

2

The Modern Girl Around the World

Cosmetics Advertising
and the Politics of Race and Style



MODERN GIRL AROUND THE WORLD
RESEARCH GROUP (ALYS EVE WEINBAUM,
LYNN M. THOMAS, PRITI RAMAMURTHY,
UTA G. POIGER, MADELEINE Y. DONG,
and TANI E. BARLOW)

Advertising was one of the primary means through which a distinct Modern Girl style simultaneously appeared around the globe in the 1920s and 1930s. With large advertising budgets, multinational and local cosmetics companies created and transmitted this Modern Girl style in the print media, portraying Modern Girls with carefully made-up faces, bobbed hair, exposed arms and backs, and bodies clad in the latest fashions. **Cosmetics ads placed Modern Girls in new social situations—romancing in public, playing sports, posing as film stars, or caring for the self in the bathroom—and, frequently, represented them using a unique aesthetic that emphasized an elongated body and abstracted facial features.** Such ads also frequently depicted Modern Girls as involved in efforts to alter their skin color through use of makeup, whitening, coloring, and tanning products. It is in this way



that cosmetics presented the Modern Girl's various acts of self-fashioning and public display as tightly knit into national as well as transnational processes of racial formation.

The richness of Modern Girl cosmetics ads, their depiction of Modern Girl style and aesthetics, and, not least, their participation in racial formation encouraged our research group to track the Modern Girl as a global phenomenon in and through them. Over the last several years we have created a diverse collection of advertisements spanning four continents, multiple languages, and a range of print media. In this chapter we explore the global prevalence of the Modern Girl in cosmetics ads and suggest ways that **capitalist enterprises created and transmitted representations of femininity and race.** The visual nature of these ads was especially useful in that it enabled us to work together using a method we call connective comparison — a method of reading texts that allows us to identify connections among disparate locales and to explore the overlap and distinction among Modern Girl representations, as discussed in chapter 1. Overall, we have relied on two research strategies: first, we have simultaneously examined multinational and local companies that marketed Modern Girl cosmetics; and second, we have tracked imagery associated with select categories of cosmetics, those designed to alter skin color. As we will see, in depicting processes of cleansing, coloring, and transforming facial and bodily surfaces, cosmetics ads indexed new, modern technologies of the self and revealed a set of newly emergent social practices.¹



Our method of connective comparison has also allowed us to pay close attention to the peculiarities of local manifestations of the Modern Girl style and aesthetic and to discern the repeated citation of specific styles and aesthetics across contexts. As this chapter argues, local understandings of skin color and their relationship to national racial formations shaped Modern Girl style and aesthetics and at once contributed to the global Modern Girl phenomenon. Put differently, the chapter illustrates the phenomenon that we term *multidirectional citation*: the mutual, though nonequivalent influences and circuits of exchange that actively connected disparate parts of the globe, shaping and transforming the representation and enactment of the Modern Girl around the world.

Modern Girl Cosmetics and Toiletry Advertising

Although multinational and local companies in all locales drew on Modern Girl imagery to market cosmetics and toiletry products, she was not equally visible everywhere. In the United States, Germany, and China, advertisements featuring the Modern Girl were more frequent than in Africa and South Asia. During the 1920s, U.S. companies were at the forefront of these developments

as they consciously employed advertising to create new markets abroad.² Ads appearing in newspapers and magazines around the world featured U.S. more often than German, British, or other European products. In the periodicals that we examined, we found no evidence that cosmetics companies based outside the United States, Europe, and Japan were able to market their products abroad before World War II. The United States, by the 1920s, moreover, was the biggest producer of magazines and print advertising.

We have principally drawn ads from three American publications catering to middle-class and upper-class readers, *Vogue*, *Ladies Home Journal*, and *Cosmopolitan*, and from two publications specifically targeted at black readers, *The Crisis*, the journal of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) that was edited during the 1920s by W. E. B. Du Bois, and the more populist weekly newspaper, the *Baltimore Afro-American*.³ For Germany, we have collected ads from four illustrated magazines directed at middle-class and upper-class audiences, the *Leipziger Illustrirte Zeitung*, *Berliner Illustrirte Zeitung*, *Die Woche*, and the women's magazine *Die Dame*. For China, the cosmetics and toiletry ads we have collected are from treaty-port newspapers including *North China Daily News* and *South China Morning Post*, both of which were published in English as well as Chinese, and from the illustrated Chinese-language magazines *Ladies' Journal* (*Funü zazhi*) and *Young Companion* (*Liang Yu*), which addressed an upper-class and middle-class audience. Lower-class and communist tabloids, such as the German *Arbeiter-Illustrierte-Zeitung* (*Illustrated Worker Press*), or the Chinese *Luobinhan* (*Robin Hood*) and *Fuermosi* (*Sherlock Holmes*) rarely contained cosmetics ads, either because of leftist hostilities toward such luxury products or because workers were not seen as cosmetics consumers.

By comparison with the U.S., German, and Chinese contexts, we have found that in Africa and India, cosmetics and toiletry ads featuring the Modern Girl were not as commonplace in the 1920s. For Africa in the 1920s and 1930s, we collected ads from the *Cape Times* (Cape Town), a newspaper catering to the white and, to a lesser extent, "coloured" populations in the British dominion of South Africa.⁴ The *Cape Times* often carried ads featuring white Modern Girls similar to those that appeared in the U.S., German, and Chinese press. For the early 1930s onward, we focused on the black newspapers *Bantu World* (Johannesburg), *Bantu Mirror* (Salisbury), and the *Times of West Africa* (Accra), which carried some ads for facial creams that featured the black Modern Girl. Finally, we gathered ads from *Drum* (Johannesburg and, later, Lagos, Accra, and Nairobi), a monthly magazine established in 1951, in which the black Modern Girl became widely visible. For India, we collected ads from the *Statesman* (Calcutta) and the *Times of India* (Bombay), major English-language pan-subcontinental dailies catering to British colonials and Indian elites. In these

papers, advertisements mainly featured the white Modern Girl until 1930, after which time some ads for toiletry and cosmetics products began to feature the Indian Modern Girl. We also drew ads from the *Illustrated Weekly of India* (Bombay), one of the first English-language magazines to publish ads explicitly targeted at elite Indian women. Here, the Indian Modern Girl appeared more frequently in the late 1930s, becoming commonplace by the 1940s.⁵

Modern Girl advertising varied in kind. Some multinational companies simply recycled the same ad in a number of national and colonial contexts. One vivid example is the ubiquitous advertising for Pepsodent toothpaste, a product made by a U.S.-based company of the same name. In three ads that appeared in the Shanghai-based Chinese language magazine *Funü zazhi* (*Ladies' Journal*), the *Times of India* newspaper, and U.S. *Vogue* between 1926 and 1931, the image of the Modern Girl varies little (see figures 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3). In fact, apart from translation into Chinese, these three Pepsodent ads are nearly identical. **All feature a young white woman with bobbed hair (while two of these ads also feature an older man resembling future U.S. president Franklin Roosevelt).** All proclaim that Pepsodent removes the “dingy film” from teeth and encourage readers to send away for a free sample with the clip-out coupon provided. Advertisers used such coupons to track the effectiveness of their campaigns. Similar ads, featuring a lone white Modern Girl appeared in the *Times of West Africa* in 1934 and in the German press around the same time. In each, a young woman with bobbed hair flashes her bright teeth thanks to Pepsodent (see figure 1.6). The Modern Girl in all of these Pepsodent ads exhibits an aesthetic that evokes “Americanness”: a wide smile, big white teeth, and a body that is noticeably athletic, sensual, relaxed, at leisure.

By contrast, other ads that we have found indicate that international companies adjusted advertisements—images and copy—in order to appeal to specific colonial and national markets. For example, from the 1920s to the 1950s the U.S.-based Pond's Extract Company (after 1955, Chesebrough-Pond's) adapted advertisements for its so-called vanishing cream to a wide array of local contexts. The Pond's campaigns were designed by the New York-based advertising agency J. Walter Thompson (JWT), which, by 1950, had offices in at least twenty-five foreign locations, including Bombay and Johannesburg. Pond's was, in fact, JWT's oldest client, dating back to 1886. Once JWT went global they used the Pond's account to showcase the value of working with an agency whose international offices could tailor a company's message for local markets. Instructively, an ad from a 1925 issue of the Chinese *Ladies' Journal* renames the product as Pond's White Jade Cream and explains how the cream can be applied underneath powder to “keep your makeup in place for the day.” While one side of the cream bottle featured in the ad carries an English trademark, the





2.4 Ad for the U.S. product Pong's Cream in the Chinese magazine *Fimn Zazhi* (Ladies' Journal, 1925) featuring contemporary fashions and a long braid.

2.5 Ad in *Illustrated Weekly of India* (1942) for Pong's, featuring an Indian Modern Girl with *bindi*, stylish hair, and sari.

other side offers explanations in Chinese of the virtues of the product. The same ad also evokes verses from a famous fourteenth-century drama to allude to the beauty achievable through use of Pong's (see figure 2.4). In Germany JWT and Pong's told magazine readers in ads in 1930 that "trendsetting women" in fifty countries depended on Pong's cold cream and vanishing cream to make their skin "smooth."⁶ Another Pong's ad from a 1942 issue of the *Illustrated Weekly of India* proclaims that "Beauty needs no adornment—real beauty does not depend on fine silks." According to this ad, Pong's enables women to achieve "real beauty" regardless of their class and caste (see figure 2.5). A fourth Pong's ad that appeared in 1955 in *Bantu Mirror*, a Southern Rhodesia weekly, targeted black readers and consumers. In contrast to the other Pong's ads, this one focuses on skin color, proclaiming that Pong's Vanishing Cream will make skin "lighter, smoother, softer."⁷

The crucial observation to take away from comparison of these ads is that Pong's and JWT attached different Modern Girl images and attributes to the same product depending on where it was marketed. Whereas Pepsodent apparently tried to create a new "American" standard of white teeth across the globe, JWT marketed Pong's facial creams by appealing to existing standards of beauty among local elites, while at times also stressing the global reach of its

products. In all our contexts, we found Modern Girl ads for cosmetics that were produced and marketed by local companies exclusively for national or subnational consumption. For example, in the 1920s and 1930s, women with bobbed or short hair, a telltale sign of the Modern Girl, could be seen in ads for an Indian lightening “emollient,” Afghan Snow, and a South African product called Keppels Face Powder (see figure 2.6). Such examples suggest the overlap and intersection among the advertising strategies of multinational and local companies.

The Modern Girl and Technologies of the Self

Comparison of ads produced by both international and local companies has allowed us to discern a Modern Girl aesthetic that cuts across national and imperial boundaries. In the 1920s and into the 1930s, the Modern Girl usually possessed an elongated, wiry, and svelte body. The form first appeared before World War I in cigarette and car advertisements in the United States and Europe,

where it signified the attractions and dangers of androgyny and sexuality outside reproduction (see figure 1.5).⁸ The Modern Girl’s body is also depicted as excessively refined; individual female body parts are elegantly polished, carefully scrubbed, meticulously sprayed, or, in an astounding variety of ways, cleaned and covered so that lips, teeth, mouth, hair, skin, armpits, legs, and vagina are all stylishly produced. Moreover, the Modern Girl’s beauty and youthfulness are often linked to scientific hygiene.

In a series of ads for Odorono, a humorously named antiperspirant and deodorant introduced by a U.S. company and widely distributed in the United States, China, South Africa, India, and Germany, many of these bodily characteristics are evident. In all Odorono ads copy specifies that by applying the product to the armpits, the young, active, trim, and glamorous Modern Girl can prevent unpleasant odors and ensure that social interactions, especially romantic ones, are unspoiled. With references to “sanitary sponge applica-



2.6 Ad from the black South African newspaper *Bantu World* (1939) featuring the products of Keppels, one of the first white-owned South African cosmetics companies to target black consumers.

tors,” a “quick-drying formula,” and the “doctor” who invented the product and supervised its production, these ads evoke scientific hygiene in rendering an unseemly topic legitimate (see figures 1.3, 1.4, and 2.7). Like many other cosmetics and toiletry ads from the late 1920s and early 1930s, the Odorono ads frequently feature angular drawings of women with long necks and limbs that connote elegance. Graphic designers of ads appearing in all research contexts frequently emphasized diagonal lines to create dynamic images. Often, the proportions used in such drawings suggest “real” women seven or eight feet tall. Heavily indebted to the international art deco movement, such aesthetic exaggeration was employed by international and local companies.⁹

Modern Girl image designers took advantage of the most advanced visual technology available. In the United States, China, Germany, and India, the format of many Modern Girl ads changed from line drawings to lithographic watercolors in the 1920s, and to photographs (often featuring film stars, well-known performers, or socialites) in the late 1920s. In many African periodicals, the shift to photos took place later, during the 1930s and 1940s. Over the decades, influenced by developments in photographic technology and techniques such as the close-up shot in filmmaking, Modern Girl ads in all locales demonstrated changes in the method of representing the female figure, shifting from locating her in the middle of a landscape or room to showing only the portrait of her head, highlighting her hair, eyebrows, eyes, cheeks, lips, or teeth. Occasionally a particular facial feature was emphasized by depicting the Modern Girl’s hand touching or caressing it.

Another aesthetic in the U.S. and German cosmetics ads and the early Indian and South African ads that targeted white colonials is what we cautiously describe as the “Asianization” of the Modern Girl. While the term has a negative valence in some contexts, especially those in which ideas of “Asianization” have been used to euphemize the dissemination of Japanese political and military power, we have found the term useful in our exploration of racialized aesthetics. In cosmetic ads that are focused on the body or face, we have found that Asianization involved creation of caricatured, elongated, often slanted eyes. This is especially the case in those ads that employ a modernist art deco style. This stylization is evident in an ad for De Kama facial cream that appeared in 1924 in U.S. *Vogue*, in an ad for Ven-Yusa face cream that appeared in 1930 in the Indian *Statesman*, and in a 1929 German poster for F. Wolff and Sohn’s advertising *Vogue Perfume* (figures 1.2, 2.8, and 14.2). The women drawn in these ads are not clearly identifiable as Caucasian, black, or East Asian, though their eyes are expressly Asianized. In Europe and in the United States, where Orientalism was a venerable tradition and advertising cultures were predisposed to racist graphics, so-called slanted eyes probably denoted Asianness especially during the interwar years, when things “Oriental” gained

NOW

ODO-RO-DO

*A Super-Fast deodorant
More satisfying...*

ODO-RO-NO Cream

A PERFECTED FORMULA

Look for this new, excitingly different idea in deodorants. Ask for the new super-fast Odoorono Cream deodorant... Stops perspiration troubles faster than you can slip on your slip. Works better because it contains science's most effective perspiration stopper. On every count it meets the highest standards in the entire deodorant field.

Alleviates other greatly needed blessings too: will not irritate your skin... or harm fine fabrics... or turn gritty in the jar. And really protects up to three days.

No other deodorant equals it. Change to the new Odoorono Cream Deodorant... it's super-fast... super-modern... excitingly different... it's the best! Use Odoorono Cream!

ODO-RO-DO
Cream

BUY THE LARGE JAR AND ECONOMIZE

It is a fact proven by medical science that within our bodies there are many glands which secrete certain substances—hormones—into the blood stream. These secretions are of such drastic importance that they actually govern our growth, development, vitality, and even our emotions.

It was, therefore, only logical to incorporate these vital and beneficial elements in the form of a facial cream which would produce the desired results upon the skin.

Dr. Kama, a scientist, after years of study and research, was the first to discover the importance of hormones in the preservation of a youthful complexion and was the first to develop them for plastic surgeons for their work in rebuilding depleted facial tissues.

Results were so amazing that he introduced the same extracts in his original hormone facial preparations—to be used easily by every woman in the finest cosmetics available. The active hormone elements—extracted by Dr. Kama's own scientific laboratory—were made available to other cosmetic professionals and cannot be duplicated.

Dr. Kama's preparations represent the first basic improvement in cosmetic development and are different from all other creams in principle, composition, and effect upon the skin.

For quick and best results use in conjunction Dr. Kama's Creams: Creams 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100.

Dr. Kama's Creams \$100 **Dr. Kama's Creams Special \$100**
For each, direct and direct

DE KAMA

Among stores carrying Dr. Kama products are the following:

Boston: Mrs. Henry's Lane Company	Los Angeles: Mrs. J. W. Taylor & Co.
Chicago: The Chicago Store	London: The London Store
Cleveland: The Cleveland Store	Manila: The Manila Store
Denver: The Denver Store	Montreal: The Montreal Store
Houston: The Houston Store	New York: The New York Store
Los Angeles: The Los Angeles Store	Philadelphia: The Philadelphia Store
London: The London Store	Pittsburgh: The Pittsburgh Store
Manila: The Manila Store	Portland: The Portland Store
Montreal: The Montreal Store	San Francisco: The San Francisco Store
New York: The New York Store	Seattle: The Seattle Store
Philadelphia: The Philadelphia Store	St. Louis: The St. Louis Store
Pittsburgh: The Pittsburgh Store	Washington: The Washington Store
Portland: The Portland Store	Winnipeg: The Winnipeg Store
San Francisco: The San Francisco Store	
Seattle: The Seattle Store	
St. Louis: The St. Louis Store	
Washington: The Washington Store	
Winnipeg: The Winnipeg Store	

It may be obtained in your locality, write direct to Dr. Kama Sales, 3402 Wilshire Boulevard Beverly Hills, California

2.7 Ad from *Illustrated Weekly of India* (1947) advertising Odoorono, a deodorant licensed by a U.S. company that was marketed around the globe.

2.8 An art deco ad from U.S. *Vogue* (1924) for De Kama face cream, featuring abstract “Asianized” eyes.

particular cachet as part of the spread of a worldwide art deco aesthetic that incorporated both chinoiserie and japonisme into its stylized depictions of bodies and faces. Whereas Orientalism is a concept that is typically used to explain the production of the “Orient” and “Oriental” as mysterious, feminine, and unchanging, as well as the consequent construction of the Occidental’s superiority and prowess, Asianization, at least for Americans and Europeans, may have expressed an ambition to make the self more “exotic,” if only temporarily, and if only from a position of relative privilege.¹⁰

In addition to the commonalities of body and facial aesthetics, the Modern



2.9 Ad in the *Times of India* (1939) for Palmolive soap featuring the film star Devika Rani.

Girl is most frequently depicted in one of four specific activities or venues: she is figured as a film star; she is represented as an outdoor and sports enthusiast; she is depicted in romantic or intimate poses; and, she is found making up or admiring herself in front of her vanity or in a handheld mirror. Each of these activities or venues suggests a cluster of values and attitudes that contemporaries associated with the Modern Girl.

It appears that the Modern Girl image, in part, reflects observation and adaptation of female bodily practices performed on the silver screen. We know from previous research on *moga* in Japan, flappers in the United States, *modeng xiaojie* in China, and *neue Frauen* in Germany that film watching was a leisure activity routinely associated with the Modern Girl. Contemporaries often viewed Modern Girl postures, hand gestures, and ways of walking and talking as mimicking the movies.¹¹ Beginning in the late 1920s, in each of our locations, well-known actresses were

used to promote products; many ads for cosmetics therefore feature film stars. In a 1939 ad for Palmolive soap in the *Times of India*, for example, the film star Devika Rani is prominently portrayed (see figure 2.9). In linking the Modern Girl and movie watching, this ad enables a British company to capitalize on the glamour and fame of a local celebrity to create nationalist appeal, and also to cast its “beauty soap” as possessing global reach. As the copy explains: Palmolive is used by “millions of women in England, France, Germany, America and 67 other countries.” It also specifies that Palmolive “contains no animal fats,” thus assuaging potential alarm among Hindu and Muslim consumers. Devika Rani, a globe-trotting local star, ties together the international consumer of Palmolive and the Indian everywoman.

Ads depicting the Modern Girl engaged in outdoor activities invariably valorize her physicality. This trend is apparent in toiletry and cigarette ads from those locales in which the Modern Girl—particularly the white European and American Modern Girl and the Chinese Modern Girl—is depicted swimming, sunbathing, golfing, and, especially, playing tennis (see figures 1.4 and 2.10). By the early 1930s, Indian newspapers and ads also featured the Indian Mod-

2.10 Ad in *Vanity Fair*
 (1934) for Elizabeth Arden
 “Sun-pruf Cream”
 featuring two athletic,
 beach-going Modern Girls.



ern Girl as an ace tennis player. Although a black tennis-playing Modern Girl did not appear in ads in the African press during the 1930s, she was the subject of written commentary, indicating that tennis was a fashionable pursuit for young, elite African women. By depicting the Modern Girl’s athleticism, such ads glorified her strength, her desire for adventure, and her unwillingness to be restricted to the domestic domain. These images may also have been voyeuristically viewed in those contexts in which public displays of female body parts, such as legs and nude shoulders, had previously been eschewed.

No matter where she appears, the Modern Girl is associated with dating, romantic love, and premarital sex. The most interesting cosmetics ads depict the Modern Girl as self-aware of her allure and capable of using it to her advantage. A 1939 ad from South Africa’s *Bantu World*, for instance, features a dancing Modern Girl under the slogan “the smartest woman in the hall” (see figure 2.6). In other ads, the Modern Girl’s sexuality suggests lesbianism (or, as we will see, autoeroticism). In a 1934 American ad for Elizabeth Arden’s Sun-pruf Cream that appeared in *Vanity Fair*, a Modern Girl clad in beach wear proffers a tube of tanning product to her companion in a phallic, erotically charged gesture (see figure 2.10). Most of the time, Modern Girl sexual desire as expressed in cosmetics or toiletry ads was not interracial and thus did not venture to provoke contemporary anxieties about interracial sex and intimacy.





2.11 Ad for perfume in the German *Leipziger Illustrierte Zeitung* (1924) of Modern Girl/Tropical Temptress with suitor.

One 1924 German ad for a perfume with the English name “Poppy,” however, depicts a sparsely clad woman — part Modern Girl, part tropical temptress — pursued by a man of color, whose otherness is coded through dress and skin color. This perfume ad appealed to consumers by hinting at multiple transgressions: a smell that “enchanted and intoxicated the senses” and an openly sexualized female body desirous of “otherness” (see figure 2.11). In contrast to ads, filmic and literary representations of the Modern Girl produced in the United States, Africa, and Europe routinely suggest that some contemporaries associated the Modern Girl with transgression of racial boundaries and sexual norms.

When ads represent the Modern Girl at home, she is neither cooking and cleaning nor tending children but rather is caring for her own body in front of her vanity. **Instead of being family-minded, the Modern Girl is represented as self-possessed, even self-indulgent.** In a 1937 Chinese ad for Richard Hudnut’s Three Flowers Dusting Powder that appeared in *Young Companion*, a young woman sits on a stool in a modern, luxurious bathroom and powders herself in front of her mirror (see figure 2.12). She is clad in only a short slip, the kind worn under a *qipao*, a dress popular with Chinese Modern Girls. Our attention is drawn by her partially nude, sleek body, which her self-caressing hand gesture presents as a delicate and precious object.

The literal self-reflection of the Modern Girl in a mirror in numerous cosmetics ads has a dual meaning (see figures 1.1, 1.7, 2.13, 2.14, and 2.15). On



2.12 “The Pleasure of a Bath.” Chinese ad for Richard Hudnut products in *Liang Yu* (The Young Companion, 1937) features a young woman wearing a slip in a luxurious modern bathroom.



2.13 In a 1928 ad for Madam C. J. Walker beauty care products that appeared in *The Crisis*, an African American Modern Girl gazes lovingly at her image in her hand mirror.

the one hand, it suggests the possibility of her self-possession. Through hints of a self-touching erotics, it celebrates the Modern Girl's sexuality. On the other hand, mirror gazing also suggests the Modern Girl's constant obligation to judge herself against the beauty and social standards presented in the ads and elsewhere and thus to predict the opinions of others and to adjust accordingly. Though commodities do not necessarily offer the Modern Girl-as-consumer freedom from gendered social constraints or create new social and sexual norms, commodities opened up new possibilities in the realm of self-reflection, self-creation, and self-valuation. This use of commodity culture to create openings for representing a femininity that is self-consciously elected and crafted is a theme that has emerged time and again in our collaboration.

Facial Cosmetics, Skin Color, and Racial Formation

A large proportion of the cosmetics ads that feature the Modern Girl promote products that promise to provide new color or to transform the existing color or quality of the Modern Girl's skin. Such products include makeup and face powders as well as cold, acne, vanishing, bleaching, whitening, and tanning



2.14 Chinese ad for Palmolive soap in *Funü zazhi* (1930) promises to prevent skin from aging.

2.15 A German ad for Elida cream from *Leipziger Illustrirte Zeitung* (1928) with a Modern Girl approvingly assessing herself in the mirror.

creams. In our analysis of ads for such products, we seek to elucidate further how the Modern Girl's bodily self-fashioning is knit into processes of racial formation. In so doing, we have sought to address two overarching and inter-related questions: How do ads for such cosmetics provide insight into racial formations, both national and transnational, through which the Modern Girl emerged? And how do such ads participate in the production and contestation of these same formations?

We do not take the position that the significance of skin color is similar everywhere. All over the world, there are deep histories of lightening and darkening; each locale has densely embedded aesthetic regimes and racialized politics of skin color. In tracking the manner in which the Modern Girl participates in racial formation in a variety of contexts, we thus simultaneously wish to recognize the singular qualities of each as well as overlap. For although there may be overlap across regional, national, and subnational contexts, it is never complete. As we will see, whitening, coloring, and tanning are in most locales neither equivalent nor opposed processes but rather intimately interlinked ones. What is most striking is how, in the 1920s and 1930s (and up through the 1960s in some locales), the Modern Girl stood at the center of shifting appeals to alter skin color made by cosmetic companies and advertising agents, and

how such appeals repeatedly evoked notions of “nature,” science, race, social status, refinement, “Americanness,” and exoticism.

Cosmetic products aimed at whitening and lightening the skin predate the Modern Girl’s first appearance in the 1920s. Pale skin was a beauty ideal for Anglo-American women in the United States throughout the nineteenth century. Possession of lighter and finer complexion was a luxury pursued by those who could afford to stay out of the elements, to pamper themselves, and to enjoy a comfortable life of leisure. Wealthy white women in the United States, Europe, and European colonies used white powders and bleaching creams to achieve the right “white” look. Heavy use of such products, however, could also open these same women to charges of artifice and associate them with both prostitution and the life of the theater. In partial reaction to this taint, by the end of the nineteenth century “looking natural” became a commonplace aesthetic ideal. By the 1920s, ads for thickly applied “lily-white” powders and paints had all but disappeared, while ads promoting products that hygienically augmented “natural” beauty and skin tone became pervasive.¹²

Cosmetic ads featuring the Modern Girl that appeared in the U.S., European, and colonial European press during the 1920s frequently focus on feeding and protecting fair skin. A 1928 German ad published by a Lever subsidiary, Elida, marketed skin creams that healed the skin, made it “even and like alabaster,” and “protected it against harsh winds and bright sunlight” (see figure 2.15). As in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century ads circulated in the United States, in this German ad fair and refined skin is a sign of upper-class breeding and of white superiority. Unlike earlier European cosmetics ads such as those for British Pears Soap or German *Lilienmilchseife* which presented people of color as dirty and therefore primitive, the Elida ad invokes fairness and whiteness in a distinct way—as linked, if not fully reducible to, racial “phenotype.”¹³

Concerns about protecting white skin from the sun and harsh elements of tropical climes often appeared in cosmetic ads in the colonial press in India and Hong Kong. A 1930 ad for Ven-Yusa, “The Oxygen Face Cream,” that appeared in the *Times of India* conveys a message similar to that of the Elida ad (see figure 1.2). Other ads, such as an Elizabeth Arden Bleachine ad that appeared in the English-language Chinese press, recommend use of bleaching creams for white women.¹⁴ All these ads expressed an anxious obsession with maintaining whiteness in a world of phenotypic others by claiming to banish what the historian David Arnold has referred to as “fearful tropicality.”¹⁵ To stay “natural”—that is, naturally fair—paradoxically one had to evade “nature.”

Skin product ads targeting indigenous consumers illustrate the many ways

cosmetic whitening was interpolated into preexisting, precolonial skin preferences. In China, for instance, ads played on the intersection of native skin color hierarchies and Euro-American ideologies of white racial superiority. Lighter skin, long a mark of high status, indicated the distance between peasants and scholar-officials. A light, nontanned complexion also formed an important element of feminine beauty. Classical literature often likened the ideal woman's skin color to congealed ointment, white jade, or fresh lichee. Yet in classical convention "whiteness" never stood as the sole criterion for beauty or ideal skin; a healthy radiance of rosy color always accompanied clear skin as the ideal.¹⁶ An illustration of this continuing preference is a 1940 ad, which features products claiming to provide the "natural" whiteness associated with elite Chinese women. "Why do high class women feel beautiful and pleasant when they apply Sparrow Face Powder?" the ad inquires; because "it will make a woman's skin look white and soft in a natural way" (see figure 1.8). While this ad and others like it mention the color white, they do not explicitly reference European or Euro-American racial whiteness.

In India, the preference for light-colored skin during the 1920s, especially for women, is undeniable, but the association of light skin with merit or status more ambiguous. Skin color had social significance in the subcontinent before European colonialism and prior to the influence of U.S. and European conceptions of race. Indian epics and artifacts are full of references to superior beings who are dark-skinned.¹⁷ The history of skin color hierarchies in India is further complicated by Turkish and later Mughal conquests of the thirteenth to mid-nineteenth century, when systems of grading people by skin color—fair, "wheaten," dark—were used to categorize certain dark-skinned groups as criminal and rebel. This form of codification passed directly into the British colonial police records from the mid-nineteenth century on.¹⁸ However, light skin was not always desirable. Mughal miniature paintings and folk tales of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, while expressing a preference for "translucent" color, also associated "too white" skin with leprosy. The feminine ideal was for "translucence," not simply fairness.¹⁹ European colonial ideologies of racial superiority (from the first Portuguese landings on the west coast of India in 1498 to the expansion and post-1857 establishment of the British empire until 1947) thus encountered extant skin color hierarchies and were themselves reshaped in the process. Colonial anthropological discourses in the mid-nineteenth century linked Indian aesthetic preferences for whiteness to caste-based social and economic stratification. Fair skin color, in these accounts, symbolized superiority in a hierarchical social structure and moral order. Over time, metropolitan outlooks on racial difference and the represen-

tation of whiteness were transformed by discourses on medicine and science that intersected with the preexisting ideas about skin color.²⁰

We have found cosmetics ads in China and India where the Modern Girl promotes what appear to be models of beauty that hark back to these older ideologies of whitening by evoking “nature.” In China during the 1920s and 1930s ads such as one for Three Flowers Vanishing Cream by the Hudnut Company, which appeared in 1931, promise to improve facial beauty by making skin “smooth,” “uniform,” and “fresh.” The text refers to the product’s “secret formula,” using an archaic word usually reserved for discussions of Chinese medicine. The ad also represents a Modern Girl body that is expressly Chinese and cast as “naturally” beautiful.²¹ A similar 1949 ad for Afghan Snow appearing in the *Times of India* references “nature” in a similar manner: the Indian Modern Girl is depicted with flowers in her hair and exudes “beauty,” “charm,” and “allure” (see figure 2.16). Notably, these Chinese and Indian ads link fair skin and whitening to “nature.”

Other ads for skin products in India and China combined references to older skin color hierarchies with evocations of scientific authority. For example, an Indian ad for Pearlex that features a white woman declares that scientific progress could make long-standing desires for whiter skin a reality (see figure 2.17). A Chinese ad for Palmolive soap explains that new “scientific developments” can enable one to keep one’s skin “rosy and moist” (see figure 2.14). These ads present the ideal skin in a vocabulary loaded with indigenous cultural references, such as “fair” and “pearly-white” in the Indian case, and “rosy” in the Chinese one. At the same time, these ads give preexisting preferences for lighter skin a “scientific,” thus modern, twist: they sell the dream that by consuming scientifically produced cosmetics one can assume a cosmopolitan, upper-class look that makes one desirable and modern.

As in the Chinese and Indian contexts, in the African context ads that promised to lighten dark skin appeared beginning in the 1930s. For instance, in 1939 the South African company Keppels ran an ad for its lightening product Freckle



2.16 Ad for Afghan Snow in *The Times of India* (1949) evokes “natural” beauty by depicting the Indian Modern Girl with flowers in her hair and a floral motif.

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2.17 Ad for Pearlex in the *Illustrated Weekly of India* (1942) that evokes modern science in its promise of whitening.

Wax in *Bantu World*, a paper that targeted a black African readership and published articles and ads in English, Xhosa, Zulu, Sotho, Tswana, Venda, Afrikaans, and Tsonga languages (see figure 2.6). Six years later, Keppels ran an ad in the *Cape Times* promising that products developed by the “famous Keppels laboratories” could combat the harmful effects of South Africa’s “cruel” climate by restoring “pristine skin-texture and colour.” Although the *Cape Times* was a daily newspaper aimed at white and “coloured” readers, the “avocado”-tinted makeup and dark gray skin color of the ad’s primary female image suggest that Keppels was targeting the latter group (see figure 2.18).²² These Keppels ads show how a South African cosmetics company appealed to a marketplace structured by racial hierarchies through asserting scientific command of local conditions and reconfiguring distinctions of skin color as matters of climate.

In southern Africa, skin color hierarchies were shaped through the long history of European colonialism, dating back to the mid-seventeenth century at the Cape. Under Dutch, and later British, colonial rule, whiteness and light-colored skin became associated with civilization, cleanliness, intelligence, and power.²³ Mid-twentieth-century ethnographies of relatively remote southern African communities mention preferences for “light-skinned girls” or “light brown skin,” suggesting a local predilection for light-colored (not white) skin that may not be entirely reducible to colonial racial hierarchies.²⁴ Within some southern African communities, light brown skin may have been a long-standing beauty attribute for young women.

During the 1930s, colonial racial hierarchies and, perhaps, indigenous preferences for light brown skin became entangled with American racial preferences and dynamics. An ad for Apex products, manufactured by an American, New Jersey-based company, appears to have been the earliest bleach ad to appear in a black South African newspaper. Apex, one of the largest black-owned businesses in the United States during the 1920s and 1930s, was, according to one ad, the first “all Negro Company” in South Africa.²⁵ The 1933

2.18 Ad from the South African newspaper *Cape Times* (1945) marketing a skin lightener, Freckle Wax, and “avocado”-tinted make-up to black consumers.



Bantu World ad featuring a line drawing of a bobbed-hair and bare-shouldered black Modern Girl gazing into a handheld mirror promises readers an improved appearance through use of Apex hair products and skin bleach (see figure 1.1). During the 1950s and 1960s, particularly in *Drum* magazine, ads for skin lighteners and bleaches manufactured in the United States became more pervasive, despite their often harmful levels of ammoniated mercury and hydroquinone. Many of these ads featured light-skinned black African Modern Girl film stars or beauty queens. Some ads continued to claim the U.S. origins of their product as a point of pride, situating African Americans as role models of racial betterment.²⁶ These ads suggest that in Anglophone African contexts, at least, colonial ideologies of white racial superiority and scientific improvement were now linked to color-coded hierarchies emanating from the United States. These developments underline that Americanization included a number of complex processes, which at times involved African Americans as capitalist entrepreneurs and racialized role models.

In the black U.S. press, representations of the African American Modern Girl were often strategically deployed to contest Jim Crow racial hierarchies that were buttressed by de jure and de facto racial segregation. Cosmetics ads, especially those run by the C. J. Walker Company in the NAACP’s journal *The Crisis*, are a perfect example of a black contrapuntal politicization of advertis-

ing. Madam C. J. Walker, one of the most influential and well-known black businesswomen at the turn of the twentieth century, founded a hair treatment and cosmetics company that flourished for several decades by selling hair-care and beauty products to African American women. C. J. Walker's ads (particularly, though not exclusively, those that were produced during Madam C. J. Walker's lifetime) often expressed race pride. Typically, ads proclaimed that the company's products produced "loveliness," "allure," and "charm" as opposed to whiteness or lightness.²⁷ For instance, a 1928 ad that features a black Modern Girl with bobbed hair looking into a hand-held mirror, promises to bring out the beauty of already existing blackness with treatments that bestow a "transparent tone" as opposed to a lighter or whiter complexion (see figure 2.13). In the case of a product labeled "Egyptian Brown Face Powder" in this ad, the subversive idea of Black Egypt as the archetype of civilization at its most beautiful and advanced (an idea popularized in aesthetics, literature, and pageantry associated with the Harlem Renaissance) is adumbrated. "Egyptian Brown Face Powder," the ad copy explains, does not lighten skin; rather, it embellishes black beauty by invisibly imparting an "olive tint" to "fair complexions" and by harmonizing "bewitchingly with darker skins." This last claim, firmly establishing the beauty of blackness, is consistent with the other advertising markets that we have examined. Such assertions of racial pride speak to the interface between prior, often counterhegemonic traditions of cosmetics use in and outside the hardening conventions of Euro-American racial hierarchies and the scientific racial theories by which such conventions were subtended. In other words, in C. J. Walker ads, as in many others run in the black press, we find a politicized celebration of blackness. At the same time, it is important to note that such ads appealed to black bourgeois ideals of hygiene and deportment that were contoured by elitist, class-marked discourses of "racial uplift."

Within the white U.S. press, Modern Girl cosmetics ads often elaborated taxonomies of ethnicized whiteness. By the mid-1920s, many ads specified and celebrated an array of "beauty types" that were heavily coded according to the various racial and ethnic groups that together constituted the national populace (and thus the U.S. market) in this period. U.S. nativist and restrictionist anxieties about immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe and South and East Asia were expressed in the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth as intensified anti-immigrant animus and were assuaged through implementation of immigration-exclusion laws that reached an apex in the 1924 Immigration Act, which effectively curtailed non-European immigration to the United States for several decades.²⁸ Instructively, in the mid-1920s the Pompeian company routinely ran powder ads that implicitly invoked racially diverse consumers by

2.19 Ad in U.S. *Ladies Home Journal* (1928) for Pompeian makeup, catering expressly to white ethnics from Southern and Eastern Europe, America's so-called "in-betweens."



referring to skin types ranging from “white,” to “olive,” to “dusky.” In one particularly evocative 1928 ad, the range of acceptable ethnicities and thus ethnic “looks,” or “skin types,” spans from “Dresden China Blonde” to Spanish “Creole Beauty,” while in another Pompeian ad from the same year, recently assimilated white ethnic Americans are celebrated as those truest of Americans, the “in-betweens” (see figure 2.19).²⁹ Overall, these ads index the history of immigration to the United States through their identification of the multiple types of “American Beauty” and each beauty’s particular “shade.” In so doing they mobilize the idea of a mixed nation—but one that is mixed within precise racial and ethnic parameters. By buying facial powders and creams, these ads suggest, the immigrant to the United States—she who aspires to full inclusion in the nation—may buy a place in the “melting pot.” For although the immigrant’s skin shade and hair color may vary from the Anglo ideal, a Modern Girl may become an American among other Americans through commodity consumption. Such ads indicate to consumers which immigrant groups have gained the status of whiteness. Through occlusion or nonrepresentation of other groups they also indicate who is deemed inassimilable within the representational strategies of the advertisements as within the nation at large.

Significantly, Pompeian twisted its ethnicized advertising formula when mar-

keting its powder to Indian and South African consumers. In these contexts, corporate advertisers appealed to color diversity among whites without any reference to “ethnic” differences. In a 1925 issue of the *Statesman* (Calcutta), Pompeian ran an ad featuring Judy, a white brunette Modern Girl. The ad did not disclose the company’s Cleveland, Ohio, base; rather, it cast Judy as possessing the characteristics of a British colonial, since, astoundingly, readers are told that she was “sent out to India to have a good time” and to obtain the skin color of “fair ‘English peach’ Bloom.” Like the Pompeian ads that appeared in the U.S. press in the same year, this one delineates a range of beauty types, “Naturelle,” “Rachel,” “White,” and “Rosée,” while dropping any mention of “in-betweens.” Nearly identical beauty types appeared in a 1925 Pompeian ad that ran in South Africa’s *Cape Times*, featuring the story of Modern Girl Dulcie Chetwynd, who was transformed from unmarried “wallflower” to “charming wife” through use of Pompeian.³⁰ Together, these ads suggest how Pompeian adjusted “beauty types” to British imperial markets by anglicizing copy, narrowing the spectrum of conceivable whiteness, and, in the case of the Indian ad, obscuring the U.S. origins of the product.

One of the most striking features of U.S. and European Modern Girl imagery from the mid-1920s onward is the embrace of tanning. From Miami to the Riviera, upper-class light-skinned Modern Girls tanned. Whereas maintenance of a fair complexion marked upper-class standing in the nineteenth century, starting in the mid-1920s, tanning became an attractive way to distinguish bourgeois and upper-class women from working-class and poor women who toiled indoors and thus wore on their faces the pallor of their confinement in factories or offices. Discussion of the “tan fad” in contemporary U.S. trade magazines like *Advertising and Selling* and *Printers’ Ink Monthly* located its origins with flappers and their enthusiasm for outdoor activities and desire for “freedom,” “color,” and “nothingness in apparel.” One marketing man described the tanning “vogue” in the following terms: “[Flappers] flocked to the beaches day after day in bathing suits as close to the ultimate zero as was permitted . . . and return[ed] to their Northern and Eastern haunts to display an expanse of deeply tanned skin that would arouse the envy of an Indian.”³¹ This quote suggests that contemporaries identified tanning as part of the Modern Girl’s panache for outdoor leisure and bodily display and reveals how her pursuit of darker skin unsettled the rigidity of racial distinctions. And at the same time, it also indicates that it was the white Modern Girl’s confidence in her racial privilege that made tanning in emulation of an “Indian” both desirable and possible.

By the end of the 1920s, some cosmetics companies in Europe, the United States, and European colonies adjusted their marketing of skin whiteners and

advertising campaigns were explicitly condoned by the National Socialist regime, but Nivea's focus on what one might call a blond "Aryan" ideal was also a response to anti-Semitic campaigns leveled against the Beiersdorf Company, which had Jews among its founders and board members (see figure 2.21). While blonds became more prevalent in cosmetics ads of the Nazi era, depictions of a range of white looks continued, including ads featuring made-up brunettes. Nazi acceptance of such images reveals that certain features of the Modern Girl, such as her tanned athletic body, were acceptable and even desirable for a racist regime, which at times defined itself explicitly in rejection of "*Girlkultur*."³³

In contrast to Nazi era ads that depicted the tanned female body as white, numerous ads in the United States in the 1930s, in the period after formal enactment of anti-immigration measures, sought to exoticize the Modern Girl's body by depicting it as "not-quite-white." In this period Hollywood joined forces with cosmetics companies such as Max Factor to more directly promote Modern Girl exoticism. Ethnicized Hollywood styles commodified dark "exotic" skin tones and tanned skin as "other" and desirable, a possibility that was precluded in the German Nivea campaign. Makeups that gave the effect of tanning, or simply of dark luxurious beauty, came to be marketed alongside lotions that claimed to enable darkening and tanning. Actresses starring in early Technicolor films were especially selected for their "exotic" skin tones, or were transformed by the studios from blonds into "exotics," a makeup effect marketed to viewers as a commodity that could be purchased and tried on for size like the clothing styles worn by actresses. Stars such as Steffi Dunn, Dolores Del Rio, Tala Birell and Anna May Wong were deemed to have the right type of "colorful beauty" and thus were natural "Technicolor types." Similarly, fair actresses such as Hedy Lamarr, Rita Hayworth, Joan Bennett and Dorothy Lamour could be transformed into dark divas to fit the bill.³⁴ After all, the studios reasoned, dark beauties allowed them to show off the advantages of the technology, just as the new film technology made the most of dark, "exotic" looks.

Given the eventual celebration of "exotic" darkness, it is not particularly surprising that the fashion for tanning also affected the marketing of skin bleaches to people of color. During the 1920s, "removing a tan" became a euphemism for bleaching in cosmetic ads run in the African American press. A Madam C. J. Walker Company ad that appeared in 1928, nine years after the death of the company's founder, partially eschews the race pride message of other C. J. Walker ads by promoting the suggestively named lightening product Tan-Off. In this ad, an athletic Modern Girl in a natural setting prevents her skin from becoming darkened by protecting it from the sun while she plays sports.³⁵ Similarly, a 1929 ad for a product named Fan Tan evokes both tanning



2.21 Ad for Nivea in *Leipziger Illustrierte Zeitung* (1936) by German Beiersdorf Company, featuring a blond, “Aryan” Modern Girl, likely to combat anti-Semitic attacks on the company.

and exoticism through discussion of lightening of dark skin. Fan Tan, the ad explains, comes in three shades: “‘Sun Tan’ is for very dark complexions and lightens them to a fashionable Sun-Brown”; “‘Ochre’ is for medium complexions . . . [and gives them] that flattering Spanish tone”; and “‘Naturelle’ is for the girl or man who wishes a creamy ivory skin” (see figure 2.22). The names and descriptions of the first two shades suggest how Fan Tan sought to situate black women’s desire for lighter skin *outside* the boundaries of the stark black/white binary held in place by Jim Crow laws by aligning the Modern Girl’s desire with an internationally trendy appreciation for tanned skin. The euphemistic evocation of tanning is also found in a 1947 ad for Whitex that appeared in the *Illustrated Weekly of India* and featured headshots of a white-looking Modern Girl. As the copy proclaimed, this skin bleach could turn “Ugly, Sun-Tanned Skin . . . Whiter in 3 minutes.” This ad targeted Indian elites by attributing dark skin to sun exposure and casting it as a temporary condition that could be remedied.³⁶ Cosmetic manufacturers and advertisers deployed the Modern Girl in promoting their racialized marketing appeals.

Conclusion

Our research on cosmetic ads and the contexts in which they appeared shows conclusively that the Modern Girl image became visible in each research locale during the 1920s and 1930s, albeit to varying degrees and in different



2.22 Ad for Fan-Tan skin lightener in *Baltimore Afro-American* (1929) offering a money-back guarantee.

forms. There is no longer any doubt that the Modern Girl was global. The Modern Girl's distinctive bobbed hair, her self-reflexivity, her presumed acquisitiveness, and the commodification of her skin, brows, teeth, body shape, and sexuality—in short the Modern Girl's technologies of self—are recognizable across contexts, whether the cosmetics ads are targeted at consumers in Johannesburg or Shanghai, New York or Bombay, Beijing or Berlin. Cosmetics companies played a central role as global mediators of Modern Girl culture and commodities: advertising budgets for cosmetics were particularly high throughout the interwar years, and cosmetics were understood as products for which needs had to be actively created.

Our analysis further suggests that in all of our research locales, Modern Girl images and cosmetics products were implicated in the production of national racial formation. Through our

method of connective comparison, we reveal the multiple ways in which ideas about skin color and race were mobilized and transformed as they were swept up in imperial and international flows. While some companies, such as Pepsodent, promoted a global image of the Modern Girl as white and American, others such as De Kama advertising in the U.S. press, or Apex in the South African press, promoted an image of the Modern Girl with aestheticized “Asian” eyes or brown skin. Still others companies, most notably Pond’s, featured drawings and photographs of Modern Girls who shared phenotypic features with the consumers being targeted. In each locale, Modern Girl images were apprehended through long-standing color-coded social hierarchies and racial formations. At the same time, Modern Girl images also contributed to the reworking of such hierarchies and formations. By the mid-twentieth century in all our research locales, discussion of desirable skin color and tone had become entangled with racialized appeals to “nature,” science, tanning, and whiteness. These appeals in turn intersected with promises of class mobility that advertisers frequently used to sell products.

Companies based in the United States clearly played an important role in globalizing these appeals. As we have indicated, a large proportion of the Modern Girl ads that we collected are for U.S.-based multinational corporate manu-

facturers. American advertisers operated with much larger ad budgets than any of their competitors, particularly in the 1920s and 1930s. U.S.-based corporations like Artra, Odorono, Pompeian, and Palmolive aggressively marketed their products by promoting a specifically “American” modernity that was supposedly rational, scientific, efficient, and desirable everywhere. The preponderance of ads for U.S.-based manufacturers also reflects the fact that U.S. capital benefited from linguistic affinities and cultural continuities in the vast imperial markets constructed through centuries of British conquest. The ads for Pompeian face powders that appeared in the Indian and South African press, for instance, suggest how British and American whiteness could easily be blended and conflated, producing an Anglo-American imperial whiteness. Other ads indicate how Americanization could take the form of African Americanization with black Americans appearing as model consumers and entrepreneurs.

In cosmetics and toiletry ads we have found that some of the most intriguing evidence of multidirectional citation — of mutual influences and nonlinear circuits of exchange — is aesthetic. In artistic renderings of the Modern Girl that appeared in the American and German press (and to a lesser degree in the Indian and South African press), we have cautiously noted an Asianized aesthetic. While we recognize that what we have labeled “Asianization” was a product of European and American designers’ conception of the “other,” we have also noted that Chinese and Japanese aesthetics influenced the representation of the Modern Girl. Conversely, we have found that drawings of the Modern Girl by Chinese illustrators are indebted to French, German, Japanese, and American artistic styles that arrived in advertising and graphic design magazines. In other words, everywhere representations of the Modern Girl can be seen to have actively incorporated aesthetic elements drawn from *multiple* colonial and national contexts.

Research in other sources including press commentary, social science research, fiction, film, photography, and autobiography suggests that what we are calling the Modern Girl’s multidirectional citation extended far beyond the realm of advertising. It also involved other discourses, texts, and venues and, as importantly, historical agents living in different parts of the world. Indeed, our research shows that actual Modern Girls traveled within and across colonial and national boundaries. They engaged the latest trends from abroad as they encountered them in magazines, newspapers, and films, and they journeyed or even worked outside their home colonies and countries. The chapters that follow further clarify how the Modern Girl’s political significance differed across locales and over time. Although the Modern Girl’s provocative fashions and explicit eroticism appear to have animated similar social anxieties about un-

ruly and frivolous behavior across the globe, in each location the political import of these anxieties varied. In some instances the Modern Girl challenged preexisting ideologies of female subservience and self-sacrifice. In others, her desire to select her own sexual partners (male and female) and to delay or avoid marriage transgressed and reworked modern heteronormativity.

Overall, our research has led us to one conclusion above all others: the Modern Girl, perhaps like no other figure of the twentieth century, reveals the complexity of global economic and cultural processes.

Notes

All authors contributed equally to this chapter.

1. Foucault, "Technologies of the Self," 18.
2. See Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity*; Woodward, "Marketing Modernity"; Peiss, "Educating the Eye of the Beholder."
3. Kathy Peiss and Davarian Baldwin show that black beauty products were also sometimes marketed to white ethnics, especially in the Jewish press. For the purposes of this chapter, however, we have focused on the white and black press only. See Peiss, *Hope in a Jar*, and Baldwin, "Chicago's New Negroes."
4. In the mid-nineteenth century, "coloured" became a common racial designation used to refer to the descendants of mixed marriages and sexual liaisons between Europeans, African peoples indigenous to the Cape region, and enslaved peoples brought from Southeast Asia, South Africa, Madagascar, West Africa, East Africa, and elsewhere during the Dutch colonial period. After 1948, South Africa's apartheid regime deployed "coloured" along with white/European, Bantu/African, and Asian as one of its four racial categories. Beginning in the 1970s, Black Consciousness and some other progressive movements rejected these categories, arguing that all people of color should identify as black.
5. For this chapter, we draw on the pan-Indian English-language press. However, we know from preliminary research and discussion with feminist scholars familiar with popular magazine and newspaper archives in Marathi, Hindi, and Telugu that commodity advertising in these languages varies in its deployment of both "modern" and "traditional" imagery of women.
6. German Pond's ad, Microfilm Collection, reel 41, J. Walter Thompson Collection, Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University.
7. Ad for Pond's, *Bantu Mirror*, 1955.
8. See especially Roberts, *Civilization without Sexes*; Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream*; and Brumberg, *The Body Project*.
9. On the United States, see Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream*, 140–63; for Germany, see Ward, *Weimar Surfaces*, 81–91.
10. See Steele and Major, eds., *China Chic*; Laurence, *Lily Briscoe's Chinese Eyes*; Yoshi-

- hara, *Embracing the East*; Lee, *Orientalism*; Meech and Weisberg, eds., *Japonisme Comes to America*.
11. See works cited in note 8 as well as Glenn, *Female Spectacle*; Petro, *Joyless Streets*; Enstad, *Ladies of Labor, Girls of Adventure*; and Stamp, *Movie-Struck Girls*; Bean and Negra, eds., *A Feminist Reader in Early Cinema*; and Zhang, *An Amorous History of the Silver Screen*.
 12. Peiss, *Hope in a Jar*, 39–43; Berry, “Hollywood Exoticism,” 109.
 13. For toiletry ads in the United Kingdom, see Richards, *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England*; McClintock, *Imperial Leather*; for Germany, see Ciarlo, “Rasse konsumieren.” For the German example of *Lilienmilchseife*, see Hinz, Patemann, and Meier, eds., *Weiss auf Schwarz*, 57.
 14. See ad for Elizabeth Arden Bleachine Cream, *South China Morning Post*, 1937.
 15. Arnold, *The Problem of Nature*, 143.
 16. For example, see Xueqin and Gao, *Dream of the Red Chamber*, 38, and *The Book of Songs*, 21 and 48.
 17. Sumit Guha, “Skin Color Preferences in South Asia,” E-post from Friday, 22 March 2002, at <http://www.h-net.org/asia/> (visited 25 February 2005).
 18. Bayly, *Caste, Society and Politics in India from the Eighteenth Century to the Modern Age*, 104.
 19. Guha, “Skin Color Preferences in South Asia.”
 20. See Harrison, *Climates and Constitutions*.
 21. Three Flowers Vanishing Cream ad, *Funü zazhi (Ladies’ Journal)*, 1931.
 22. Keppels ad, *Cape Times*, 1945.
 23. Comaroff, “Medicine, Colonialism, and the Black Body”; Burke, *Lifebuoy Men, Lux Women*, esp. chaps. 1–2.
 24. Schapera, *Married Life in an African Tribe*, 46; Hunter, *Reaction to Conquest*, 222.
 25. Peiss, *Hope in a Jar*, 92; Apex ad, *Bantu World*, 7 July 1934.
 26. On the long and varied history of African Americans serving as potential role models and mentors for black South Africans, see Couzens, “Moralizing Leisure Time”; Erlmann, “A Feeling of Prejudice”; Campbell, *Songs of Zion*; Kemp, “‘Up from Slavery’ and Other Narratives.”
 27. On Madam C. J. Walker, see Robinson, “Class, Race, and Gender”; Rooks, *Hair Raising*, esp. chap. 3; Bundles, *On Her Own Ground*; Peiss, *Hope in a Jar*, 108–14 and 203–37; and Baldwin’s chapter in this volume.
 28. Jacobsen, *Whiteness of a Different Color*.
 29. Pompeian ad, *Ladies Home Journal*, 1928.
 30. Pompeian Beauty Powder ads, *Statesman*, 10 April 1925, and *Cape Times*, 4 November 1925.
 31. Quote from Cowling, “Will the Vogue for Tan Last?,” 31. Also see Du Bois, “What Is Sun-Tan Doing to Cosmetics?,” 19–20, 62, and 64; Du Bois, “The Sun-Tan Mode Arrives,” 28, 76, 78, and 80; and Berry, “Hollywood Exoticism,” 117.
 32. *Leipziger Illustrirte*, 5 May 1927, 644.

33. On Nivea and the Nazis, see Gries, *Produkte als Medien*, 467–86. More generally on contradictory Nazi attitudes, see Guenther, *Nazi Chic?*; Herzog, *Sex After Fascism*.
34. Berry, “Hollywood Exoticism,” 119–26.
35. Tan-Off ad, *Baltimore Afro-American*, 1928. During the 1920s and 1930s, Tan-Off was, in some markets, the Walker Company’s bestseller. Peiss, *Hope in a Jar*, 113.
36. Whitex ad, *Illustrated Weekly of India*, 1947.