corset Co	1898-1899	334 Spadina	corset manufacturer
Upthegrove, Mrs Ellen	1895	624 Yonge	corsets
Van Stone Corset Co	1886	345 Yonge	Isaac Van Stone, prop
Vermilyea, Mrs HM	1889	228 Spadina	corset manufacturer
Vermilyea, Mrs HM	1890-1891	248 Spadina	corset manufacturer
Vermilyea Corset co	1892-1893	338 Spadina	corset manufacturer
Vermilyea, Madame HM	1894	489 Queen w	corset manufacturer
Vermilyea Manufacturing	1896	276 Yonge	corset manufacturer

Company name	Years Active	Address	Description
co			
Vermilyea, Solomon	1904	598 Yonge	
Ward & McKenzie	1894-1899	316 Yonge	Mrs IL Ward and Mrs George McKenzie
Ward & McKenzie	1900	314 Yonge	
Ward, Isabella	1902	316 Yonge	corset manufacturer
Ward, IL	1903	2 College	corset manufacturer
Wilson, Miss Olive	1899	268 Queen W	corsets
Woolnough Corsetiers	1901	104 King W	FJ Woolnough, manager
Wray Corset Manufacturing	1890	67 Adelaide	Richard Wray, Propietor

Appendix B: Employees

This extensive list of labourers is drawn from the city directories. Lists were compiled for each year of the directory, and then merged to create a comprehensive list of women and men employed in corset manufacturing. This list shows the variey of positions in factories and shops, as well as how often people moved house. The significance of this large appendix rests in celebrating everyday labourers, who were overwhelmingly female, who earned wages. Of the information that can be gleaned from this table is the marital status of the female employees, either un-married, married or widowed, because of the salutation used.

Name	**Address**	**Position**	**Company**
Adams, Robert	109 Waverley (1896-1899) 87 Waverley (1900)	manager & agent	Dominion Corset
Addison, Miss Isabella	63 Bellevue (1894-1895)	corset maker	
Alford, Miss Kate	292 Church (1891-1892)	corset maker	
Alford, Miss Kate	128 McGill (1893)	worker	Crompton
Allan, Miss Blanche	15 Nicholas (1894)	worker	Crompton
Allan, Miss Maud	172 Grange (1897)	operator	Corset Speciality Co
Alldis, Miss Matilda	48 Arthur (1894)	worker	Crompton
Alldis, Wm C	48 Arthur (1894)	blocker	Crompton
Allen, Miss Alice	172 Grange (1899-1900)	corset maker	
Allen, Miss Beatrice	10 Carlton (1892)	corset maker	
Allen, Miss Maud	172 Grange (1898-1900)	worker	Corset Speciality Co
Alllen, Miss Blanche	10 Carlton (1892)	corset maker	
Anderson, Miss Margt	475 1/2 St. Clarens (1913)	bookkeeper	Crompton
Archer, Wm B	5 Farley (1899)	worker	Crompton
Archibald, Miss Dusellia	53 Nelson (1894)	worker	Crompton
Armstrong, Miss Isabella	118 Beaconsfield (1894)	worker	Crompton
Armstrong, Miss Sarah	89 Euclid Av (1891) 294 Manning (1894)	machine operator	Vermilyea

Name	Address	Position	Company
Arnold, Richard W	61 Duke, Hamilton Terrace (1882-1883)	corset maker	
Arthur, Miss Annie	129 McCaul (1892)	corset maker	
Arthur, Miss Lydia	129 McCaul (1892) 135 McCaul (1893)	corset maker	
Arthur, Miss Lydia	806 Dovercourt (1894) 643 Lansdowne (1897)	worker	Crompton
Aspinal, Thos	21 Wilton cres (1901) 43 Mutual (1909) 21 Wilton (1911) 43 Oak (1913) 43 Bickle (1914)	worker	Crompton
Atkinson, Miss Sarah	81 Robinson (1894)	worker	Crompton
Austin, Frank	68 Sussex (1891)	cutter	Crompton
Avison, George	469 Queen W (1903)	corset maker	
Avison, Miss A Myrtle	164 Margueretta (1912-1913)	stenographer	Bias Corset Co
Badgley, Miss Florence	4 Clarence sq (1890)	finisher	Vermilyea
Bain, Miss Mary	97 Teraulay (1884)	corset maker	
Ballard, Chas F	49 Harbord (1913)	traveler	ET Corset Co
Ballard, Fredk	658 Euclid (1914)	traveler	ET Corset Co
Bannan, Nellie	57 Mitchell (1898)	operator	Corset Speciality Co
Barnes, Miss Leah	32 Albert (1891)	corset maker	
Barrett, Albert	140 Jarvis (1896)	porter	Crompton
Barron, Miss Effie	50 Markham (1895)	worker	Crompton
Barron, Miss Euphemia	158 Palmerston (1894)	worker	Crompton
Barron, Miss Jessie	158 Palmerston (1894) 50 Markham (1895)	worker	Crompton
Barry, Miss Bridget	2 Crocker (1898)	corset maker	
Barton, Miss Maud	19 Gildersleeve av (1902, 1905)	corset maker	Corset Speciality Co
Bassil, L	2054 Queen E (1914)	worker	Crompton
Bastow, Clarence H.	65 Lisgar (1886-1888) 236 Lisgar (1890) 206 Dundas (1891) 365 Givens (1892) 330 George (1893-1894) 153 Howland (1902-	bookkeeper	Crompton

Name	Address	Position	Company
	1903)		
Beaton, Miss Florence	16 Agnes (1894)	corset maker	
Belcher, John D	380 Queen W (1905)	Manager	CBC Corset Co
Bell, Aleurd	788 Chester (1907) 47 Moscow (1913-1914)	worker	Crompton
Bell, Arthur	220 Bathurst (1903) 259 Farley (1907) 58 Spadina (1908) 120 Harrison (1909)	worker	Crompton
Bell, David	16 Earnbridge (1901)	clerk	Dominion Corset
Bell, Edward	16 Earnbridge (1912-1913) 93 Pearson (1914)	clerk	Dominion Corset
Benjamin, Miss Arzelia	226 Sumach (1894)	worker	Crompton
Bennett, Edward	21 Elm (1896)	porter	Crompton
Bennett, Mrs Mary	49 Northcote (1894)	operator	Vermilyea
Berrie, Miss Maggie	627 Gerrard e (1891-1892)	corset maker	
Bird, Miss Florena	14 Mitchell (1900) 12 Mitchell (1906-1907)	corset maker	
Birks, Miss Emily	77 Major (1893)	corset maker	
Black, Maggie	84 Turner (1893) 183 Strachan (1894)	worker	Vermilyea
Blackie, Miss Christina	172 Palmerston (1894, 1897)	operator	Crompton
Blake, Wm	40 Huntley (1905)	traveler	ET Corset Co
Blakemore, Miss Minnie	155 Queen e (1894)	corset maker	
Boake, Miss Clara	27 Olive Av (1892)	corset maker	
Boddy, William	155 Hallam (1905-1906)	traveler	Dominion Corset
Boland, John	102 Manning (1904)	porter	Brush
Boland, Miss Agnes	102 Manning (1900)	corset maker	
Boland, Miss Annie	102 Manning (1899)	corset maker	
Boland, Miss Elizabeth	102 Manning (1893, 1895, 1899)	corset maker	

Name	Address	Position	Company
Boland, Miss Mary	102 Manning (1893-1894, 1899-1900)	corset maker	
Bonesteel, Miss Olive	96 Gladstone (1894-1895) 120 Sheridan (1897)	worker	Crompton
Booth, Wm	43 Brookfeild (1901, 1907-1909) 18 Trenton (1905-1906) 48 Brookfield (1911) 101 Pearson (1912-1914)	worker	Crompton
Borland, Frederick	5 Lennox (1894)	apprentice	Crompton
Bowman, George	266 Clinton (1891-1892) 213 Manning (1893)	porter	Crompton
Bowman, John GE	266 Clinton (1892) 24 Nelson (1894)	porter	Crompton
Boyd, Miss Daisy	82 Bismarck (1894)	worker	Crompton
Boyd, Miss Jean	82 Bismarck (1897, 1898)	worker	Crompton
Breslin, Miss Lena	54 Cecil (1913)	stenographer	Bias Corset Co
Brewer, Louisa	23 Woolsley (1894)	forewoman	Vermilyea
Brewer, Miss Louise	85 Woolsley (1890)	machine operator	Vermilyea
Brewer, Miss Maud C	270 Dupont (1898)	corset maker	
Broderick, Miss Bessie	9 Sydenham (1899)	corset maker	
Broderick, Miss Elizabeth	116 Ontario (1894) 156 Ontario (1897)	worker	Crompton
Broderick, Miss Mary	9 Sydenham (1899)	corset maker	
Bromley, George F.	150 Brunswick Ave (1889)	packer	Crompton
Brown, Miss Alice	457 Queen e (1902)	corset maker	Crompton
Brown, Miss Maude	193 Claremont (1893)	corset maker	
Bruce, Albert	19 Adelaide W (1888)	carpenter	Crompton
Buckley, Maurice	2 Glen Rd (1896) 122 Avenue (1896-97, 1899, 1904-1905) 1528 King W (1906-907, 1909, 1912-1914)	traveler & agent	Dominion Corset
Bullivant, Francis H	272 Clinton (1896-1898)	machine head	Crompton
Burke, Miss Bertha	371 Margueretta (1904)	corset maker	

Name	Address	Position	Company
Burns, Margareta	125 Chestnut (1894)	corset maker	
Burns, Miss Kate	380 King W (1892)	corset maker	
Burns, Miss Nellie	380 King W (1892)	corset maker	
Burton, Mrs Emma	153 Major (1894-1895)	worker	Crompton
Butcher, Alfred	11 Howie (1904) 23 Woodbine beach (1906-1907) 66 gait (1908-1909, 1913-1914)	engineer	Crompton
Butcher, Ernest	75 Gait Av (1914)	worker	Crompton
Bywater, Miss Clara	29 Bellvue (1894)	worker	Crompton
Caddell, Wm	149 Brunswick Av (1891) 174 Major (1892)	machinist	Vermilyea
Calhoun, Miss Catherine	155 Manning (1906)	operator	Crompton
Callon, Miss Amelia	37 Sherbourne (1894)	worker	Crompton
Calvert, Miss Rachel	4 Brant pl (1894)	worker	Crompton
Calvert, Miss Rae	183 John (1897)	worker	Crompton
Campbell, Miss Agnes	210 Brunswick (1894) 299 Euclid (1895) 238 Lippincott (1897)	worker	Crompton
Campbell, Miss Catherine	362 Queen W (1904)	worker	Crompton
Campbell, Miss Della	17 Afton (1906)	corset maker	
Campbell, Miss Lizzy P.	293 Simcoe (1885)	pay clerk	Crompton
Caven, Mrs Georgina	167 Argyle (1906)	operator	Corset Speciality Co
Chafee, Mott	192 Adelaide w (1890)	ironer	Crompton
Chaffe, Morris B	255 Wellington W (1891) 20 McCaul (1894)	ironer	Crompton
Chalk, Miss Margaret	128 Esther (1897)	worker	Crompton
Chalmers, James	74 Esther (1895)	corset maker	Crompton
Chalmers, Miss Maggie	74 Esther (1895)	corset maker	
Chaperon, Miss Eurelia	89 Garden (1894)	worker	Crompton
Chapman, Miss Emma	89 Garden (1894-1895)	worker	Crompton
Charter, Frances B	429 Dufferin (1895)	corset maker	
Charter, Lydia E	429 Dufferin (1894-1895)	corset maker	

Name	Address	Position	Company
Charter, Minnie M	429 Dufferin (1895)	corset maker	
Charter, Miss Martha	429 Dufferin (1894)	corset maker	
Charter, Miss Minnie	429 Dufferin (1896)	corset maker	
Clark, Henry	45 Nelson (1886)	machinist	Crompton
Clarke, Albert E	270 Jarvis (1900) 1358 Queen W (1902)	bookkeeper	Crompton
Clarke, Henry J.	45 Nelson (1885-1886)	machinist	Crompton
Clarke, Miss Bessie	17 Stratford (1894) 88 Garden (1895, 1897)	worker	Crompton
Claxton, Miss Amy	26 Broadway Pl (1890)	assistant cutter	Vermilyea
Coe, Frederick	53 Queen E (1889)	porter	Crompton
Coghill, David	Balmy Beach (1906-1908)	Ironer	Bias Corset Co
Coker, Walter	72 Salisbury (1899)	carpenter	Crompton
Cole, Miss Henrietta	48 Nassau (1897-1898)	corset maker	Ward & McKenzie
Comisky, Miss Alice	115 Boyden (1894-1895, 1897)	worker	Crompton
Cook, Miss Annie	439 Adelaide (1898)	operator	Crompton
Cook, Miss Fray	18 Bond (1883)	corset maker	
Cooke, Ernest	18 Wood (1899)	pressman	Crompton
Cooper, Albert	420 Parliament (1890) 16 Dean (1891)	machinist	Crompton
Cooper, James	657 Euclid (1906-1907)	Manager	CBC Corset Co
Cooper, Miss Jennie	17 Collahie (1903)	corset maker	
Cooper, Miss Rebecca	11 Markham pl (1894)	worker	Crompton
Cowie, Wm F	100 Markham (1895)	traveler	ET Corset Co
Cox, Miss Millie	117 Berkeley (1895)	corset maker	
Crane, Miss Ada	205 Chestnut (1894)	worker	Crompton
Crawford, Douglas	32 1/2 Sheridan (1914)	worker	Crompton
Crawford, Edward L	115 Harbord (1902)	clerk	Crompton
Crawford, Miss Emily	27 Crocker (1899) 171 Strachan (1900)	corset maker	
Crawford, Miss Ida	27 Crocker (1899) 171 Strachan (1900)	corset maker	

Name	Address	Position	Company
Crawford, Mrs. Susan	96 Gladstone (1894) 120 Sheridan (1897)	worker	Crompton
Crawley, Thomas C	186 Borden (1895)	clerk	Crompton
Cresswell, Miss Annie	13 Temperance (1889)	corset maker	
Cresswell, Miss Elizabeth	133 Simcoe (1895, 1897-1898)	operator	Crompton
Crook, Miss Maude	366 1/2 Dupont (1897) 270 Dupont (1900)	corset maker	
Crosier, Miss Rachel	25 Waterloo (1902)	corset maker	
Croteau, Miss Alice	10 Catherine (1891)	corset maker	
Crumpton, Fred	1441 King w (1901, 1911-1914)	manager	Spirella
Curan, Miss Catherine	34 Robert (1884)	corset maker	
Curran, Miss Caroline	176 Markham (1896)	corset maker	
Curran, Miss Kate	40 Camden (1890)	machine operator	Vermilyea
Curran, Miss Kate	176 Markham (1896) 149 Markham (1898-1900, 1904, 1906-1909) 207 Markahm (1902)	operator	Corset Speciality Co
Curran, Miss Katie	46 Arthur (1894-1895)	corset maker	FM Holmes
Curran, Miss Mary	167 Seaton (1888) 245 Seaton (1889) 38 Saulter (1894) 196 Booth (1899) 190 Booth (1900)	operator	Crompton
Curran, Miss Matilda	46 Arthur (1894)	corset maker	FM Holmes
Curran, Miss Matilda	176 Markham (1896)	corset maker	Corset Speciality Co
Curran, Miss Matilda	149 Markham (1898)	operator	Corset Speciality Co
Curran, Miss Matilda	267 Markham (1904-1908)	operator	Corset Speciality Co
Curran, Miss Nellie	57 Claremont (1896) 149 Markham (1899-1900)	corset maker	Corset Speciality Co
Curran, Miss Tillie	46 Arthur (1895)	corset maker	FM Holmes
Curren, Miss Mary	38 Saulter (1895)	corset maker	
Cuthbert, Miss Nellie	230 Teraulay (1894)	worker	Crompton
Daley, Michael	112 Adelaide W (1903-1904)	messenger	Corset Speciality Co

Name	Address	Position	Company
Daveen, Albert	65 Yonge (1902) 277 Jarvis (1903-1904) 39 Carlton (1905-1908) 40 Carleton (1909) Bay (1901, 19011) 614 Avenue (1912-1914)	traveler	Dominion Corset
Davey, Miss Minnie	70 Elm (1900)	corset maker	
Davey, Nicholas	265 Clinton (1894)	porter	Crompton
Davis, Charles	188 Munro (1905)	corset maker	Crompton
Davis, Miss Louisa	202 Adelaie w (1896)	corset maker	
Davis, Miss Louise	118 Adelaide (1894)	worker	Crompton
Dawson, Miss Jennie	22 Lewis (1896)	corset maker	
Day, Wm R	20 King E (1893) 4 Churchill (1895, 1897)	clerk	Crompton
Dehaney, Miss Violet	33 McGill (1897)	worker	Crompton
Diamond, Miss J	110 Borden (1906)	operator	CBC Corset Co
Diamond, Miss Lillian	110 Borden (1906)	operator	CBC Corset Co
Dick, Allie	139 Dundas (1899)	operator	Corset Speciality Co
Dick, Miss Alice	127 Dovercourt (1897) 217 Dovercourt (1898) 229 Dovercourt (1900)	operator	Corset Speciality Co
Dingle, Wm	2 Wilton (1902)	worker	Crompton
Dolsal, Miss Alice	18 bond (1883)	corset maker	
Dolsal, Miss susan	18 Bond (1883)	corset maker	
Donaldson, Miss Catherine	265 Church (1894)	worker	Crompton
Doran, Miss Annie	284 Victoria (1894)	worker	Crompton
Douglas, Miss Edith	250 Richmond (1894)	worker	Crompton
Douglas, Miss Eliza	245 Shaw (1899-1900)	clerk	Corset Speciality Co
Douglas, Miss Eliza	246 Shaw (1897, 1902, 1905) 149 Dovercourt (1906)	sales lady	Corset Speciality Co
Douglas, Miss Eliza	246 Shaw (1903-1904)	bookkeeper	Corset Speciality Co
Douglas, Miss Lyla	246 Shaw (1902)	bookkeeper	Corset Speciality Co

Name	Address	Position	Company
Douglas, Miss Sarah	47 Major (1907)	operator	Corset Speciality Co
Douglas, Robert	19 Cameron (1894)	worker	Crompton
Douglass, Miss Eliza	246 Shaw (1898)	clerk	Corset Speciality Co
Doyle, Miss K	6 Bond (1882)	corset maker	
Drover, Miss Lizzie	172 Euclid ave (1890)	machine operator	Vermilyea
Duffy, Miss Minie	48 Duchess (1902)	corset maker	
Duffy, Miss Rose	15 Power (1886)	corset maker	
Dufort, Miss Maud	Little York (1900)	worker	Corset Speciality Co
Dulan, Miss Lizzie	30 St. Paul (1891)	corset maker	Wm. Lozo
Dundas, Hubert E	189 Clinton (1914)	worker	Crompton
Dunn, Miss Eliza	23 Widmer (1894)	worker	Crompton
Dunning, Mrs NC	14 Brant Pl (1891)	inspector	Vermilyea
Dykes, Miss Lillian	110 Borden (1907)	operator	CBC Corset Co
Earl, Richard F.	168 King W (1886)	Ironer	Crompton
Eibbitt, Wm	Manning at Dupont (1896) 214 Christie (1897)	cutter	Crompton
Elder, Miss Elizabeth	246 Bathurst (1894)	worker	Crompton
Elder, Miss Margaret	246 Bathurst (1894)	worker	Crompton
Ellis, Miss Catherine	222 St. Patrick (1902)	corset maker	Eatons
Ellis, Miss Martha	222 St. Patrick (1902)	corset maker	Eatons
Embly, Miss Mary	31 Duchess (1885)	forewoman	Crompton
Erskine, Miss Jane	113 Berkely (1891)	corset maker	
Eve, Mrs Marie	608 Yonge (1912-1913) 607 Yonge (1914)	corset maker	
Fahey, Miss Margaret	26 Ord (1894)	worker	Crompton
Fahey, Miss Mary	39 Nelson (1894)	worker	Crompton
Fahey, Miss Theresa	97 Teraulay (1884)	corset maker	
Farrance, Miss Alice	80 Denison (1896)	corset maker	Ward & McKenzie
Feirley, Miss Minnie	74 Mansfield (1898-1899)	Corset maker	
Felming, John	51 Lombard (1897)	casemaker	Crompton
Flagher, Miss Alice	18 Widmer (1897)	worker	Crompton
Flanagan, Wm	129 Sackville (1909)	corset maker	

Name	Address	Position	Company
Fleming, John	74 Adelaide w (1889) 106 Adelaide W (1890) 358 Adelaide W (1891) 198 Victoria (1892-1893) 198 Victoria (1894) 207 Victoria (1895) 85 1/2 church (1896) 31 Lombard (1898)	casemaker	Crompton
Fleming, Joseph	51 Lombard (1899)	ironer	Crompton
Ford, Miss Julia	660 King W (1892) 302 Bathurst (1895)	corset maker	Crompton
Forgie, Edith	10 Ossington (1896-1897, 1899) 13 Ossington (1900, 1902-1909)	operator	Corset Speciality Co
Forgie, Miss Edith	10 Ossington (1895)	corset maker	FM Holmes
Forgie, Miss Edith	13 Ossington (1901, 1911-1912)	operator	Woolnough
Fowler, Thomas	31 Galley (1909)	worker	Crompton
Frame, Annie	218 Richmond W (1892)	worker	Balls
Freeman, Miss Beatrice	1 Gladstone (1892)	corset maker	
Freeman, Miss Beatrice	187 Gladstone (1902)	examiner	Crompton
Freeman, Miss Jennie	244 Queen W (1885)	Corset maker	
Freeman, Miss Lily B	187 Gladstone (1897)	worker	Crompton
Freeman, Thomas	255 Wellington w (1891)	accountant	Vermilyea
Frost, Miss Minnie	44 Spadina Ave (1890)	forelady	Vermilyea
Fuller, Miss Minnie	338 Euclid (1893-1894)	corset maker	
Fursier, Miss Nellie	135 Church (1892) 214 George (1894)	corset maker	Crompton
Gallagher, Annie	92 Oak (1893)	corset maker	GR Holden
Gallagher, Miss Annie	43 William (1889) 55 William (1894) 17 Beverley (1895)	corset maker	
Gallagher, Miss Annie	92 oak (1896)	corset maker	Ward & McKenzie
Gallagher, Miss Annie	92 Oak (1902)	operator	American Corset

Name	Address	Position	Company
Gallagher, Miss Annie	37 Williams (1905-1907)	operator	CBC Corset Co
Gallagher, Miss Honora	55 William (1894) 37 william (1897)	worker	Crompton
Garvin, Miss Eliza	26 William (1894-1898)	operator	Crompton
Gibblins, Miss Libbie	600 Wilton (1913)	stenographer	Crompton
Gibbons, Miss Charlotte	91 Denison ave (1890)	corset maker	
Gibbons, Miss Sarah	67 Bellevue (1894, 1897)	worker	Crompton
Gibbons, Sarah R	91 Denison ave (1890)	corset maker	
Gibson, James	21 Nicholas (1902)	machinist	Crompton
Gilchrist, George	455 Palmerston (1901, 1906-1908, 1911)	traveler	Crompton
Gilchrist, John	245 Palmerston (1899)	traveler	Crompton
Gilchrist, John	245 Palmerston (1902-1903)	assistant manager	Crompton
Gilchrist, John	412 College (1901, 1905-1913) 435 Parliament (1914)	vice president	Crompton
Gilchrist, Thomas	677 Queen w (1903)	stock keeper	Crompton
Gill, Miss A A	213 grand ave (1890)	bookkeeper	Crompton
Gillam, Miss Edith	170 Bolton (1906-1909)	worker	
Gillies, Miss Mary	523 Bloor w (1894, 1897)	worker	Crompton
Gillooly, Miss Bessie	25 Nelson (1889)	corset maker	
Gillooly, Miss Nellie	119 Palmerston (1894)	corset maker	
Gilmore, Thomas	184 Markham (1890)	packer	Crompton
Gilmore, Thomas	261 Lippincott (1891-1893)	packer	Crompton
Gilmour, Thomas	60 Palmerston (1894)	shipper	Crompton
Gilmour, Thomas	199 Bellwoods (1897) 1 Markham (1898)	clerk	Crompton
Gilmour, Thomas	134 Farley (1899-1900)	stock keeper	Crompton
Gilmour, Thomas	677 Queen W (1902-1908)	stock keeper	Crompton

Name	Address	Position	Company
Gilmour, Thomas G	60 Palmerston (1895)	corset maker	Crompton
Gilmour, Thomas G	199 Belwoods (1896)	shipper	Crompton
Glass, Donald	1 Victoria Pl (1892)	pointer	Crompton
Glendenning, Miss Frances	95 Munro (1893)	corset maker	
Glockling, Miss Elizabeth	77 Bellevue (1894)	corset maker	
Glover, Bennett	N/A (1884)	worker	Crompton
Glover, Henry	Old Fort (1884)	engineer	Crompton
Godfrey, Miss M	153 Sherbourne (1882)	corset maker	
Gordon, Miss Mabel	25 Mansfield (1898-1899	corset maker	Brush
Gorley, Miss Agnes	52 Esther (1893)	corset maker	
Gorton, Miss Esther	25 Saulter (1902)	corset maker	
Gorton, Miss Rubie	69 Allen (1899-1900) 529 Queen E (1902) 723 Queen E (1903) 272 Sumach (1904)	operator	Corset Speciality Co
Goulding, Edgar	235 St. Clarens (1905)	manager	Bias Corset Co
Gracie, Hugh	546 Bloor w (1896) 183 Robert (1897)	ironer	Crompton
Gracie, Hugh	546 Bloor w (1895)	corset maker	Crompton
Graham, Miss Emily	28 Follis (1897)	worker	Crompton
Graham, Miss Emma	28 Johnson (1894)	worker	Crompton
Graham, Miss Frances	28 Johnson (1894)	worker	Crompton
Graham, Miss Frances	28 Follis (1897)	worker	Crompton
Green, Reginald	156 Fern (1901, 1911)	traveler	Dominion Corset
Greenwood, Joseph	545 Givens (1904) 376 Brock (1906)	carpenter	Crompton
Greer, Robert H	431 Parliament (1894)	machine head	Crompton
Griffith, Miss Annie	234 McCaul (1894, 1897)	worker	Crompton
Griffiths, Miss Lizzie	235 Niagara (1895)	corset maker	
Hall, Fred w	242 McCaul (1904) 66 University (1905) 219 Simcoe (1906)	cutter	Crompton

Name	Address	Position	Company
Hall, Frederick	360 Lansdowne (1908-1913)	cutter	Crompton
Hall, James	32 Nassau (1889) 38 Nassau (1890) 463 Givens (1891-1902) 542 Bloor w (1906)	cutter	Crompton
Hall, Miss Minnie	75 Richmond e (1895)	corset maker	
Hall, William	408 Manning (1906-1908)	corset designer	Eatons
Hall, Wm	408 Manning (1891, 1895-1897) 76 Bathurst (1892) 78 Bathurst (1894)	cutter	Crompton
Hallet, Saml	1474 Dufferin (1914)	worker	Crompton
Halliday, Miss Belle	356 Lippincott (1894)	worker	Crompton
Hallowes, Saml	190 Ossington (1897) 1666 Queen W (1902) 95 Close (1904) 17 Hepbourne (1906) 14 Dunn (1907) 135 Pearson (1908) 79 Lee (1901, 1911) 209 Waverley (1913)	porter	Crompton
Hallows, Samuel	29 Bellefair (1909) 44 Bellefair (1912)	printer	Crompton
Hamilton, Alexander	31 Tranby (1905) Deer Park (1908)	traveler	Bias Corset Co
Hamilton, Alexander	31 Tranby (1906-1907)	manager	Bias Corset Co
Hamilton, Miss Lena	85 McKenzie (1901, 1909, 1911) 47 Givens (1908)	corset maker	
Hamilton, Miss Margaret	19 Caer Howell (1894)	worker	Crompton
Hamner, Ogie	240 Palmerston (1904-1905)	worker	Crompton
Handy, Wm H	423 Jarvis (1896-1898) 514 Church (1902)	traveler	ET Corset Co
Hardy, Wm. R	236 Wellington W (1884)	machinist	Crompton
Harmon, Miss Lottie	362 Queen E (1903)	worker	Crompton

Name	Address	Position	Company
Harold, J	30 Earl (1882)	corset mnfr	
Harris, Mary	71 Huron (1893-1894)	worker	Crompton
Harris, Miss Elizabeth	71 Huron (1893-1894) 65 McCaul (1897)	corset maker	Crompton
Harris, Walter	121 Hazelton (1903)	worker	Crompton
Hartnett, Miss Margaret	75 Tecumseth (1894)	worker	Crompton
Hawkins, Miss Jessie	336 Adelaide w (1902)	worker	Dominion Corset
Hawthorn, Hugh	39 Howie av (1892)	engineer	Crompton
Hawthorn, Wm A	39 Howie (1894)	engineer	Crompton
Hawthorn, Wm L	11 Shuter (1889) 39 Howie (1891, 1895-1897, 1902) 706 Ontario (1899)	engineer	Crompton
Hawthorn, Wm N	39 Howie (1891)	engineer	Crompton
Hawthorne, Wm	39 Howie (1893)	engineer	Crompton
Healey, Wm	55 Huron (1890)	cutter	Crompton
Healy, Wm	45 Huron (1889)	cutter	Crompton
Hefferin, Louisa	92 Adelaide (1893)	corset maker	
Hemmingway, Mrs. Bertha	254 Adelaide W (1890)	corset maker	
Henderson, John	174 Cowan ave (1889-1890)	traveler	Crompton
Henderson, John	30 Melbourne Ave (1894-1896, 1899)	traveler	Crompton
Henderson, Miss Sarah	66 Elm (1894) 70 Elm (1897)	worker	Crompton
Henderson, Miss Zadie	70 Elm (1900)	corset maker	
Hester, Bertram	102 Pears (1904)	worker	Crompton
Hewitt, Miss Hilda	Kew Beach (1899-1900)	clerk	Corset Speciality Co
Hewlett, Miss Hilda	Bellefair av (1902)	sales lady	Corset Speciality Co
Hickingbottom, Miss Annie	57 William (1893)	corset maker	
Hickingbottom, Miss Clara	57 William (1893)	corset maker	
Hicks, James	81 Manning (1893) 287 Lippincott (1894) 267 Clinton (1895)	pressman	Crompton
Hill, Melville	98 Gould (1914)	shipper	ET Corset Co

Name	Address	Position	Company
Holden, WM W	124 Agnes (1884) 57 Emma (1885-1886)	carpenter	Crompton
Holland, Wm	172 Grange ave (1891)	messenger	Crompton
Holmes, Miss Fannie M	426 Queen W (1893-1895) 246 Shaw (1899, 1900-1904, 1906-1907)	manager	Corset Speciality Co
Holmes, Miss Jessie	Norway (1900)	worker	Corset Speciality Co
Hopkins, Miss Emily	588 Dufferin (1895)	corset maker	
Horan, John	5 Lee (1909) 444 Marlon (1913)	traveler	Dominion Corset
Howe, Miss Florence E	64 Adelaide w (1895)	corset maker	
Hoyle, Hardy	Queens Rd (1892)	engineer	Vermilyea
Hughes, James	31 St. Paul (1901, 1911) 27 St. Paul (1909) 1051 Dufferin (1912)	worker	Crompton
Humphrey, Miss Emma	150 Simcoe (1887)	corset maker	
Humphries, Miss Ada	85 Elizabeth (1889)	corset maker	
Hutchinson, Miss Frances	15 Bell (1899)	corset maker	
Hutchison, Miss Mary	15 Grange (1894) 16 Ord. (1887)	worker	Crompton
Ibbett, Wm	928 Manning (1896)	apprentice	Crompton
Idenden, Miss Ida	86 Beaconsfield (1894)	operator	Vermilyea
Ironside, Miss Ada	38 Howard (1894)	worker	Crompton
Izzard, Miss Edna	30 Melbourne (1897-1898)	operator	Corset Speciality Co
Izzard, Miss Mildred	307 Euclid (1897-1899)	operator	Corset Speciality Co
Jackson, Miss Minnie	198 Adelaide (1897)	worker	Crompton
Jackson, Mrs Mary E	112 Brock (1884)	corset maker	
Jamieson, Henry	143 John (1897)	traveler	ET Corset Co
Jardine, Chas	305 Crawford (1901, 1912-1913)	clerk	Crompton
Johnson, Miss Myrtle	218 Bathurst (1894)	worker	Crompton
Johnson, Sidney	28 Cameron (1896) 39 Farley (1897)	cutter	Crompton
Johnston, Frank E	462 Montrose (1914)	worker	Crompton
Johnston, Miss Mable	128 Morse (1894)	worker	Crompton

Name	Address	Position	Company
Johnston, Miss Sarah	660 King W (1892)	Corset maker	
Johnston, Miss Theresa	184 William (1891) 26 Caer Howell (1897) 55 Anderson (1904)	worker	Crompton
Jones, Miss Mary	8 Wyndham (1890)	corset maker	
Karberry, Miss Margaret	434 Wellseley (1902)	corsets	
Keech, Miss Maud	7 Ossington (1896-1898)	corset maker	Corset Speciality Co
Keech, Miss Maud	29 Dovercourt (1900) 81 Sully (1902)	cutter	Corset Speciality Co
Keech, Miss Maud	81 Montrose (1903)	forelady	Corset Speciality Co
Keedwell, Wm	14 Erindale (1914)	worker	Crompton
Keisig, Miss Minnie	Lucas House (1981)	corset maker	
Kenney, Miss Julia	134 Esther (1894) 80 Bathurst (1895)	worker	Crompton
Kenny, Miss Annie	41 Anderson (1894)	worker	Crompton
Kenny, Miss Annie	41 Anderson (1897)	packer	Crompton
Kenny, Miss Annie	41 Anderson (1909)	clerk	Crompton
Kenny, Miss Elizabeth	41 Alexander (1909)	clerk	Crompton
Kent, Arthur	405 Concord (1909)	worker	Crompton
Kerr, John	5 McAlpin (1903, 1905-1908)	worker	Crompton
Kerr, Miss Elizabeth	79 D'Arcy (1895)	worker	Crompton
Kerr, Miss Jennie	97 Baldwin (1897)	worker	Crompton
Kershaw, Geor	10 Sullivan (1913)	shipper	Crompton
Kessock, Miss Alexandria	660 King W (1894)	worker	Crompton
Kirk, Miss Nellie	2 Markham pl (1894)	worker	Crompton
Kissock, Miss Esther	55 Dovercourt (1897)	worker	Crompton
Kissock, Miss Exie	20 Woolsley (1892)	clerk	Crompton
Kissock, Miss Nellie	20 Woolsley (1890)	forewoman	Crompton
Knight, Miss Tillie	105 Oxford (1894)	worker	Crompton
Lamb, Miss Sarah	100 Dalhousie (1885)	hoopmaker	
Lane, Miss Johanna	191 Clinton (1891) 11 Evans (1895)	corset maker	
Larter, Edward	131 1/2 Chestnut (1885)	engineer	Crompton
Larter, Walter	121 Cumberland	ironer	Crompton

Name	Address	Position	Company
	(1886)		
Law, Miss Grace	97 Jersey (1899)	operator	Crompton
Lawrence, Lewis P	57 Hayden (1886)	ironer	Crompton
Lawrence, Lewis P	467 Givens (1885)	corset maker	Crompton
Lawrence, louis P	467 Givens (1897-1898)	foreman	Crompton
Lawrence, Miss Essie	877 Palmerston (1903-1905)	corset maker	
Lawrence, Percy	N/A (1888)	worker	Crompton
Lawrence, Samuel W	467 Givens (1896)	ironer	Crompton
Lawson, Miss Lillie	154 Farley (1906) 15 Gladstone (1907)	corset maker	Eatons
Le Drew, Miss Maud	510 Manning Ave (1890-1891)	machine operator	Vermilyea
Leake, Miss Annie	185 Chestnut (1894)	worker	Crompton
Leask, P. Alfred	21 Maynard (1895)	traveler	Crompton
Leavens, Miss Annie	16 Alice (1894)	worker	Crompton
Leber, Miss Annie	24 Gladstone (1892)	corset maker	
Leesing, Wm	W S Strange, N of Eastern (1884, 1886)	worker	Crompton
Leesing, Wm	22 Lewis (1888) Deer park (1893)	clerk	Crompton
Leesing, Wm	Deer Park (1889, 1891)	shipping clerk	Crompton
Legg, Miss Elizabeth	300 College (1892) 48 Phoebe (1894)	worker	Crompton
Leith, Miss Margaret	149 Adelaide w (1895)	worker	Crompton
Lennie, Miss Caroline	315 Sumach (1894)	worker	Crompton
Lennie, Miss Margaret	315 Sumach (1897-1898)	worker	Crompton
Leppington, Hester	561 Lansdowne Ave (1890)	machine head	Vermilyea
Lessing, William	Deer Park (1890)	shipper	Crompton
Lewis, Miss Elizabeth	101 Muter (1884)	corset maker	
Lewis, Thomas	190 Bleecker (1892)	foreman	Crompton
Lewis, Thomas L	78 York (1894)	manager	Crompton
Link, Miss Margaret	57 Niagara (1894)	worker	Crompton
Little, Miss Bertha	167 Wilton Ave (1890-1891)	corset maker	
Little, Miss Minnie	167 Wilton Ave (1890)	corset maker	

Name	Address	Position	Company
Livingstone, Miss Sarah	51 Lombard (1899-1900)	corset mnfr	
Lloyd, Miss Annie	192 Grange (1902)	corset maker	
Lobb, Charles	196 Beverley (1904) east Toronto (1906)	secretary	Crompton
Lobb, Charles	170 Beech (1907-1909)	secretary	
Logie, John	393 Lansdowne (1913-1914)	manager	Parisian Corset co
Loso, Mrs Emma	647 King W (1894)	corset maker	FM Holmes
Loso, Mrs Emma	426 Queen w (1896) 449 Church (1898) 266 Sumach (1900)	forelady	Corset Speciality Co
Loso, Wm	160 1/2 king W (1893)	corset mnfr	
Lynn, Oscar	290 Grace (1901, 1911) 5 Moss Park (1907-1908) 68 Macpherson (1909)	worker	Crompton
Mabers, Wm G	110 Denison Ave (1885)	bookkeeper	Crompton
Macartney, Miss Elizabeth	278 Markham (1896)	corset maker	
Magowan, Miss Jennie	194 Chestnut (1894)	worker	Crompton
Magowan, Miss Maggie	36 Bismarck (1895) 11 Charlotte (1897)	worker	Crompton
Mahers, Wm G	189 St. Patrick (1884) Albion Hotel (1886)	bookkeeper	Crompton
Malby, Miss Mary	141 Little Richmond (1883)	corset maker	
Malcolm, Gardoris	1 Due, Hamilton Terrace (1882-1883) 95 Adelaide E (1884)	corset maker	
Maley, Maines	52 Cameron (1896) 57 Bay (1897, 1900) 99 Gloucester (1902) 23 Baldwin (1903-1904)	traveler	ET Corset Co
Mallett, Richard	349 King w (1907)	worker	Crompton
Mallory, Miss Mary	141 Little Richmond (1883)	corset maker	
Mallory, Mrs H	266 Yonge (1882)	corsets etc	

Name	Address	Position	Company
Marie, Madame	608 Yonge (1912-1913)	Corset scientist and student of anatomy	
Marie, Mrs Ada	555 Bloor W (1901)	corset maker	
Marshman, Miss Mary	56 Stafford (1893) 27 Defoe (1900)	corset maker	
Mason, George	216 Adelaide W (1894-1895)	plater	Crompton
Mason, Mrs Sarah	219 Niagara (1893-1894)	corset maker	
Matheison, Miss Mary	20 Mutual (1885)	Corset maker	
Mathieson, Tena	390 Adelaide W (1889)	corset maker	
Matthews, Miss Maud	24 University (1900)	worker	Corset Speciality Co
Maxwell, Miss Susan	213 Palmerston (1894)	worker	Crompton
McAdo, Miss Sarah	20 New (1883)	corset maker	
McAlpine, Miss Annie	143 Simcoe (1889)	corset maker	
McCarthy, Miss Annie	188 St. Patrick (1890)	corset maker	
McClintock, Miss Kate	618 King W (1895)	corset maker	
McCormick, Charles	50 Bay (1900)	traveler	Dominion Corset
McDougal, Wm	16 Melbourne (1902)	traveler	ET Corset Co
McEwan, Miss Bella	548 Manning Ave (1893)	corset maker	
McFadden, Miss Mary	48 Bond (1883) 71 Lewis (1895)	corset maker	
McFadden, Miss Sarah	48 Bond (1883)	corset maker	
McFadyen, Miss Elizabeth	28 Mutual (1894)	Worker	Crompton
McFadyen, Miss Mary	619 King E (1897-1903)	worker	Crompton
McFayden, Miss S	48 Bond (1882)	corset maker	
McGillivray, Miss Eva	50 Shirley (1894) 21 St. Clarens (1895)	worker	Crompton
McGowan, Miss Bella	80 Givens (1898, 1900)	corset maker	
McGowan, Miss Minnie	80 Givens (1896, 1898)	corset maker	Corset Speciality Co
McGowan, Miss Minnie	80 Givens (1902)	operator	Brush
McKay, Miss Minnie	494 Givens (1890)	machine operator	Vermilyea
McKeith, Peter	197 Church (1894)	worker	Crompton

Name	Address	Position	Company
McKeivie, Harold	199 Markham (1903)	stenographer	Crompton
McKelvie, Harold	196 Markham (1904)	clerk	Crompton
McLean, Miss Bella	141 Spadina (1894)	corset maker	
McLim, Miss Maude	398 Church (1894)	worker	Crompton
McMann, Miss Elizabeth	82 King E (1894)	corset maker	
McManus, Wm	90 Emily (1888)	machine head	Crompton
McMoran, Edward	214 Teraulay (1885-1889)	traveler	Crompton
McMoran, Edwin	202 Teraulay (1890)	traveler	Crompton
McMorran, Edwin	54 Bay (1893)	manager	Dominion Corset
McNea, Miss Jennie	109 Bay (1894)	worker	Crompton
McPherson, Miss Mary	74 Eastern ave (1894)	worker	Crompton
McQuarrie, Miss Sarah	63 Walton (1883) 78 Walton (1890)	corset maker	
McTaggart, Caroline	13 Bellwoods (1894)	operator	Vermilyea
McWilliam, Frederick	134 Shuter (1892)	presser	Crompton
Meehan, Miss May	168 Parliament (1899)	operator	Corset Speciality Co
Membry, Mrs Ellen	11 1/2 Richmond St. W (1890)	corset mnfr	
Merrick, Miss Mamie C	98 Jarvis (1898)	operator	Crompton
Milen, Miss Bridget	91 Jarvis (1884)	corset maker	
Miller, Miss Annie	94 Argyle (1894-1895)	worker	Crompton
Miller, Miss Lillian	266 Wellington (1894)	worker	Crompton
Milligan, Miss Essie	79 Teraulay (1893)	corset maker	
Millington, Peter	57 Robinson (1883)	clerk	Crompton
Mills, Edward	197 Fern (1912-1913) 1396 King W (1914)	secretary	Crompton
Mills, Miss Elizabeth	56 Gerrard (1894)	worker	Crompton
Millsap, Chas	324 Bathurst (1912)	worker	M&W Corset Co
Millson, Charles	324 Bathurst (1906)	foreman	CBC Corset Co
Millward, Charles	691King W (1890) 34 Phoebe (1891)	cutter	Vermilyea
Millward, Charles	466 Yonge (1892-1893)	proprietor	Toronto Ordered Corset Co
Millward, Charles	384 Spadina (1898) 334 Spadina (1899)	manager	Toronto Ordered Corset

Name	Address	Position	Company
			Co
Millward, Charles	324 Bathurst (1901, 1908, 1909, 1911, 1913) 327 St. Clarens (1914)	manager	M&W Corset Co
Millward, Charles	324 Bathurt (1905,1907)	foreman	CBC Corset Co
Millward, Charles W	324 Bathurst (1900-1904)	corset mnfr	
Milne, Miss Bella	93 Teraulay (1884)	corset maker	
Mitchell, Bernard	39 Munro (1898)	worker	Crompton
Mitchell, Gordon	870 Brock (1906-1907)	presser	CBC Corset Co
Mitchell, Miss Lilly	75 Gerrard W (1893)	corset maker	Toronto Ordered Corset Co
Monroe, Miss Annie	53 McCaul (1891)	clerk	Vermilyea
Moon, Miss Agnes	399 King W (1892)	corset maker	
Moore, Harold	364 Wellesley (1908) 435 Wellesley (1912)	shipper	Bias Corset Co
Mooring, Annie	30 Manning (1892-1892, 1897)	corset maker	
Moralee, Arthur	22 Otter (1911)	worker	Crompton
Moran, Arthur	22 Otter (1901) 326 Wilton (1906-1907) 22 Oxford (1908-1912)	worker	Crompton
Moroney, Miss Catherine	102 Jarvis (1894)	worker	Crompton
Morrison, Henry	Adelaide and Sheppard (1891)	pressman	Crompton
Morrison, Miss Mary	195 St. Claire (1892)	corset maker	
Morrow, Miss Rose	79 McGill (1887) 95 Vanaulay (1890) 53 Grange (1892-1893)	worker	Crompton
Morton, Edward	191 Adelaide W (1890)	presser	Crompton
Morton, Miss Laura	199 Church (1890)	folder	Vermilyea
Mortson, Miss Mary	166 Argyle (1893) 11 Widmer (1894)	worker	Crompton
Mowat, Miss Bella	deer park (1897-1898)	worker	Crompton
Mowat, Miss Daisy	deer park (1897-1899)	worker	Crompton

Name	Address	Position	Company
Mumford, Elsie	806 Dovercourt (1894) 643 Lansdowne (1897)	worker	Crompton
Mundy, Charles	11 Euclid (1903)	cutter	
Mundy, Miss Bertha	109 Harrison (1897) 10 Ossington (1900, 1902) 10 Baden (1901, 1903, 1906-1909)	operator	Corset Speciality Co
Mundy, Miss Bertha	10 Baden (1911-1914)	operator	Woolnough
Mundy, Miss Edith	109 Harrison (1898)	operator	Corset Speciality Co
Murphy, Miss Margaret	49 Mitchell (1900)	corset maker	
Nash, Miss Nellie	98 Denison (1902)	corset maker	
Nichol, John W	55 Hayden (1895)	worker	ET Corset Co
Nicholas, Richard E	584 Givens (1896-1898)	bookkeeper	ET Corset Co
Nicholl, Richard	92 MacPherson (1906) 92 Macpherson (1905) 128 Avenue (1907-1908)	traveler	ET Corset Co
Nicholls, John W	Walker house (1887) 62 King W (1888) 469 Givens (1896)	traveler	Crompton
Nicholls, Richard	584 Givens (1900)	salesman	ET Corset Co
Nicholls, Richard E	8 Avondale (1895)	shipper	ET Corset Co
Nicholls, Richard E	554 Givens (1899)	salesman	ET Corset Co
Nixon, Miss Clara	61 Louisa (1902)	corset maker	
Nolan, Miss Nellie	120 Curzon (1899)	machine operator	Corset Speciality Co
Norman, Alfred	192 Queen W (1904)	worker	Crompton
Ockenden, Wm A	378 Witton (1898)	cutter	
O'Leary, Miss Mary	92 Adelaide w (1893)	corset maker	
O'Leary, Miss Susan	202 Adelaie w (1896, 1902)	corset maker	
Olfred, Miss Kate	147 Church (1890)	worker	Crompton
Olfred, Miss Ollie	234 Richmond W (1890)	corset maker	
O'Malley, Miss Elizth	425 Church (1901, 1911)	corset maker	
Osston, Frank	29 Ulster (1890)	cutter	Crompton
Owen, Thos	127 Cooper (1914)	worker	Crompton

Name	Address	Position	Company
Owens, Henry M	450 Bathurst (1895)	corset maker	Crompton
Owston, Francis	64 Sussex Ave (1889) 68 Sussex ave (1890-1891) 450 Bathurst (1892-1894)	cutter	Crompton
Owston, Henry	276 Borden (1896-1897) 673 Markham (1898) 685 1/2 Markham (1899-1900)	cutter	Crompton
Owston, Henry M	450 Bathurst (1894)	porter	Crompton
Page, Alfred	637 Gerrard e (1902-1909) 262 Bain (1913)	presser	Crompton
Page, Arthur	637 Gerrard e (1899)	pressman	Crompton
Page, Miss Edith	637 Gerrard e (1902)	operator	Crompton
Paine, Miss Mary	116 Sherbourne (1892)	corset maker	
Palin, Miss Louise V	18 Delaney (1902)	operator	Crompton
Paris, Felix	13 King e (1890)	Kid Glove and corset store	Wm Sitt & Co
Parrott, Frank	119 Bay (1890)	Cutter	Crompton
Payton, Miss Rosa	33 Robert (1902)	operator	Crompton
Peel, Miss Harriet	277 Markham (1892-1896)	worker	Crompton
Pell, Miss Adeline	17 Mitchell (1894)	worker	Crompton
Pell, Miss Nellie	17 Mitchell (1894, 1897)	worker	Crompton
Pelow, Arthur	42 Duchess (1891)	starcher	Crompton
Perrot, Francis W	250 Richmond w (1894-1895)	corset maker	Crompton
Perrott, Francis	187 Simcoe (1892) 250 Richmond W (1893)	foreman	Crompton
Phillips, Miss Minnie	222 Seaton (1897, 1899) 9 Howie Ave (1902)	worker	Crompton
Pickard, Miss Mary	1 Dean (1892)	corset maker	
Pickering, Miss Annie	34 Wyatt (1894-1985)	worker	Crompton
Pickering, Miss Martha	34 Wyatt (1895) 148 River (1897)	worker	Crompton
Pickering, Miss Mattie	49 Wyatt (1899)	corset maker	
Pierce, Joseph	Brantford (1894)	Traveler	Crompton

Name	Address	Position	Company
Plaskey, John	15 Emily (1889)	starcher	Crompton
Pleaky, John	27 Manning (1900)	presser	
Pollard, John	47 Richmond w. (1885) 45 Nelson (1886) 43 Nelson (1888) 18 Esther (1889) 2 Esther (1890) 270 Clinton (1891-1899) 206 Robert (1902)	worker	Crompton
Polleskey, John	893 King w (1891) 106 Rose (1894)	pressman	Crompton
Pollesky, George	893 King w (1891)	pressman	Crompton
Pollock, Miss Ella	33 Caer Howell (1893)	corset maker	
Pope, Arthur	20 Pears (1903)	worker	Crompton
Porden, Carrie	136 Ossington (1914)	bookkeeper	Bias Corset Co
Porden, Miss Carrie	30 St. Andrew (1905-1906)	bookkeeper	Bias Corset Co
Porden, Miss Carrie	126 Baldwin (1907-1908)	bookkeeper	Bias Corset Co
Porter, Miss Almeda	7 Augusta (1904)	corset maker	
Porter, Miss Margaret	323 Queen w (1893)	worker	Vermilyea
Porter, Miss Martha	731 Queen W (1906)	operator	CBC Corset Co
Prentice, Margaret	91 Denison Ave (1884)	corset maker	
Pridgeon, Wm S	226 Cottinham (1906, 1912, 1914)	Manager	Dominion Corset
Pridham, Wm	134 Carlton (1902-1903) 226 Cottingham (1901, 1904, 1907-1909, 1911, 1913)	Manager	Dominion Corset
Prowse, Miss Emmeline	235 Robert (1894)	worker	Crompton
Prowse, Miss Jessie	235 Robert (1894)	worker	Crompton
Purnell, Miss Agnes	160 De Grassi (1907-1908)	operator	Corset Speciality Co
Purvis, Miss Amy	119 Dovercourt (1896-1897)	worker	Crompton
Raffery, Miss Jessie C	67 McMurray (1900)	corset maker	
Ramsay, Charles F	3 Moss park (1898)	clerk	Crompton
Ramsay, Miss Ethel	3 Moss Park (1897)	stenographer	Crompton
Ray, Richard	79 Arthur (1884)	corset maker	

Name	Address	Position	Company
Raymond, Mrs Louisa	11 chestnut (1883)	corset maker	
Rayworth, Miss E	569 Yonge (1900)	corsets	
Rayworth, Miss Elizabeth	1277 Dundas (1901, 1911, 1913)	corset maker	
Redmond, Miss Lillie	20 1/2 Cameron (1894)	corset maker	
Reed, Thomas	Weston (1894)	clerk	Crompton
Reed, Wm G	546 Adelaide W (1913-1914)	shipper	Bias Corset Co
Reedy, George	80 Lowther (1902-1903)	vice president	Crompton
Reid, Thomas	Weston, ON (1893)	clerk	Crompton
Rendle, Miss Agnes	15 Walton (1887)	corset maker	
Rhind, Miss Annie	82 Lippincott (1884)	worker	Crompton
Rhind, Miss Ellen	82 Lippincott (1884)	worker	Crompton
Rich, Miss Agnes	70 Woolsley (18894-1897)	worker	Crompton
Rich, Miss Mary	70 Woolsley (1897)	worker	Crompton
Richardson, Miss Sarah	250 Richmond W (1894)	worker	Crompton
Riggs, Miss Mary	42 Gerrard W (1883)	corset maker	
Roach, Miss Alice	22 McDonnell sq (1893) 191 Niagara (1895-1897)	corset maker	
Roberts, Miss Annie	238 Yonge (1890)	finisher	Vermilyea
Roberts, Miss Annie	219 Wellesley (1894-1985)	worker	Crompton
Roberts, Miss Eliza	984 Dovercourt (1893)	corset maker	
Roberts, Miss Jessie	109 Major (1894)	worker	Crompton
Robertson, Miss Agnes	261 Queen E (1898)	corset maker	
Robinson, Miss Maggie	25 Sherbourne (1899)	corset maker	
Robinson, Miss Nora	655 Bloor W (1901, 1911) 186 Ossington (1912)	stenographer	Bias Corset Co
Ross, Miss Bella	433 Shaw (1897)	worker	Crompton
Ross, Miss Della	433 shaw (1898) 105 Borden (1895)	operator	Crompton
Ross, Miss Ella	93 Langley (1905-1906)	clerk	Corset Speciality Co
Ross, Miss Isabella	105 Borden (1894)	worker	Crompton
Ross, Miss May	105 Borden (1894-1895)	worker	Crompton

Name	Address	Position	Company
Rossiter, Miss May	663 Gerrard e (1902-1903)	corset maker	Corset Speciality Co
Rowarth, Cecil	182 Bolton (1903)	presser	Crompton
Rowe, George	148 Grange (1905) 106 St Patrick (1906)	machinist	Crompton
Roworth, Cecil	332 Danforth (1904) Chester (1905) 41 Dunedin (1909, 1913)	presser	Crompton
Roworth, George	155 McCaul (1902) 320 Gerrard e (1904) 20 Dawson (1906) 12 Dawson (1908, 1913) 14 Dawson (1914)	presser	Crompton
Rumball, Miss Nellie	Junction (1897-1899, 1900)	operator	Corset Speciality Co
Russell, Thomas	123 Scollard (1904)	worker	
Rutherford, Frank	540 Manning (1899)	clerk	Crompton
Ryan, Miss Bertha	83 Augusta Ave (1890-1891)	machinist	Vermilyea
Ryan, Miss Bridget	25 St. Paul (1908-1909)	corset maker	
Ryan, Miss Maggie	78 Gerrard (1897)	cutter	
Schultz, Miss Abbie	510 Church (1894)	worker	Crompton
Schultz, Miss Mary	510 Church (1893-1894)	corset maker	
Scott, Charles W	172 Simcoe (1896)	cutter	Crompton
Scott, Miss Julia	143 Amelia (1894)	worker	Crompton
Scudds, Miss Alice	78 Salisbury (1894)	corset maker	
Seager, Miss Laura	346 Ossington Ave (1890)	stenographer	Vermilyea
Seal, Henry	144 Leslie (1907) 183 Leslie (1907)	cutter	Bias Corset Co
Shannon, Miss Alice	150 Sackville (1897)	worker	Crompton
Sharp, John	321 Manning (1892-1893) 264 Clinton (1894) 265 Clinton (1895, 1897, 1899) 206 Adelaide (1900) 10 Trafalgar (1902-1903)	machinist	Crompton
Sharp, Miss Nellie	421 St. Clarens (1900)	corset maker	

Name	Address	Position	Company
Sharpe John	2 Coburg Ave (1901, 1905-1909, 1911-1914)	foreman	Crompton
Shaughnessy, John	27 Howie (1909)	worker	Crompton
Shea, Sidney	199 Jarvis (1905)	worker	Crompton
Sheehan, Miss Nellie	350 King W (1894)	worker	Crompton
Sheen, Ellen	10 Catherine (1891)	corset maker	
Sheen, Miss Kate	10 Catherine (1891)	corset maker	
Shepard, Miss Elizabeth	175 Chestnut (1883)	corset maker	
Sheppard, Miss Jennie F	381 Church (1899-1900)	clerk	Crompton
Sheridan, Miss Elizabeth	112 William (1894)	worker	Crompton
Sheridan, Miss Mary	112 William (1894, 1897-1899)	worker	Crompton
Shillinglaw, Florence	73 Isabella (1901, 1911) 61 Wood (1909)	clerk	Crompton
Shipman, Miss Mazel	109 Booth (1899)	corset maker	
Short, Miss Alberta	124 Agnes (1888)	corset maker	
Simpson, Albert	41 Wyatt av (1892)	clerk	Crompton
Sims, Miss Ella	57 Leonard (1894)	worker	Crompton
Sinclair, Miss Ada	348 Bathurst (1904)	corset maker	
Singer, Miss Aggie	181 Bellwoods (1894, 1897) 120 Peter (1898-1899)	worker	Crompton
Sly, Joseph	96 william (1905) 100 william (1906) 750 Gerrard (1907)	corset maker	
Smiley, Miss Margaret	105 Spadina (1894) 304 Richmond w (1898)	worker	Crompton
Smith, Miriam	7 Brookfield (1895)	corset maker	
Smith, Miss Alice	81 Robinson (1894)	worker	Crompton
Smith, Miss Catherine	65 Givens (1907-1909)	corset maker	
Smith, Miss Florence	116 Peter (1899)	corset maker	
Smith, Miss Hattie	327 Jarvis (1903)	cutter	Corset Speciality Co
Smith, Miss Miriam	305 Preston (1896) 414 Ossington (1896-1900)	Corset maker	
Smith, Roland	43 Nelson (1888)	flosser	Crompton
Smith, Rowland	43 Nelson (1889)	corset maker	
Smith, Walter	180 Adelaide W	worker	Crompton

Name	Address	Position	Company
	(1903)		
Snider, W Harley	30 Pine (1901, 1909, 1911-1914) Balmy beach (1908)	assistant manager	Bias Corset Co
Souster, Austin	36 Fennings (1909)	worker	Crompton
St. John, Oliver	426 Queen w (1896)	engineer	Corset Speciality Co
Stacey, Mrs. Alice	1441 King w (1912, 1914)	worker	Spirella
Stagg, Miss May	78 Duke (1903)	operator	Corset Speciality Co
Stanley, Miss Jane	219 Manning (1906)	operator	Crompton
Stanley, Miss Mary	219 Manning (1906)	operator	Crompton
Steer, Miss Annie	135 Queen E (1902)	worker	Crompton
Stein, Miss Kate	15 Nelson (1900)	corset maker	
Stein, Miss Mary	15 Nelson (1893, 1896)	corset maker	
Stevenson, Eric	24 Anne (1906)	machinist	Crompton
Stewar, Miss Alice	41 Robert (1897)	worker	Crompton
Stewart, Lillie	22 Givens (1891)	corset maker	
Stewart, Miss Annie	33 McGill (1894)	worker	Crompton
Stewart, Miss Ella	41 Robert (1894, 1895)	worker	Crompton
Stone, Miss Amy A	180 Centre (1893, 1894)	worker	Crompton
Surphlis, Richard	10 Sully (1895, 1896)	junior machinist	Crompton
Sutcliffe, Henry	17 Beverly (1902)	worker	Crompton
Sutherland, Miss Christina	158 Bay (1884)	corset maker	
Sweet, Norman	27 McKenzie (1904)	shipper	ET Corset Co
Tait, Miss Mary	52 Lippincott (1897)	worker	Crompton
Tassell, Miss Ella	167 Garden (1894-1895)	worker	Crompton
Tate, Miss Mary	19 Eaton pl (1894)	worker	Crompton
Theobald, Miss Jennie	10 Mission Ave (1890) 52 Chestnut (1891)	corset maker	
Theobald, Miss Margery	10 Mission Ave (1890) 52 Chestnut (1891)	corset maker	
Thom, Miss Ida	143 Simcoe (1889) 151 Simcoe (1890)	corset maker	
Thomas, Ethel	302 Logan (1899)	operator	Corset

Name	Address	Position	Company
			Speciality Co
Thomas, Miss Ethel	162 Markham (1900-1902)	worker	Corset Speciality Co
Thomas, Russell	126 Scollard (1903)	worker	Crompton
Thompson, Ann	159 Parliament (1893)	corset maker	
Thompson, Miss Ada	174 Palmerston (1894-1895) 101 Manning ave (1896) 194 Bellwoods (1897)	worker	Crompton
Thompson, Miss Catherine	150 Sackville (1894)	worker	Crompton
Thompson, Miss Lydia	150 Sackville (1894-1895)	worker	Crompton
Thompson, Miss Matilda	158 Bay (1884)	worker	Crompton
Thompson, Wm h	4 Robinson (1892-1893)	clerk	Crompton
Thorn, Miss Ida	728 King w (1892)	corset maker	
Tiech, Miss Catherine	129 Teraulay (1898)	corset maker	
Titus, Charlotte M	18 Camden (1893)	corset maker	
Tomkins, Wm R	169 Hope (1882)	corset maker	
Tossell, Miss Ella	167 Garden (1896-1898)	operator	Crompton
Totman, Frank L	340 Adelaide W (1889)	foreman	Crompton
Townley, Miss Eva	98 Wood (1897)	worker	Crompton
Townley, Miss Maggie	79 Chestnut (1897) 137 Portland (1894)	worker	Crompton
Townsend, Miss Catherine	164 Euclid (1894) 248 Church (1897-1898)	worker	Crompton
Tracy, Miss Mary A	466 Brock ave (1893)	corset maker	
Trills, Thomas	71 Fuller (1902)	foreman	Crompton
Trimble, George	32 Argyle (1902)	worker	Crompton
Trimble, Thomas	32 Argyle (1903) 91 Dundas (1904)	worker	Crompton
Trimble, Thomas	71 Fuller (1906)	foreman	Crompton
Tuck, Miss Emily	61 Kenilworth (1907)	corset maker	
Tugnett, Miss Maud	152 Major (1903)	operator	Corset Speciality Co
Tuite, Miss Annie	489 Adelaide W (1898) 671 Queen W (1900)	corset maker	

Name	Address	Position	Company
Tyrell, Miss Ethel	424 Church (1900)	corset maker	
Urguhart, Donnella	428 Adelaide W (1891)	corset maker	
Vanderschaaff, Miss Margaret	276 Palmerston av (1892, 1894)	worker	Crompton
Vandor, Margaret	198 Richmond W (1889)	corset maker	
Vermillyea, HM (Wid S)	228 Spadina (1889)	corset mnfr	
Vermilyea, Mrs HM	Richardson House	corset mnfr	
Vermilyea, Solomon	598 Yonge (1904) 6 Trinity sq (1906-1907)	corsets	
Vince, Mary	132 Claremont (1894, 1897-1898, 1905)	worker	Crompton
Vince, Miss Emma A	160 King W (1888)	corset maker	
Vince, Mrs Mary A	160 King w (1883)	corset maker	
Wainwright, Miss Evelyn	North dovercourt (1903)	clerk	Corset Speciality Co
Wainwright, Miss Evelyn	26 Primrose (1904)	worker	Corset Speciality Co
Wainwright, Miss Evelyn	North Dovercourt (1905-1906)	operator	Corset Speciality Co
Wainwright, Miss Evelyn	110 Symington (1907)	operator	Crompton
Wainwright, Miss Evelyn	110 Symington (1908-1909)	operator	Corset Speciality Co
Wainwright, Miss Kathleen	Junction (1902)	corset maker	Corset Speciality Co
Wainwright, Miss Kathleen	North Dovercourt (1903)	operator	Corset Speciality Co
Wainwright, Miss Kathleen	26 Primrose (1904)	worker	
Walker, Addie	13 Temperance (1889)	corset maker	
Walker, Wm	313 Markham (1892)	bookkeeper	Crompton
Walker, John	135 Bathurst (1881-1886) 12 Brunswick Ave (1887-1900) 60 St. George (1903)	secretary treasurer	Crompton
Walker, Miss Ada	44 St Clarens (1894)	worker	Crompton
Walker, Miss Addie	222 Ontario (1897) 26 Louisa (1898)	operator	Crompton
Walker, Wm	383 Bathurst (1882-	clerk	Crompton

Name	Address	Position	Company
	1885)		
Walker, Wm	387 Markham (1888-1889) 313 Markham (1891, 1893, 1896-1897)	bookkeeper	Crompton
Walker, Wm	313 Markham (1894)	shipper	Crompton
Walker, Wm	313 Markham (1895)	corset maker	Crompton
Wall, Wm	113 Berkley (1906)	worker	Crompton
Walsh, Miss Ellen	111 Bathurst (1896)	corset maker	
Walsh, Miss Ellen	41 Vanauley (1898-1899)	clerk	Crompton
Walsh, Miss Jennie	46 Bond (1900)	worker	Corset Speciality Co
Walsh, Miss Jennie	121 Borden (1912-1914)	worker	M&W Corset Co
Walsh, Miss Margaret	234 Euclid (1893-1894) 91 Defoe (1900)	worker	Crompton
Walsh, Miss Nellie	111 Bathurst (1894) 161 Bathurst (1897) 41 Vanauley (1898)	worker	Crompton
Ward, Isabella L	316 Yonge (1902)	proprietor	American Corset
Ward, Isabella L & co	2 College (1904)	corsets	
Ward, Miss Ellen	7 Niagra (1882)	corset maker	
Ward, Miss Lilly	94 1/2 Duke (1902)	corset maker	Corset Speciality Co
Warne, Edward	647 Manning (1895) 372 Ossington (1896)	Traveler	Crompton
Watson, Frank J	5 Beverley (1889)	ironer	Crompton
Watt, Miss Annie	23 Collahie (1894-1895, 1897) 23 Adelaide w (1898)	worker	Crompton
Watts, Miss Alice	23 Collahie (1894-1895)	worker	Crompton
Weatherly, Alice	105 West Lodge (1898)	operator	Corset Speciality Co
Webb, Miss Dottie	58 Cameron (1900)	corset maker	
Webb, Miss Mott	166 Dovercourt (1894-1895)	worker	Crompton
Webster, Miss Sarah	97 Teraulay (1884)	corset maker	
Weldon, Miss Alma	10 Soho (1893) 98 John (1894-1895)	worker	Crompton

Name	Address	Position	Company
Wheldon, Thomas	251 spadina (1906-1907) 294 St. Clarens (1901, 1911-1912) 360 Margueretta (1914)	cutter	Crompton
Wheler, Thomas	340 King W (1903)	cutter	Crompton
White, Benjamin	233 Sackville (1897)	porter	Crompton
White, Benjamin	684 Gerrard e (1900)	cutter	Crompton
White, George	77 Arthur (1883-1884)	corset maker	
White, Wm H	175 Wilton Ave (1885) 317 Berkeley (1887)	traveler	Crompton
Wiggs, Miss Jennie	304 Richmond (1897)	worker	Crompton
Wilfoil, Miss Ella	215 Palmerston (1894)	worker	Crompton
Williams, Geo A	121 Brunswick (1913)	shipper	ET Corset Co
Williams, Miss Ethel	Coxwell ave (1906-1907)	corset maker	
Wilson, A. John	8 Golden (1902)	cutter	
Wilson, Adam	639 Lansdowne (1906-1907) Swansea (1909, 1912-1913) 78 York (1914)	foreman	Crompton
Wilson, Adam J	362 Church (1885)	cutter	Crompton
Wilson, Alfred	362 Church (1886)	presser	Crompton
Wilson, Ernest	104 1/2 Rose (1899)	worker	Crompton
Wilson, John	362 Church (1886) 24 Edward (1890) 387 Church (1891-1892) 67 Beaconsfield (1893-1894) 70 Sheridan (1895) 639 Lansdowne (1904)	cutter	Crompton
Wilson, John	639 Lansdowne (1905)	foreman	Crompton
Wilson, John A	Ellis Ave (1913)	corset designer	
Wilson, Miss Emma	91 Sydenham (1898) 289 Sackville (1900)	operator	Crompton
Wilson, Miss Hannah	136 Jarvis (1884)	corset maker	

Name	Address	Position	Company
Wilson, Miss Jenny E	81 King e (1892)	corset maker	
Wilson, Miss Maud	232 Munro (1893) 232 Munro (1894) 163 Munro (1896) 24 Allen (1897)	corset maker	
Wilson, Robert	112 Yonge (1905-1907)	traveler	Corset Speciality Co
Wingfield, Miss Florence	65 Lucas (1902)	corset maker	
Withers, Margaret	38 Millicent (1905)	Corset maker	
Wood, C. Arthur	29 Olive (1903)	worker	Crompton
Wood, Charles	168 Lippincott (1891)	ironer	Crompton
Wood, Charles	19 Ulster (1890) 268 Lippincott (1892)	starcher	Crompton
Wood, Charles	37 Dunedin (1901, 1908, 1911-1913) 25 Dunedin (1907)	worker	Crompton
Wood, Miss Sadie	339 Dupont (1903)	operator	Crompton
Wood, Thomas	548 Jones (1901, 1911-1912) 114 Chester (1913) 789 Pape (1914)	worker	Crompton
Woods, Robert	Deer park (1893)	Traveler	Dominion Corset
Woodward, Miss Maggie	N/A (1891)	operator	Vermilyea
Woolnough, Frank	180 Lee (1912-1914)	manager	Woolnough
Woolnough, Frank J	104 King W (1908)	manager	Corset Speciality Co
Woolnough, Miss Maud	98 Nassau (1909)	stenographer	Corset Speciality Co
Wooster, Miss Ellen	153 Major (1894)	worker	Crompton
Wooster, Miss Sarah	153 major (1894)	worker	Crompton
Worman, Beatrice	56 Shirley (1894)	operator	Vermilyea
Wray, Richard	35 Herrick (1884-1885)	pressman	Crompton
Wret, Jane	65 University (1889)	corset maker	
Wret, Margaret	65 University (1889)	corset maker	
Wright, Catherine	158 Richmond W (1889)	corset maker	
Wright, Miss Annie	N/A (1891)	operator	Vermilyea
Wylie, Miss Sarah	50 Vanauley (1894)	worker	Crompton
Yielding, Thomas W	44 Seaton (1887)	corset maker	

Name	Address	Position	Company
Yielding, Thomas W	60 Seaton (1890)	cutter	Crompton
Yielding, Thomas W	58 Seaton (1902-1903)	cutter	Brush
York, Miss Lottie	N/A (1891)	operator	Vermilyea
York, Mrs Annie	N/A (1891)	machine operator	Vermilyea
Young, Wm	327 Brunswick (1914)	worker	Crompton

Appendix C: Aggregated Employees

The information regarding types of positions available in Toronto's corset trade in Appendix B are aggregated in this table and divided according to gender. These job descriptions include machine operators, general labourers, and a variety of white collar and clerical positions. The gendered columns show the kinds of positions that were available to women. Though the majority of the clerical positions were held by men, the overwhelming majority of work elsewhere in the company structures was performed by women, especially the positions directly related to manufacturing, which were almost exclusively female.

Position	**Female**	**Male**
Accountant/book keeper	5	5
Apprentice		2
Assistant cutter	1	
Assistant Manager		2
Blocker		1
Carpenter		4
Case maker		1
Clerk	11	16
Corset designer		2
Corset maker	216	17
Corset manufacturer	3	3
Corset Scientist	1	
Cutter	3	21
Engineer		9
Examiner	1	
Finisher	2	
Flosser		1
Folder	1	
Forelady/woman/man	6	9
Inspector	1	
Ironer/presser/pressman		26
Junior machinist		1
Machine head	2	2
Machine operator	61	

Position	Female	Male
Machinist	1	8
Manager	1	12
Messenger		2
Packer	1	2
Pay clerk	1	
Plater		1
Pointer		1
Porter		11
Printer		1
Proprietor	1	1
Sales lady/man	2	1
Secretary		3
Shipper		10
Starcher		3
Stenographer	7	1
Stock Keeper		2
Traveler		27
Vice-president		2
Worker	168	48

Appendix D: Newspaper Advertising Data

The data in this table was obtained through random sampling of newspaper advertisements for Toronto retail outlets, via the Proquest newspaper database. The table lists the retail outlets alphabetically, but also lists the date the advertisements were published. This is not a comprehensive list of advertisements, as corsets were advertised mutlitple times a week in each newspaper, and yielded thousands of results.Not all the advertisements included the same information, but they did often list the names of the corsets available, the price, colour and sizes available. The smallest size that was available was 18 inches, while the largest was 38 inches, sizes to accommodate a wide range of bodies. The lowest price for a corset was 25 cents, while on the high end they sold for $20. The prices and sizes available stayed static over the 43 years of this study.

Paper	Date	Retail	Company	Price	Colour	Size	Notes
Toronto Star	1897-11-02	Army and Navy Clothing	Jubilee	35c	grey, fawn		regular price 49c
Toronto Star	1897-12-03	Army and Navy Clothing		25c			regular price 50c-$1
Toronto Star	1894-10-25	Backrack & co		25c-$1.25			300 sample pairs
Toronto Star	1897-07-08	Backrack & co	Enlgish, American and Canadian makes	50c		all sizes	original price 75.-$1.25
Toronto Star	1897-07-21	Backrack & co	Men's corsets	50c			75c=$1
Toronto Star	1894-06-09	The Bon Marche		25-50c			

Paper	Date	Retail	Company	Price	Colour	Size	Notes
Toronto Star	1894-09-01	The Bon Marche		50-75c			original price 75.-$1.25
Toronto Star	1895-07-18	The Bon Marche		10-40c			
Toronto Star	1896-02-06	The Bon Marche		49-98c	white, grey, drab		orignial price .75-$1.25
Toronto Star	1896-06-06	The Bon Marche	The Surprise, French Estella, Josephine	19c-69c			regular price 75-$1
Toronto Star	1896-11-12	The Bon Marche		49c			Regular price $1
Toronto Star	1898-09-03	The Bon Marche		49c			regular price 75c
Toronto Star	1897-09-09	The Bon Marche		49c		all sizes	regular price $1.25
Toronto Star	1899-06-15	The Bon Marche		35-75c			Regular price 50-$1.25
Toronto Star	1894-01-18	Botsford	Thompson's	$1.25			Original price $1.75
Toronto Star	1894-02-17	Botsford	Thompson's	99c-$1.25			Original price $1.50-$2
Toronto Star	1894-04-21	Botsford		25c-$1.50			Spring corsets
Toronto Star	1894-07-07	Botsford	R&G; Thompson's	75c-99c			
Toronto Star	1894-09-15	Botsford		25c			380 pairs, originally 50c
Toronto Star	1894-12-19	Botsford		50c-$1.00			
Toronto Star	1895-03-16	Botsford	B&G; Thomsons; D&A; Cromton; Brush	50c-$2.5	white, fawn, black, broche	Odd sizes, outside sizes	

Paper	Date	Retail	Company	Price	Colour	Size	Notes
Toronto Star	1895-05-09	Botsford		39c-50c		all sizes	summer corsets
Toronto Star	1895-06-16	Botsford		45c-$2.00	drab		
Toronto Star	1895-06-20	Botsford		20c-75c		large sizes	
Toronto Star	1895-07-13	Botsford	Flame	75c		large sizes	
Toronto Star	1895-08-15	Botsford	BB; Glenora; ET	45c-$1.00		all sizes	
Toronto Star	1897-03-20	Botsford	Double Zone	46c			regular price 65c
Toronto Star	1894-09-07	C.S. Herbert		25c-$1.00			
Toronto Star	1894-09-14	C.S. Herbert	D&A; E&T; Royal	50c-$1.50			
Toronto Star	1894-11-17	C.S. Herbert		50c-$1.00			
Toronto Star	1895-02-04	CM Henderson	Eaton's				
Toronto Star	1899-03-02	Co-Coperative	The Royal; The Co-operative; P.C; Challenger; Ameican Lady	25-50c	black	all sizes	
Toronto Star	1899-06-16	Co-Coperative	The Royal; The Co-operative; The Society; Bicycle; Classique; Paris Lady; American Lady	25-$1.25			
Toronto Star	1899-09-19	Co-Coperative	The Royal; Society; Paris Lady	25c-$1.25			
Toronto Star	1899-12-21	Co-Coperative	The Royal; The Co-Operative; Classique; Paris Lady	25c-$1.25			

Paper	Date	Retail	Company	Price	Colour	Size	Notes
Toronto Star	1904-04-04	Crawford Bros	ET	$1-1.50			
Toronto Star	1904-10-01	Crawford Bros	ET	56c-$1.88			Regular price 75-$2.50
Toronto Star	1894-11-02	Devaney Bros					
Toronto Star	1894-03-13	Eaton's	Eaton's	33c			original price 50c, 100 pairs
Toronto Star	1895-04-04	Eaton's	R&C	75c	black		
Toronto Star	1895-05-16	Eaton's	R&G	75c			
Toronto Star	1895-07-15	Eaton's		25c	white, drab	21-26	children's waists
Toronto Star	1895-08-29	Eaton's		39c	drab		
Toronto Star	1895-08-30	Eaton's	R&G	75c			
Toronto Star	1896-01-18	John Eaton's	P&N; D&A; Eaton	49-90c	white, drab, black		
Toronto Star	1896-03-26	John Eaton's		69-$1.24		odd sizes	
Toronto Star	1896-07-09	Eaton's		.39c			Regular price .75c
Toronto Star	1896-09-24	Eaton's	American Lady	99c	black	19-30	regular price $1.50
Toronto Star	1897-02-24	Eaton's	The Elite	$1.35			Regular price $3
Toronto Star	1900-10-31	Eaton's	B&C; W.B;	.75c-$2.25	drab, white, black	18-26	
Toronto Star	1901-03-20	Eaton's	WB	95c	pink, blue	18-30	Regular price $2

Paper	Date	Retail	Company	Price	Colour	Size	Notes
Toronto Star	1901-09-05	Eaton's	La Vida; Kabo; W.B.; R&G; P.N; B&C; Acme	$1.00-8.50			Fitting expert
Toronto Star	1901-10-30	Eaton's	Acme; B&C; WB; PN; CB; Kabo; La Greque; La Vida; R&G	.28c-$3.50			
Toronto Star	1902-02-04	Eaton's	WB	.97c	white		Fitting expert
Toronto Star	1903-08-12	Eaton's	La Vida	$2-12.50	white, drab, black, fancy		
Toronto Star	1904-03-20	Eaton's	150 styles	$3.50-$8.50		18-30	
Toronto Star	1909-09-18	Eaton's		$1.25		18-36	Fitting expert
Toronto Star	1910-04-14	Eaton's	Nemo	.50c-$5.50	white	18-36	Fitting expert
Toronto Star	1911-02-15	Eaton's	Nemo	$3.50-4.50		18-26	Fitting expert
Toronto Star	1912-02-12	Eaton's	Nemo	$3.50-$4.50		18-36	Fitting expert
Toronto Star	1895-07-19	J. Sutcliffe & Sons		50c-$1.00			odd lines
Toronto Star	1895-12-03	John Eaton	P&N; D&A; Eaton	87c-96c	white, drab, black		
Toronto Star	1895-12-14	John Eaton					
Toronto Star	1894-03-13	Little Eaton	American	75c			
Toronto Star	1898-07-23	Griffith & Co		.35C			regular price 50c
Toronto Star	1899-02-16	John Catto & son		$1.25			
Toronto Star	1899-04-07	John Catto & son	The Dowager			23-36	
Toronto Star	1899-08-17	John Catto & son	Featherbone	.50c-$1.25			

Paper	Date	Retail	Company	Price	Colour	Size	Notes
Toronto Star	1899-10-06	John Catto & son	R&G; The Dowager	$1.25-$2.00		all sizes	
Toronto Star	1895-01-19	McKendry's	American; PN	50c-$1.50			includes childrens
Toronto Star	1895-02-16	McKendry's	American	50c			28 dozen
Toronto Star	1895-05-11	McKendry's	American	25c-$1.00	white		summer and childrens
Toronto Star	1895-05-18	McKendry's	Brush's	50c			
Toronto Star	1895-06-22	McKendry's	American	75c			35 dozen
Toronto Star	1895-08-01	McKendry's	NY	50c	dark, white		summer corsets
Toronto Star	1895-08-10	McKendry's	NY; P&N	99c			misses corded corset
Toronto Star	1896-02-01	McKendry's	American	50c			
Toronto Star	1896-07-25	McKendry's		25c			regular price .50c
Toronto Star	1896-11-25	McKendry's	D&A	69c			regular price $1
Toronto Star	1898-04-28	McKendry's	P.N., summer corsets	25c-95c	black		
Toronto Star	1898-06-23	McKendry's	summer corset	35c			
Toronto Star	1898-09-15	McKendry's		39c			regular price .75c
Toronto Star	1894-02-09	Simpson's	N.P; D&A; Crompton; PN; Queen	45c-$2.00	drab, fawn, cream, black, white		
Toronto Star	1896-02-20	Simpson's		45c	drab	18-24	regular price .60c
Toronto Star	1896-11-03	Simpson's	P.N.	$1.00	black		

Paper	Date	Retail	Company	Price	Colour	Size	Notes
Toronto Star	1898-05-16	Simpson's		75c		odd sizes	
Toronto Star	1898-11-05	Simpson's	P.D.; Cromptons; Ferris; B&C; R&G	$1-12.50			
Toronto Star	1899-11-18	Simpson's	P.D.	98c-$12		18-30	regular price $1.75-25
Toronto Star	1899-01-10	Simpson's		79c	white		regular $1.50
Toronto Star	1899-05-15	Simpson's	R&G	50c		18-26	
Toronto Star	1900-04-15	Simpson's	Simpson's	35-50c		18-30	
Toronto Star	1903-04-08	Simpson's	Le Reve; Bon Ton; C.B.; Royal Worcester; R&G; C.C.; Crompton; The Dowaher	75c-$20	grey, white	18-26	
Toronto Star	1903-09-25	Simpson's	Le Reve; Bon Ton; C.B.; Royal Worcester; R&G; C.C.; Crompton; The Dowaher	50c-$20		18-26	window display
Toronto Star	1904-02-22	Simpson's	D&A; Le Reve; Bon Ton; C.B.; Royal Worcester; R&G; C.C.; Crompton; The Dowaher	50c-$20			Fitting expert
Toronto Star	1904-08-21	Simpson's	D&A; Le Reve; Bon Ton; C.B.; Royal Worcester; R&G; C.C.; Crompton; The Dowaher	75c-$20			40 styles in catalogue

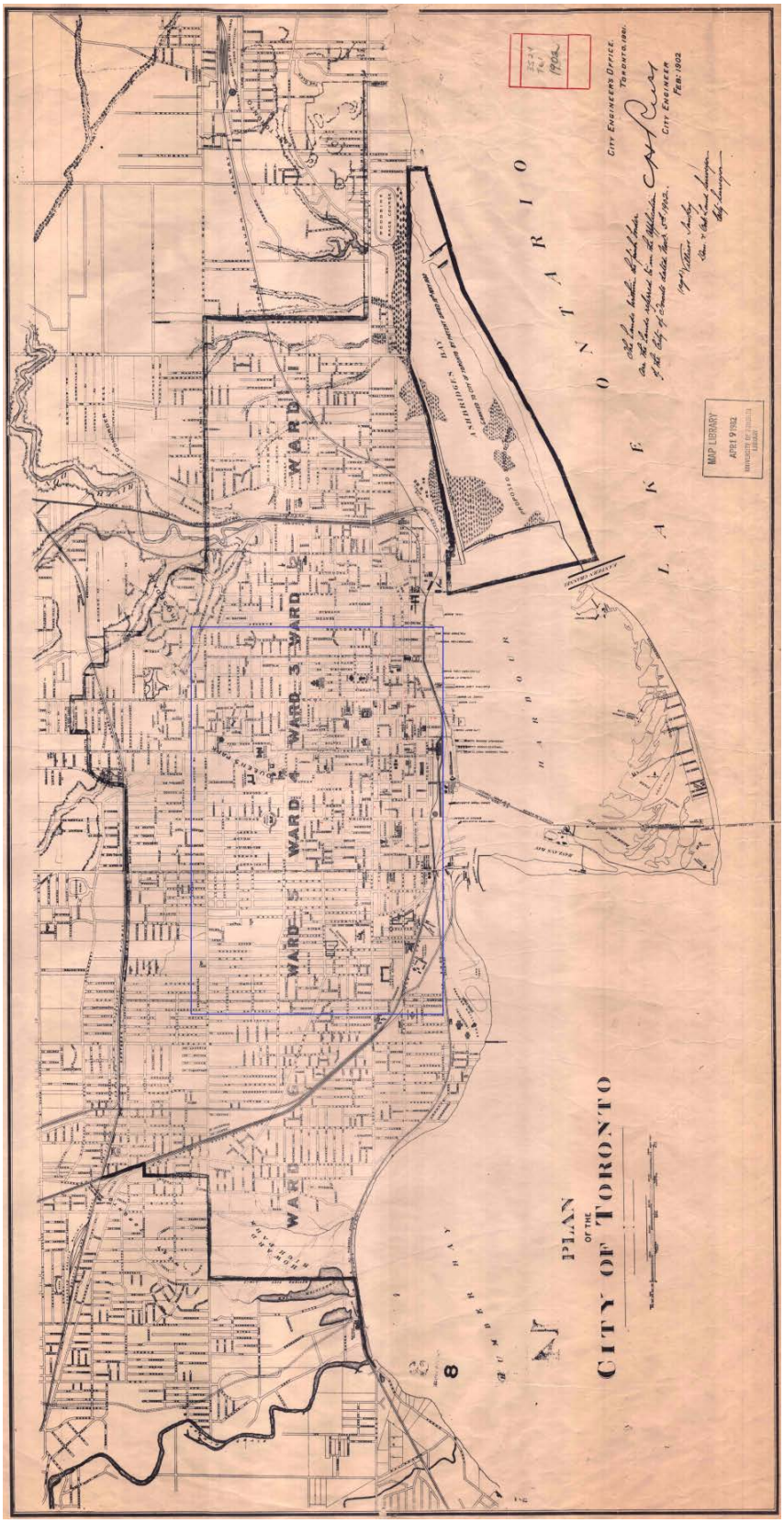
Paper	Date	Retail	Company	Price	Colour	Size	Notes
Toronto Star	1905-08-25	Simpson's	Redfern; Bon-Ton; Royal Worcester; Warner's; C.C.; C.B.; R&G; F.P.; Crompton; Armourside; Dowager; Ferris	75c-$7			
Toronto Star	1905-12-11	Simpson's	Royal Worcester	$1.75	black w blue or pink flowers	18-26	regular price $3.50
Toronto Star	1906-04-26	Simpson's	D&A; C.C	$1.50	white, grey, drab	18-26	Regular $2.50, $3.50
Toronto Star	1906-12-26	Simpson's	C.C.	75c		18-30	Fire sale
Toronto Star	1907-04-08	Simpson's	Warner's; Refern; C.B; The Dowager; The Grand duchess; F.P.; C.C; Crompton's; D&A; Ferris	50-$7.50			
Toronto Star	1907-11-15	Simpson's	CBC	50c		18-30	Regular price $1.00-$1.50
Toronto Star	1908-03-11	Simpson's	C.B.; Redfern; Bon Ton; Royal Worcester; Jewel; Royale; R&G; C.C; D&A. P.D	75c-$7			
Toronto Star	1909-09-17	Simpson's	D&A Diva	$2.50			

Paper	Date	Retail	Company	Price	Colour	Size	Notes
Toronto Star	1910-03-10	Simpson's	Mme Irene; Warner's; Redfern; D&A; Thomson's; Royale; C.C; Royal Redwing	$1.25-12.00			
Toronto Star	1911-02-11	Simpson's	Mme Irene; Warner's; Redfern; D&A; Thomson's; Royale; C.C; Royal Redwing	75c-$12.00			
Toronto Star	1911-10-18	Simpson's	Marmola	$1.75		20-30	Fitting expert
Toronto Star	1912-01-31	Simpson's	Mona self-reducing	$1.75		20-30	
Toronto Star	1912-10-12	Simpson's	C.B.; Thomson's; Bien Jolie; Redfern; Royal Worcester; Modart; La Diva; L'Elegant; D&A	$1.25-12			
Toronto Star	1914-09-12	Simpson's	Gossard; Modart; Bon Ton; Royal Worcester; Redfern; Bien Jolie; Warner's; La Diva; C.C.; C.B; Thomson's; Rengo	$1.25-10		20-26	
Toronto Star	1896-06-18	Mammoth Fair		35c			regular price .50c
Toronto Star	1896-11-27	Mammoth Fair		24c-74c			regular prcice .50-$1

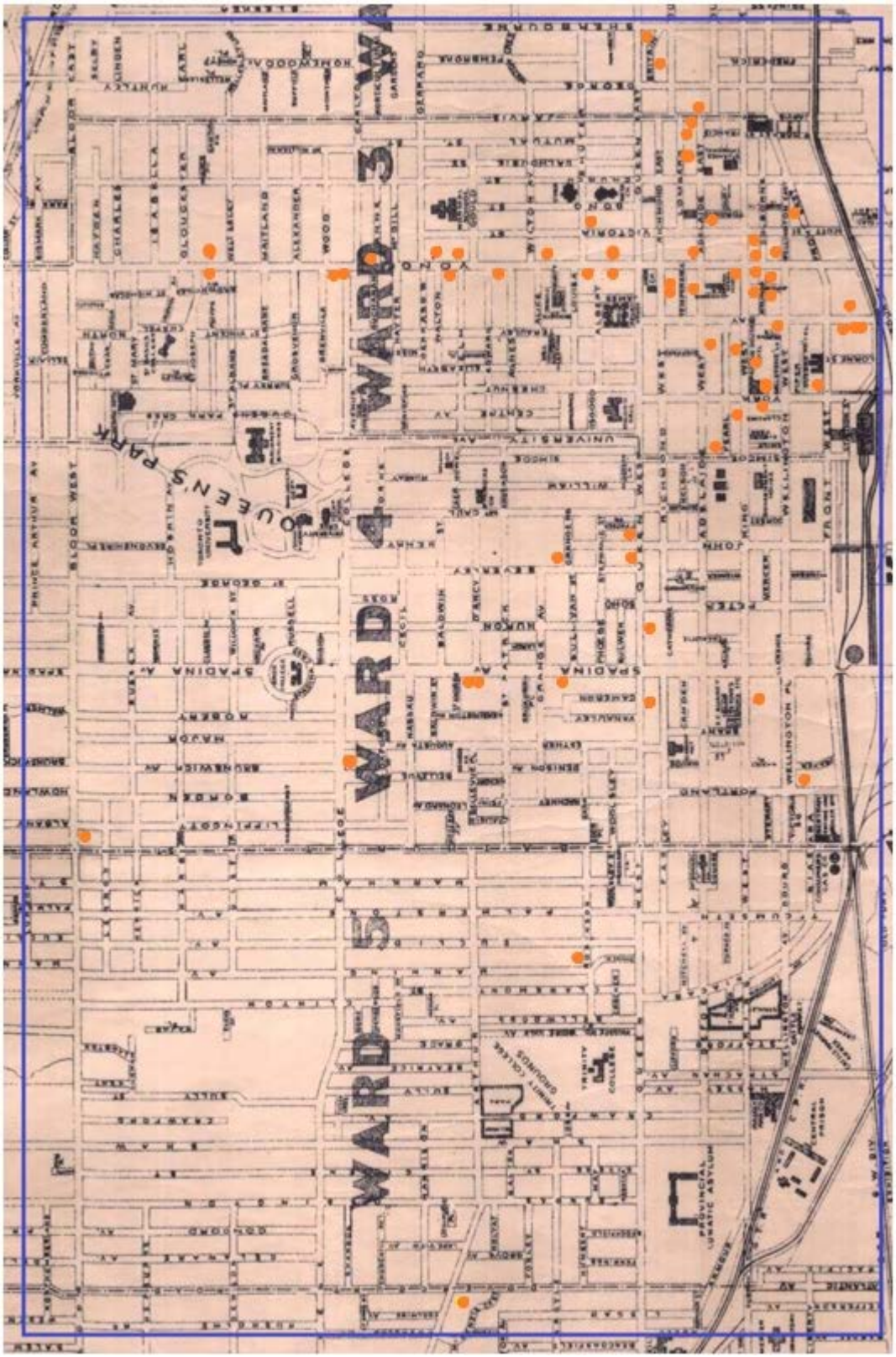
Paper	Date	Retail	Company	Price	Colour	Size	Notes
Toronto Star	1894-04-06	T.Thompson & Son	Thompson's	69c-75c			original price $1
Toronto Star	1894-08-18	T.Thompson & Son					
Toronto Star	1894-08-24	T.Thompson & Son		19c-85c	tan		
Toronto Star	1895-03-22	T.Thompson & Son		59c			25 dozen
Toronto Star	1895-03-28	T.Thompson & Son		35c and up			50 dozen
Toronto Star	1895-04-18	T.Thompson & Son	Crompton	40c-75c	drab, buff	all sizes	
Toronto Star	1895-04-25	T.Thompson & Son	Crompton	75c		all sizes	
Toronto Star	1895-05-02	T.Thompson & Son	Crompton	33c-75c			
Toronto Star	1894-06-09	The Bon Marche		50c			
Toronto Star	1894-08-04	The Bon Marche		19c-50c	fawn, white, grey		500 pairs
Toronto Star	1894-09-01	The Bon Marche		50c-75c			
Toronto Star	1895-05-02	The Bon Marche					
Toronto Star	1895-05-16	The Bon Marche		40c-75c			
Toronto Star	1895-05-18	The Bon Marche		40c-75c			
Toronto Star	1895-07-18	The Bon Marche		10c-40c			150 dozen
Toronto Star	1895-03-07	The Economic	Featherbone	19c			
Toronto Star	1892-11-03	W.A. Murray and Co.'s	C.P. Corsets	$1.25	white, pink, sky, gold	"every size"	original price $2.25
Toronto Star	1895-05-22	Walkers		50c			factory seconds
Globe	1871-03-24	Eaton's	Andromeda				

Paper	Date	Retail	Company	Price	Colour	Size	Notes
Globe	1871-04-06	RH Gray & Co			drab		
Globe	1871-04-29	RH Gray & Co					
Globe	1871-05-30	Lockhart & Haldane					
Globe	1871-06-03	RH Gray & Co	English, French, Nursing				
Globe	1871-07-08	R. Walker & Sons					
Globe	1871-07-18	Golden Griffin	Panama	$1.25			
Globe	1871-09-29	John MacDonald & Co					
Globe	1871-09-30	Jno. Charlesworth	Wove, Cousille		white, gray		
Globe	1872-03-19	Crawford & Smith	Thompson's, nursing				
Globe	1872-04-06	Gray, Rennie & co					
Globe	1873-01-06	Thompson & Son		50-$1	grey, drab, white		
Globe	1873-02-20	Jno. Charlesworth	Cupid; No. 1 seamless; Boomering				
Globe	1873-04-03	Hodgson & Boyd					

Appendix E: Map of Toronto, Corset Businesses



This is a plan of the city of Toronto from 1902. The blue square represents the area of the city where most of the corset companies were located, as indicated in Appendix A, with the exception of the Vermilyea factory, which was located in the Junction. The orange dots on the zoomed segment each represent a company listed in the directories spanning the date range of this study. The majority of the companies were located on Yonge St., as well as long King and Queen streets. As the city limits expanded, companies were located along College and Bloor, denoting still extant consumer centres.


WARD 3
WARD 4
WARD 5
QUEEN'S PARK
UNIVERSITY AVE
SPADINA AVE
BLOOR WEST
PROVINCIAL LUNATIC ASYLUM

Appendix F: Material Culture Data

The information in this table is from the musums and collections that are in Toronto, or corsets that had provenance to Toronto. Not included is the information from Museum London. Corsets ranged from the 1870s to the 1930s, despite the date range of 1871 to 1914 that I requested from the collections. This range provided by collections punctuates the fact that corsets were worn long after World War I. Many of the corsets did not have information of the maker, either due to lack of labelling, or degredation of the artefact resulting in lost information. Each item is listed by the repository with the accession number, approximate date range as provided by the collection's records, waist size in inches, material used, and the company information, if available. The smallest size was 16 inches, which created an 18 inch waist, and the largest was 42 inches. Like the data from the advertisements, this shows the range of bodies that existed in Toronto. Most of the corsets were made from brocade, duck or coutil, though the ribbon corsets were all silk, possibly an indication that they were part of wedding trousseaux.

Collection	Accession number	Approx. Year	Waist in inches	Material	Company
McCord	M2004.101.16.1-2	1910s	21	pink duck	
McCord	M2009.41.13.1-2	1910s	21	grey herringbone	PC corsets
McCord	M2014.111.16	1920-1928	22	beige herringbone	ET "La Deese"
McCord	M2014.111.21	1920-1929	16	beige herringbone	ET "La Deese"
McCord	M2014.111.17	1920-1930	20	beige herringbone	ET "La Deese"
McCord	M922.58.1	1900-1910	18	beige ribbon	Cromptons
McCord	M2004.101.17.1-2	1900	19	beige twill ribbon	
Seneca	1-870-72	1860s	20	grey corded	
Seneca	1-870-72-01132	1890	21	black w silver brocade	HR Zoe, Belgium

Seneca	1-880-72-01139	1880s	21	off-white twill	"The Astarte"
Seneca	1-910-72-01136	1910s	24	peach brocade	
Seneca	1-900-72-01135	1910s	21	grey twill	
Seneca	1-889-72-04574	1893	18	cream silk	C/B à la Spirite, Belgium
Ryerson	2013.05.001	1905	22	yellow coutille	home made
Ryerson	2013.06.001	1938		pink herringbone	
Ryerson	2014.07.229	1905	18	pink silk ribbon	"The Lillian" John Wanamaker New
Ryerson	2014.07.228	1905	17	beige silk ribbon	
Ryerson	2014.07.231	1905	19.5	blue silk ribbon	"The ReJean" The Daniel and Fisher Store, Denver
Ryerson	2014.07.230	unknown	24	blue corselet	
Ryerson	private collection	1880s	19	grey sateen	D&A
Ryerson	2014.07.231	1880s	22	purple duck	
ROM	2015.15.2.1	1913	19	white long-line	C/C à la Grâce, comes with box
ROM	2015.21.1.1	1913	19	white long-line	La Diva, comes with box
ROM	936.38.2	1904	21	off white ribbon	
ROM	964.197.1	1890s	24	black and purple brocade	
ROM	964.197.2	1904-1914	24	light pink	
ROM	967.92.0	1897	18	off white satin	
ROM	968.105.1	1900	19	off white ribbon	
ROM	969.89.15	1900-1907	18	off white ribbon	"The ReJean" The Daniel and Fisher Store, Denver
ROM	971.122.3	1903	18	light blue ribbon	
ROM	971.258.36	1890-1899	21	black cotton w/ yellow stitching	
ROM	972.92.1	1900	26	grey duck	
ROM	975.241.122	1880-1889	27	black velveteen corselete	
ROM	976.73.0	1870-1900	20	off white nursing	
ROM	978.28.0	1880-1900	24	black satin	"Sappho" made in Belgium
FHM	N/A	1900	21	blue tabbed	
FHM	n/A	1939	30	pink herringbone	Spirella
FHM	N/A	1919	22	nude	Cromptons (no label)

Toronto	1982.7.1190	1914	42.5	off white floral brocate	
Toronto	1982.7.1189	1910-1914	37	nude dot cotton	
Toronto	1982.7.1188	1910-1914	42	pink striped twill	
Toronto	1982.7.1187	1910-1914	39	pink cotton	

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