

“Advertising would never again have it so plush”: The Therapeutic Ethos and Advertising in *Good Housekeeping*, 1920–1929

Erin Crawley

Erin Crawley, of Morton, Illinois, who earned her BA in History and BM in Vocal Performance at Illinois Wesleyan University, is currently a graduate student in History at Eastern Illinois University. A member of Phi Alpha Theta, she wrote this paper for Dr. Lynne Curry in *History 5350, Twentieth Century American Cultural and Social History*, in the fall of 2007.

Lizabeth Cohen’s provocative book, *A Consumers’ Republic*, begins with an assessment of what she labels the “first-wave consumer movement.” Reaching its height in the 1910s, this movement coincides with the Progressive era reform efforts of middle-class women, working for protections against false advertising and harmful products in an increasingly consumer-oriented America.¹ The birth of the “second-wave consumer movement” correlates with the response to the Depression and New Deal in the 1930s when women once again took up the cause of product and consumer safety, lobbying the national government and proclaiming their rights as citizen-consumers. Established at this point as the main consumers in America, women had the confidence necessary to evaluate the national economy.² Largely annoyed with this trend, businessmen struggled to pull women back into their domestic roles, while at the same time halting the passing of limiting government legislation. Businessmen and advertisers favored the idea of a purchaser-consumer – women who supported the United States economy by buying mass produced goods.³

But what of the 1920s? Cohen treats the middle decade of her formula almost as an anomaly. Surrounded by advocates of consumer rights and the efforts of confident women, the 1920s of her account seem rather perplexing at first. She holds that government action was minimal at this point, and advertising men had complete control over how they wished to treat the consumer. Business dominated the upper echelons of society, full of persons who could afford just about anything, and “few Americans during these years considered consumers a self-conscious, identifiable interest group....”⁴ She leaves her study at this, proposing no full reasons as to why the 1920s existed in such a free-wheeling, advertising-heavy state.

Other authors, however, have taken up this issue in great detail. There are those who hold that businessmen in this particular decade were extremely tenacious, manipulative, and aggressive in their control of

advertising. There are others who give advertisers a gentler appearance, granting them the collective role of the sage who wanted to guide consumers, especially women, through the changes taking place in a complex, modern, and mainly urban setting. Either way, it is obvious that the 1920s was a decade apart from the years enveloping it. Women who had previously enjoyed a sense of community in group-work settings were largely confined to their homes, constructing their identities not in correlation to other women, but instead through their roles as homebound, lonely women working in isolation. Given these changing circumstances, women, although in control of their family economies, were untiringly targeted by advertisers who saw opportunities – vicious or noble? – for control and enjoyed great success as they wheedled their way into the daily lives of women consumers. Through an examination of this exchange between the woman consumer and the advertiser, and supported by a case study of advertisements in *Good Housekeeping* magazine, this paper will show how advertising from 1920 to 1929 paradoxically offered more desires, luxuries, and choices in products but increasingly sapped women of their agency as consumers.

Stuart Ewen was one of the earliest historians to address the enigma of the twenties. In his 1979 book *Captains of Consciousness*, Ewen attributes the rise of modern advertising to a “direct response to the needs of mass industrial capitalism,” which exploded in the 1920s.⁵ By his estimate, advertising became the most important force of modernization. Instead of allowing this force to remain in the hands of the people, businesses snatched up advertising as a smart investment, and as a control over the people they wished to persuade into buying mass-produced goods on a large scale.⁶ The key to his assessment, then, is the idea of control – over and over again he talks about consumers as if they were peons to which the advertisers condescended, assuming “an expansionist and manipulative approach to the problem of popular consciousness.”⁷ The consumers of the 1920s, in his study, are passive, indolent, and largely irrational.

This work also makes a contribution to the study of women consumers in particular, suggesting that advertisers grafted women onto new roles in their homes. The domesticity remained, but women were now expected to treat their housework more in keeping with the factory mindset of the era. Housework became increasingly scientific, structured, and isolationist, pushed along by increasingly advanced, modern, and technological additions to the home. This in turn led to a sense of alienation from their work as women realized that although consumer technology might make their chores easier, work was no longer instilled

¹ Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers’ Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (NY: Vintage Books, 2003), 21.

² *Ibid.*, 34.

³ *Ibid.*, 56-57.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁵ Stuart Ewen, *Captains of Consciousness: Advertising and the Social Roots of the Consumer Culture* (NY: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1979), 31.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 32-33.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 81.

with the community values inherent to the nineteenth century.⁸ This viewpoint also supposes that women lost some of the public identity they had gained through Progressive era reforms in the 1910s and had not yet rediscovered the world of advocacy and consumer rights that would foment in the 1930s.

However, Ewen only hints at the idea that the American public was unsettled by these quick and complex changes happening in society. In fact, in the beginning of his essay “From Salvation to Self-Realization,” T. J. Jackson Lears finds fault with Ewen for his failure to “[grasp] the complex relationship between power relations and changes in values – or between advertisers’ changing strategies and the cultural confusion at the turn of the century.”⁹ In order to correct this shortcoming, Lears turns to what he coins as the “therapeutic ethos,” discussing the ethos first as a means to finding identity and freedom and secondly as a concept behind many of the advertising techniques in the early twentieth century.¹⁰

First he discusses how in a shifting society, reassigning gender roles, job structures, and corporate mobility, Americans easily lost sight of their previous realities. Industry and life in an increasingly urban setting led people to feel that they were floating along in a fast-paced current, and many of the city-dwellers sought advice from doctors and psychologists. As a result, “neurasthenia” emerged as a curse to the middle and upper-middle class elites at the end of the nineteenth century, and continued well into the twentieth. Given attributes such as depression and causing such feelings as rootlessness, neurasthenia became the buzz word voiced when people complained of a lack of autonomy and meaning in their work. The doctors and psychologists began to proscribe rest cures and “abundance therapy” in order to coax these nervous Americans into a false sense of identity, coalescing around consumerism. If real life was no longer providing identity, then a new reality was the cure – one based on desire, luxury, and purchased goods.¹¹

As the therapeutic ethos endorsed “growth and process as ends in themselves,” Lears finds it hardly surprising that advertising agencies picked up on the psychological aspects of the ethos and implanted those into their campaigns, packaging, and advertising art.¹² Advertisers subtly began the switch from presenting text full of information to text that invoked emotion and attracted attention. Advertising became a visual environment in which masses of people were triggered to particular feelings carefully researched by psychologists working for ad agencies.

⁸ Ibid., 164.

⁹ T. J. Jackson Lears, “From Salvation to Self-Realization: Advertising and the Therapeutic Roots of the Consumer Culture, 1880-1930,” in *The Culture of Consumption: Critical Essays in American History, 1880-1980*, ed. Richard Wightman Fox and T. J. Jackson Lears (NY: Patheon Books, 1983), 3.

¹⁰ Ibid., 5.

¹¹ Ibid., 7-12. Quotation from p. 12.

¹² Ibid., 16.

Gradually, advertising came to define what was socially acceptable and unacceptable, as well as how men and women were supposed to act in each others’ company, and in their respective roles. It also placed a heightened sense of importance on youth and revitalization. And although Lears is cautious in placing too much emphasis on the victimization of women in this advertising-driven society, he does allow that consumerism centered on the fact that women were the leading purchasers and the idea that women were completely irrational and easily duped by sentiment.¹³

Despite the fact that Lears began with a brief critique of Ewen, he obviously does not disagree with all of his work. For example, in 1994, Lears published *Fables of Abundance* in which he pursued a new ethos more in keeping with Ewen’s assertion that advertisers wanted control over social norms. Lears’ new concept is that of the “ethos of management.” He proposes that by using “market research, advertisers pioneered the statistical surveillance of public life, a practice that would become central to the maintenance of managerial cultural hegemony.”¹⁴ Therefore, although advertisers would use their role as managers to assuage anxiety, Lears still places them in a much more problematic position than had his previous work by asserting that they cared little for morals and tradition in the wake of fast-paced business and city life.¹⁵ He calls advertising, on the whole, a condescending practice in which the assumed manipulability of the mass audience was a commonplace by the 1920s.¹⁶

Philip Cushman pushes this idea further in his work *Constructing the Self, Constructing America*. He argues that Freud’s theory of the unconscious had much to do with this transition into American consumerism – a fair assessment since it was Freud’s nephew, Edward Bernays, who became one of the driving forces behind psychologically manipulative ad campaigns. As a population constantly battling the “disparities between image and reality” Americans were particularly receptive to Freud’s concept of the unconscious.¹⁷ No longer was the weightlessness of Americans’ lives their responsibility – forces beyond their conscious control pushed along their whims and impulses, the fragmentation of the self. This realization was not necessarily a dangerous one to make, and Freud sincerely hoped that this theory and the knowledge with which it came might help Americans adjust to their rapidly changing surroundings in a healthy, whole manner. But in 1909, the year of Freud’s Clark University lectures, America had already given

¹³ Ibid., 18-26.

¹⁴ Jackson Lears, *Fables of Abundance: A Cultural History of Advertising in America* (NY: Basic Books, 1994), 138.

¹⁵ Ibid., 160.

¹⁶ Ibid., 230.

¹⁷ Philip Cushman, *Constructing the Self, Constructing America: A Cultural History of Psychotherapy*, (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1995), 144.

way to business as the leading social influence in society. In the hands of businessmen and savvy psychologists, “the unconscious became a vehicle for the single most important cultural dynamic of the twentieth century: the consumerization of American life.”¹⁸ The leaders in American business latched on to the idea of the therapeutic ethos, resituating the idea outside the realm of psychological treatment and in firmly in the burgeoning world of advertising and consumption. By the 1920s, advertising dictated consumer behavior, assuring producers that for as many products as they could promote, there would be a willing, gullible buyer.¹⁹

Gary Cross returns to a much gentler analysis of advertisers in the 1920s in his book *An All Consuming Century*. Like Lears and Cushman, Cross hints at the manipulative skill of advertisers; however, he holds that their manipulation was well-meant, intended to help people in “substituting consumer aspirations for producer dreams.”²⁰ Commodities, he explains, “became innovative and often creative building blocks for the construction of different identities and new communities when the old ones were in decline.”²¹ He goes on to describe the way that purchasing consumer goods gave Americans, and especially women, a sense of liberation and identity in an ambiguous society. Yes, there were still economic strata in America, but consumers grew to enjoy immersing themselves in advertisements targeted at high class elites while dreaming of riches, luxury, and desires.

Tied to this theme is the idea of the democratization of goods. If consumers could not find the means to emulate the rich, then at least they could take comfort in the fact that all members of American society, even the elite members, used products like Ponds Cold Cream or Listerine – the advertisements themselves exclaimed so each time they promoted one particular brand over another.²² Cross also holds, in opposition to Lears’ later work, that advertisers took it upon themselves to provide the link between old and new values by coupling consumption of mass-produced goods with advertisements that spoke to consumers personally about their individual, personal needs.²³ Advertisers eased consumers from the old to the new by explaining technology and praising the leisure time which it would grant to those who embraced electricity, automobiles, and packaged or canned goods.

These previous concepts tie into Lears’ earlier work on the therapeutic ethos. It is fair to say that of all the theories presented by the authors attempting to make sense of the twisting complexities of the

climb to 1920s consumerism, the therapeutic ethos is the most convincing. As a theory it combines many elements of psychology, economics, and cultural history into a multi-dimensional approach to changing societal functions, and as a practice, it is obvious in the mindsets of advertisers and in the illustrations and copy of advertisements. Therefore, the remainder of the paper will center on providing evidence of the prevalence of Lears’ postulated ethos in advertising. For example, the paper will address where advertisers were the most successful in their use of this concept, how exactly ad men hooked their readers, and what the advertising agencies’ preferred artistic and psychological techniques were.

Good Housekeeping is the ideal magazine for this study because of its remarkably structured focus – its founder Clark W. Bryan intended it to be a journal dedicated to the home, and since 1885 it has remained so. It also came onto the market at a higher price than other women’s magazines, therefore attracting a middle- and upper-middle class readership. In fact, its full title when it first appeared was *Good Housekeeping: A Family Journal Conducted in the Interests of the Higher Life of the Household*.²⁴ It was also well known for attracting columns and editorials written by the readers themselves, a link that advertisers later found enticing when deciding which magazines were likely to attract invested readers. After a brief drop in price and overall page length, probably due to Bryan’s illness and eventual suicide in 1898, the journal changed hands a number of times. John Pettigrew purchased the journal, but sold it to E. H. Phelps, the head of the Phelps Publishing Company, in 1900. Phelps brought the magazine back to life and then in 1911 sold it to William Randolph Hearst, who saw the great potentialities of the magazine and centered publication in New York amid the height of urban life.²⁵ By the 1920s, the magazine expanded to more than 250 pages, chalk full of color illustrations, advertisements, and literature from well-known authors.²⁶

One of the attributes Hearst admired was the commitment previous owners of the magazine made to product testing and closely monitored advertising. The Good Housekeeping Institute, instated by 1909, assured not only safety in advertising, but also another assurance that readers watched the advertising content carefully. Even so, by the early 1930s, *Good Housekeeping* had to print retractions of a number of advertisements along with apologies for letting particularly unsafe products claim page space.²⁷ The Institute also printed lists of stores that supported the same

¹⁸ Ibid., 143.

¹⁹ Ibid., 154.

²⁰ Gary Cross, *An All-Consuming Century: Why Commercialism Won in Modern America* (NY: Columbia University Press, 2000), 19.

²¹ Ibid., 18.

²² Ibid., 22-23.

²³ Ibid., 24.

²⁴ Frank Luther Mott, *A History of American Magazines*, Vol. V, *Sketches of 21 Magazines, 1905-1930* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968), 126.

²⁵ Mary Ellen Zuckerman, *A History of Popular Women’s Magazines in the United States, 1792-1995* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1998), 12-13.

²⁶ Mott, *A History of American Magazines*, 136.

²⁷ Ibid., 171-172.

products displayed in the magazine, creating small communities of women consumers who prided themselves on their discerning taste.²⁸

Still the view advertisers took toward their readership was not always deferential and approving, and historian Mary Ellen Zuckerman includes one particularly telling quotation in her discussion:

Many traditional notions and stereotypes about the female sex came into play. Advertisers felt that women preferred little complexity or technicality; they followed commands and directions more easily than men. Appeals needed to be directed to women's feelings, not their intellects. Illustrations worked especially well. Ill-informed, emotional, and suggestible, females also paid more attention to advertisements....²⁹

Although not the most enlightened view, it does provide good evidence as to why most advertising dollars went to expenditures on women's magazines. In 1927, for instance, women's magazines attracted "almost 72 percent of magazine advertising for soap and housekeeping supplies, over 70 percent for food and food beverages, over 48 percent for drug and toilet goods, and over 45 percent of all clothing and dry goods."³⁰ In fact, as the 1920s unfolded, the editors found that advertisements often eclipsed the literature, artwork, and editorial sections of most women's magazines. Editors started increasing page size to include more advertisements. They also grew to depend less on subscription money for revenue than they did contracts from enterprising ad agencies.³¹ By the 1920s it was a well established fact in the advertising business that women were by far the most easily targeted consumers, and the editors of magazines like *Good Housekeeping* took great advantage of that fact when planning their budgets and anticipating their revenue.

Advertisers also took advantage of that fact when planning their copy and illustrations. Gary Cross asserts that by 1931, advertising made up fifty to sixty percent of the content of magazines targeting women. By his assessment, advertisements invoking youth, beauty, and pleasure were the most common, but in magazines like *Good Housekeeping*, ads also exalted innovations in home appliances, increasingly strengthening the homebound state of women tied to domestic roles.³² Although Cross is

²⁸ Ibid., 63.

²⁹ Ibid., 67.

³⁰ Ibid., 160.

³¹ John Tebbel and Mary Ellen Zuckerman, *The Magazine in America, 1741-1990* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1991), 146.

³² Cross, 45-46.

relatively judicious when describing the role of advertisers, other authors such as Joel Spring are less so.

Spring tends to find that whenever women tried to assert some sort of liberation in the 1920s, it was co-opted by eager and greedy advertisers. For example, domestic scientists sang the praises of new technology that would give women more leisure time – time which these highly educated women assumed would be spent in service roles and women's reforms. Advertisers, however, as the other modernizers, took this leisure time and linked it to the therapeutic ethos suggesting vacations, shopping sprees, and of course luxurious usage of every product advertised.³³ In another example, Spring shows how cosmetics were introduced as a way for the new woman to assert herself sexually, independently, and outside of a domestic role. Once again, advertising caught the new trend and capitalized on women's sexuality in a condescending manner.³⁴ He agrees with Lears that "advertisements did more than stir up desire, they also sought to manage it – to stabilize the sorcery of the marketplace by containing dreams of personal transformation within the broader rhetoric of control."³⁵

Equally as scathing, although perhaps with good reason, is Jennifer Scanlon in her book *Inarticulate Longings*. Attacking a one sided standard in advertising, she holds that the "female, middle class, and white" definition of unity was exclusive and insulting.³⁶ Furthermore, she finds that grouping women together by shared experiences with a particular brand of soap is a rather hallow way in which to build a community. Although perhaps briefly providing some sort of therapeutic release, she finds in general that the change "from concentrating on the product to concentrating on the user, created not only artificial needs for new products but also artificial relationships among women and artificial definitions of womanhood."³⁷ Admittedly, women did choose to embrace many of the mass-produced goods of the 1920s, but to what extent that was their choice, she is unsure.³⁸

In spite of recent contributions to the debate on the role of advertisers, the generally accepted expert on the topic is Roland Marchand whose 1985 book *Advertising the American Dream* is still considered the best work on historical advertising. A strong advocate for the importance of the therapeutic ethos in advertising, he holds that ad men in the 1920s did not see themselves in a negatively controlling role;

³³ Joel Spring, *Educating the Consumer Citizen: A History of the Marriage of Schools, Advertising, and Media* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., 2003), 38-39.

³⁴ Ibid., 44-45.

³⁵ Lears, *Fables of Abundance*, 10.

³⁶ Jennifer Scanlon, *Inarticulate Longings: The Ladies Home Journal, Gender, and the Promises of Consumer Culture* (NY: Routledge, 1995), 198.

³⁷ Ibid., 219.

³⁸ Ibid., 9.

they saw themselves as “apostles of modernity,” explaining technology to their public, helping city dwellers adjust to the pace of modern, hectic life, aiding producers as they tried to sell their surplus of goods, letting women know that relaxation, beautification, and leisure time were precious commodities, not wasteful luxuries.³⁹ Despite their attention to the emotions of the consumer, advertisers generally felt that the contributions they made to society were economically pragmatic, encouraging flexibility, merchandizing, and a whole new professional business in the realm of advertising.⁴⁰

In his balanced account, Marchand does cover some of the negatives of the advertising profession, but overall asserts that at the outset advertisers could not always see the negative side of their practices. For example, Americans always appreciated advances in technology, so when advertisers began touting ready-made clothes and quickly changing styles, they did not see themselves as creating obsolescence in clothing, just offering more choices in the American way.⁴¹ They rationalized their role in the consumer ethic by establishing their prominence as givers of advice, accepting human irrationalities with a smile, and helping people work through their anxieties by offering reassurance. The goods they advertised were often unnecessary and frivolous, but advertisers overwhelmingly thought that Americans needed them in order to survive in an uprooted society.⁴²

So how, then, did advertisers promote the selling of luxuries in a society fresh from the Protestant work ethic, unnerved by industry and distrustful of change? Their techniques changed throughout the 1920s nearly as much as the brands of products did. They began by promoting the idea of “human-interest,” which by the mid twenties was a commonplace in advertising. Whereas before the turn of the century advertising was meant to simply provide information, at this point appeals to human emotion helped consumers adapt to technological society.⁴³ An article from *Printers’ Ink* asked its business-like readers in 1920, “Where Does Sentiment Belong in Advertising?” The answer was that sentiment belongs absolutely everywhere. The author of this particular article called for advertisers, above all, to humanize their copy.⁴⁴ Another author, Marion Hertha Clarke, penned “From One Woman to Another” in 1925. In this article she too exalted emotion, claiming that a “woman is first a dreamer, visionary and deeply romantic.”

³⁹ Roland Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity, 1920-1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 1-2.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 156.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 160.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 10-12.

⁴⁴ W. Livingston Larned. “Where Does Sentiment Belong in Advertising?: Heart-Interest Copy That Has Put Over Some Difficult Campaigns,” *Printers’ Ink* (January 8, 1920), 193.

She went on to suggest methods of marketing. For example, when selling vacuums, she suggests that advertisers “sell dreams of leisure hours, of rest, of happy, contented homes and simplified housework.”⁴⁵

As the 1920s progressed, Marchand proposes that advertisers noticed consumers, and especially women, adapting well to their society. As women grew more comfortable, advertisers found they needed to create a new kind of ad that would remind their public of the imperative necessity of buying commodities. Their creation was “scare copy” – advertising which “sought to jolt the potential consumer into a new consciousness by enacting dramatic episodes of social failures and accusing judgments.” This technique was particularly useful at mid-decade, but continued into the later years as well. An article titled “Negative Advertising Decidedly in the Ascendancy” in *Printers’ Ink* from 1926 exclaims that although scare copy is increasingly more subtle, it is still one of the preferred methods of advertisers. This anonymous author seems to think that readers are in fact quite grateful when they are faced with their faults:

Instead of being frightened into buying, the prospect is shamed and ridiculed. An appeal is made to his pride. He is told what is wrong with him. He is informed that he is unpopular and unsuccessful and is frankly told why. As a rule, this information is imparted to the prospect so indirectly, through suggestion and insinuation, that he does not take much offense.⁴⁶

Scare copy is generally, and famously, identified with the 1920s Listerine advertisement. Fashioned by the Lambert Pharmaceutical Company, the new Listerine copy claimed that those who did not use Listerine would suffer from “halitosis” or bad breath, which in turn would ruin romances, chances at jobs, and happiness in general. And if that was not enough, they also proclaimed that even the most wary consumer would not notice this problem...they would have to be told by judgmental acquaintances. Therefore, why wait to be embarrassed when Listerine could solve all your social inadequacies?⁴⁷ Listerine advertisers also promoted the use of mirrors in their illustrations, a long standing cliché among promoters of beauty products, meant to signify leering “friends,” judgmental husbands, and the eyes of cautious lovers.⁴⁸ (Fig. 1)

⁴⁵ Marion Hertha Clarke, “From One Woman to Another – Ament Copy: Ruth Leigh Is Taken to Task for Stigmatizing Certain Copy as Being Over-Feminized,” *Printers’ Ink* (January 1, 1925), 57.

⁴⁶ Anon. “Negative Advertising Decided in the Ascendancy: But It Is Still More Subtle Than the Scare Copy of Ten Years Ago,” *Printers’ Ink* (February 4, 1926), 137.

⁴⁷ Marchand., 18-19.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 175.

Other sorts of scare copy threatened personal harm, as in the *Good Housekeeping* advertisements for Fairy Soap. The top of one particular ad shows a human hand whose finger has been tied off by a string, rendering free circulation impossible. If the swelled fingertip is not frightening enough, the copy then proceeds to tell readers, “Close the pores of your skin and they cease to breathe. Then your body suffers and your health falls below par.” In other words, failure to use Fairy Soap will result in failing health and terrible circulation. Inherent in this sort of advertisement is the accusation that were a reader of *Good Housekeeping* to become ill from lack of Fairy Soap, she would have no one to blame but herself. (Fig. 2)

Other advertisements for soap products were gentler, linking themselves to youth and revitalization. For example, a 1924 advertisement for Lifebuoy soap not only comes at the recommendation of a doctor, but also centers its copy directly on the idea of keeping beauty fresh throughout motherhood. Because of its readership base, *Good Housekeeping* carried many ads that spoke to mothers, but at the same time the magazine also wanted to make sure that every reader felt entitled to beauty and luxury, regardless of how many children made demands on her time. In fact, many ads in *Good Housekeeping* include maids in the illustrations, further attesting to ideals of personal freedom and luxury through the use of hired help. This particular ad, although without a maid, shows a forty-year-old woman with golf club in hand dreaming about a fancy soiree while sweeping hair back from her face. At the other corner of the advertisement is the older conception of motherhood – a Victorian woman dressed in black and content with her sewing. The ad leaves readers with the choice of which persona they might wish to adopt. (Fig. 3)

Marchand also speaks to the importance of testimonials in therapeutic copy. Women in particular wanted to know that their desires were not impersonal, or better yet, were glamorous. Advertisers found that by offering advice that seemed to come from caring professionals, they could help women become comfortable with their longing to feel young, healthful, and beautiful.⁴⁹ For example, in 1924 *Good Housekeeping* carried a line of ads called “An Interview with Mrs. O.H.P. Belmont on the care of the skin.” (Fig. 4) This advertisement for Pond’s Cold Cream is conversational in approach, speaking directly to women in an attempt to personalize the message. This particular ad is also constructed to appear exactly like an editorial section in the magazine would look. Two small illustrations decorate three columns of copy, and the product name is not emblazoned across the top as it is in most ads, but only subtly mentioned in the text. Marchand holds that this innovation in copy was

⁴⁹ Ibid., 14.

even more significant than the highly popular scare copy.⁵⁰ Later Ponds advertisements would combine the editorial approach with market research, responding to personal letters and answering anxious questions.

Jennifer Scanlon covers a different sort of testimonial ad also employed by the Ponds Cold Cream Company. In the same years that the company ran editorial like ads, they also ran flowery endorsements from rich and famous figures in continental Europe. (Fig. 5). The endorsement included in this paper is that of Princesse Marie de Bourbon of Spain, but others included Queen Marie of Romania, and the American equivalent, Mrs. Reginald Vanderbilt. The ads were highly successful for a long while, pandering to women’s desires to emulate the rich and dream of luxury. However, the endorsement ads ran into 1927, at which point most testimonials came not from the elite, but rather from other mothers, neighbors, and college women. In that context, a testimonial from Marie de Bourbon simply seemed ludicrous – women were no longer convinced that a “Princesse” would condescend to use the same hand cream as a housewife used in the United States.⁵¹

After mid-decade, Marchand notes that advertisements began to emulate any trend that proved itself particularly important to popular culture – especially tabloid articles and moving pictures.⁵² Keeping with the new attention to “real” figures, rather than queens, *Good Housekeeping* published a series of ads for Hoover vacuum cleaners in 1926 naming the sad looking woman with a broom in each advertisement as “THE MARTYR.” (Fig. 6) With its bold type and tragic figure, the ad calls up images of tabloid press stories, but in the actual text below the picture, the advertising copy simply notes that brooms are obsolete and in order to modernize, women should own a Hoover vacuum cleaner. In spite of the tabloid image, then, advertisers remained true to their roles as “apostles of modernity” easing readers from the old into the new. A Dodge Brother advertisement from the same year shows the importance of movies to a consumer’s imagination. (Fig. 7) In this advertisement, a damsel in distress bewails her state of being in front of a Dodge Brothers special Type-A Sedan, while an eager director shouts to her and the film rolls. The car is relegated to the background along with a host of stereotypical western characters.

The therapeutic ethos was also invoked to help consumers adjust to the way that individual personalities were shaped into commodities on a daily basis. Businessmen had to sell themselves at work, and the “first impression” grew to have a particular importance. Advertisers capitalized on this trend, and twisted it around to turn the first impression into what Marchand calls an advertising “parable.”⁵³ *Good Housekeeping* had no

⁵⁰ Ibid., 103.

⁵¹ Marchand, 14; Scanlon, 217.

⁵² Marchand, 56.

⁵³ Ibid., 208-209.

qualms in using this particular parable to sell beauty products to women, and an ad from 1927 provides the perfect example. (Fig. 8) In this advertisement, a young man offers a beautiful, smiling woman his umbrella as shelter from a downpour. The text of the ad asks the reader, "When beauty depends solely on your SMILE...What then?" An advertisement for Dr. West's tooth brush, the message of the ad is obviously that daily brushing with this product allows a woman to make a dazzling first impression, giving her a natural, highly appreciated beauty as well as sex appeal. Without Dr. West, this unfortunate young woman would have been left cowering under a newspaper in the cold rain.

One final trend in advertising which Marchand discusses at length is that of intriguing, modern, emotional art in illustrations. Beginning in 1926, advertisers noticed how well women responded to illustrations based on their "emotional impulses" and only later rationalized their purchasing decisions. Therefore, many ads started to move away from editorial copy and toward the inclusion of a single, modern picture which belied elite style and taste. For example a *Good Housekeeping* ad from 1926 relies on the beautiful, elongated figure of a stylish woman to sell a Cadillac. (Fig 9) Her pose and expression completely overshadow the background tableau of a car driving through the city in the evening, and when combined, the two images express themes that were commonplace by the end of the decade. First of all, style is more important in this ad than function, secondly the motion of the car in the background calls up feelings of the fast-paced city life well known to urban readers, and finally, the importance of modern art over text allows the reader to move past the advertisement and fall directly into daydreams of slicked hair, mink stoles, and luxury cars.

Another example from 1928 shows the continued importance of art in advertising. (Fig. 10) In this case the advertisement for Armand Cold Cream Powder derives its modern aspect from the simple black and white, clean-lined drawing. However, the intrigue of the illustration is not so much in its two-dimensional aspect as it is in the fact that this supremely modern woman casts the shadow of an eighteenth century, genteel French courtier. Appealing to the exotic, foreign side of the cosmetic industry, this illustration, like the Cadillac advertisement, also allows the reader to fall into a reverie. As the decade ended, *Good Housekeeping* relied on the use of color advertisements to promote the stylish qualities of their products, adding yet another element to their already flashy advertisements.

By the 1930s, advertising styles were changing once again. A tongue-in-cheek assessment of advertising by Tubal Kane in 1930 lists a number of changes he sees as necessary in the guise of "New Year Resolutions of a Reflective Advertiser." He vows to be more specific in his ads, center more on the product and less on the user, and do away with scare copy entirely. Obviously, he appreciates the intelligence of his

audience more than did advertisers in the 1920s.⁵⁴ Perhaps this is evidence of a change back to consumer advocacy and the consumer-citizen of Cohen's 1930s. However, what it actually asserts is that the woman consumer lacked agency in the previous decade. She was hammered by scare copy, and advertisers continually belittled her intelligence by stereotyping her as an irrational, incompetent figure duped by pseudo-scientific appeals and pretty art.

How much this stereotype affected women consumers is a question asked by most scholars of consumerism in this era, regardless of how they view the therapeutic ethos or advertisers. There are plenty of sources of evidence, but for now, the 1920s remain just as Cohen set them up – as somewhat of an enigma.



Fig. 1. *Good Housekeeping*, July 1923, 175.



Fig. 2. *Good Housekeeping*, February 1923, 100.

⁵⁴ Tubal Kane, "New Year Resolutions of a Reflective Advertiser," *Printers' Ink* (January 9, 1930), 41.

HEALTH BEAUTY

a promise to Mothers

from the Health Doctor



Every Mother is a Health Doctor
I sign myself "Health Doctor" but the real health doctor is yourself. It is you mothers who are the chief guardians of family health.

MOTHER and I know a lot about it. That is why I have been retained by the makers of Lifebuoy Health Soap to write a book of talks on Health and Beauty. People tell me that my children are healthy. What they mean is that the kiddies are with the bloom of health in their rosy, sturdy bodies that have been guarded against—particularly the colds and fevers that retard a child's development. I am a good looking myself and proud of it. I am as attractive as long as I live—by the way, I have no patience with the women who are sweetly resigned to being old at a time when they should be still a girl—splendidly alive to the height of her beauty. The secret of keeping young is to keep well the surest day in and day out protection know for myself, my children and theirs, too, is personal cleanliness. It is the good health and looks of my children and myself very largely to the regular use of Lifebuoy Health Soap. A few words about Lifebuoy. It protects by removing germs and impurities from the pores open and brings out the natural beauty of the skin by keeping it

The gentle antiseptic in Lifebuoy combined with these pure vegetable oils imparts to the rich creamy lather its purifying and skin beautifying virtue.

And of course it is the antiseptic cleansing quality of Lifebuoy lather which gives real protection against colds and other illnesses. This lather cleanses every pore, removes germs and impurities, leaves the skin deodorized and safe.

Why skin must be purified

The unseen danger to which we are all constantly exposed—children especially—is that al-



most anything we touch is likely to be covered with germs deposited by other hands. Unless we constantly purify our hands these germs are apt to get into the nose or mouth, often causing colds and fevers.

Give Lifebuoy an honest trial. You will become fond of the cleanly odor, which vanishes almost instantly, it gives one such a comfortable feeling of being safely clean. *And it protects your children.*



Send for this book—"Health Beauty"
The "Health Doctor" wrote it. A wonderful book. It tells about preserving your health and good looks. Bound in stiff covers and exquisitely illustrated. It will be sent to you if you will enclose 10 cents in stamps with your request.
Lever Bros. Co. Cambridge, Mass.



In using advertisements see page 4 107

Fig. 3. Good Housekeeping, April 1924, 107.

An Interview with Mrs. O.H.P. BELMONT

on the care of the skin



Frenchwomen say, Cleanse and Protect

YOU spend a part of each year in France. Do Frenchwomen use creams much?" I asked Mrs. Belmont.

"In France," she said "they have always used cleansing creams and protecting creams, knowing that water is not enough and that the face cannot stand much strain and exposure."

"Then you think women should use two creams?"

"I know they should. That is why I advise the daily use of Pond's Two Creams, so that women can keep their charm and influence as long as they need them—and that is always," she smiled.

Use this Famous Method

GIVE your skin these two indispensable to lasting skin loveliness—the kind of cleaning that restores each night your skin's essential suppleness, and the freshening that, besides protecting, brings each time the beauty of fresh smooth skin under your powder.

For this, two distinctly different face creams were perfected—Pond's Cold Cream and Pond's Vanishing Cream.

Every night—with the finger tips or a piece of moistened cotton, apply Pond's Cold Cream freely. The very fine oil in it is able to penetrate every pore of your skin. Leave it on a minute. Then remove it with a soft cloth. Dirt and excess oil, the rouge and powder you have used during the day, are taken off your skin and out of the pores. How relaxed your face is. *Do this twice.* Now finish with ice rubbed over your face or a dash of cold water. Your skin looks fresh and is beautifully supple again. If your skin is very dry, pat on more cream, especially where wrinkles come first—around the eyes, the nose, the corners of your mouth—and leave it on over night.

After every cleaning, before you powder, and always before you go out—Smooth on Pond's Vanishing Cream every evening—just enough for your skin to absorb. Now if you wish, rouge—powder. How smooth and velvety your face feels. Nothing can roughen it. When you get up in the morning, after a dash of cold water, this cream will keep your skin fresh and untired for hours. And it will stay evenly powdered.

Use this method regularly. Soon your face will be permanently fresher, smoother and you can count on the charm of a fresh, young skin for years longer than would otherwise be possible. Begin now. Buy both Pond's Creams tonight in jars or tubes at any drug store or department store. The Pond's Extract Company.

GENEROUS TUBES
MAIL THIS COUPON WITH 10¢ TODAY

The Pond's Extract Co.
37 Hudson St., New York

Two cents (20¢) is enclosed for your special introductory tubes of the two creams every normal skin needs—enough of each cream for two weeks' ordinary toilet uses.

Name: _____
Street: _____
City: _____ State: _____

Pond's Two Creams
used by the women who must keep their charm, their beauty, their influence.
EVERY SKIN NEEDS THESE TWO CREAMS

In using advertisements see page 6 93

Fig. 4. Good Housekeeping, February 1924, 93.

PRINCESSE MARIE de BOURBON of SPAIN

tells how she cares for her flower-like skin



Charlotte Fitchchild

The PRINCESSE MARIE DE BOURBON is an aristocrat by birth. She belongs, furthermore, to that larger aristocracy of beautiful women who know that true distinction of appearance depends upon taking the utmost pains with the smallest details of the toilet, including the care of the skin.

Charlotte Fitchchild

FREE OFFER—
Mail this coupon and we will send you free tubes of these two creams and an attractive little folder telling you how to use them.


The Pond's Extract Company, Dept. G
135 Hudson Street, New York City
Please send me your free tubes of Pond's Cold and Vanishing Creams.

Name.....
Street.....
City..... State.....

In using advertisements see page 4 101

Fig. 5. Good Housekeeping, July 1925, 101.

THE MARTYR



MARTYR to a "lost cause" is the woman who strives for cleanliness with carpet beater, broom and dust-cloth.

Though she invest every ounce of strength, every hour of time, how unsatisfactory are the results!

For much of the dangerous, destructive dirt which ruins her rugs still lies embedded deep in the nap after each sweeping.

The age of brooms and carpet beaters long is past! In their place has come The Hoover—Servant to the Home—that your home and that of every housewife may be kept immaculately clean.

While it saves more of your strength and time than do most cleaners, The Hoover

also saves your rugs. Unlike other cleaners, it provides every cleaning method needed in order to make your rugs wear longer and retain their beauty.

As you glide it easily, slowly, back and forth, The Hoover beats your rugs—and rugs need beating, as you can prove* . . .

It sweeps your rugs, and suction-cleans. Its remarkable dusting tools do all your dusting, dustlessly.

With ease and speed your tasks are thoroughly accomplished. There is time for leisure; and the cleanliness of your home is an endless source of pride.

Own a Hoover! For only \$6.25 down any Authorized Hoover Dealer will make delivery, complete, today!

***TO PROVE RUGS NEED BEATING:** Turn over a corner of a rug with the handle of an ordinary table-knife, or something of equal weight, give the under or warp side 15 to 25 sharp taps and watch the dirt dance out from the nap depths onto a piece of paper. Feel the destructive character of this grit. This is the dirt your present cleaning methods have missed, and that beating has dislodged. Correct use of The Hoover causes this embedded dirt to be returned to the surface by the rapid, gentle heaving of the Hoover brush, as powerful suction lifts the rug from the floor and draws all the beaten-out, swept-up dirt into the dust-tight bag.


The HOOVER

It BEATS . . . as it Sweeps as it Cleans

THE HOOVER COMPANY, NORTH CANTON, OHIO
The oldest and largest maker of electric cleaners • The Hoover is also made in Canada, at Hamilton, Ontario

In using advertisements see page 6 87

Fig. 6. Good Housekeeping, January 1926, 87.



DODGE BROTHERS
 SPECIAL
TYPE-A SEDAN

The aristocrat of Dodge Brothers line of closed cars. Yet so dependably built is the Special Type-A Sedan that frequently you find it serving under conditions that would try the sturdiest open cars.

This amazing capacity for long life and hard work is recognized everywhere as the outstanding characteristic of Dodge Brothers product.

It is strikingly evidenced by the fact that more than 90% of all the motor cars Dodge Brothers have built during the past eleven years are still in active service—a record which stands impressively alone in automobile history.

*Ask your dealer about Dodge Brothers
 New Credit-Purchase Plan*



© D. B.
© 1927, W. B. M. Co.

In using advertisements see page 6 107

Fig. 7. *Good Housekeeping*, January 1926, 107.

SUDDEN downpour. Clothes sodden—powder streaked—make-up ruined. A proffered umbrella. A smile, radiant with the loveliness of clean bright teeth. Natural beauty triumphant. The Soria Text . . . could you pass it now?



When BEAUTY
 depends solely
 your SMILE
What then?

To every woman moments must come that test *true, natural beauty*. When all the little artifices and aids-to-beauty fail. Each time you smile is such a test. For then *natural loveliness* is revealed. Or its lack uncovered. In a moment or two you have been judged. Strictly judged, if by a man.

Only sparkling cleanliness of teeth can give true beauty here. If they lack that you cannot conceal the fact. If they have it, no adornment is needed.

This is the one natural loveliness all women can have. It is simpler than any other care you take.

SPEND but 4 minutes daily, using a Dr. West's Tooth Brush, brushing away from the gums. Two minutes at night, two in the morning.

By tens of thousands, women are finding that this famous brush not only *cleans thoroughly—but polishes* as it cleans. See why this is so:

It is small, has a sloping, tuftless end. Thus goes clear back between teeth and cheek, easily. Or easily reaches every part of the inner jaw-curve. But bristles always remain erect—for cleaning as polishing. The brush-body is doubly convex in shape (end-to-end, side-to-side). And the pointed bristle-tufts have extra space between them. Thus you clean crevices, and spaces between teeth *obviously left unattended*.

Don't try to wear out your Dr. West's brush. It is durable; may still look serviceable after the splendid polishing ability is impaired. That's why dentists using Dr. West's for their own teeth get new brushes monthly. This being sure costs little; benefits much!

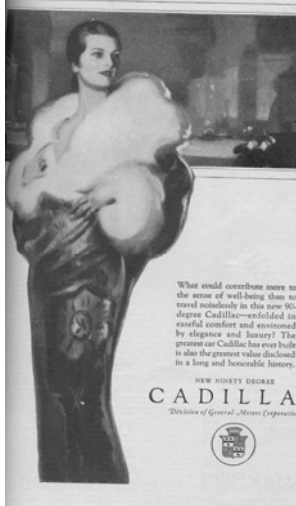
You can make no better investment today than a Dr. West's Tooth Brush for each one in your family. Adult's, 50c; Youth's, 35c; Child's, 25c; Special Gum Massage Brush, 75c.

SEE HOW your Dr. West's Tooth Brush is protected from hand First sterilized; then sealed in glass envelope, inside the usual carton.



© 1927, W. B. M. Co.
In using advertisements see page 6

Fig. 8. *Good Housekeeping*, July 1927, 143.



What could contribute more to the sense of well-being than to travel exclusively in the new 90-degree Cadillac—enclosed in casual comfort and envisioned by elegance and luxury? The greatest car Cadillac has ever built is also the greatest value disclosed in a long and honorable history.

NEW NINETY DEGREE
CADILLA
Division of General Motors Corporation



 In using advertisements see page 6

Fig. 9. *Good Housekeeping*, March 1926, 105.

194

This distinctive face powder
meets the changed conditions of your
active modern life

It is the Armand belief that face powder, like fashions, should conform to the life of your times. In fifty years there have been only a few improvements in face powder. The modern idea is responsible for Armand Cold Cream Powder. It produces a marvelous texture which fulfils the need of today. It stays on during hours of activity without renewing. Armand Cold Cream Powder gives you a rose petal complexion.

Armand Cold Cream Powder is obtainable at all good stores at home and abroad. The price is \$1. Armand, Des Moines. In Canada, Armand Ltd., St. Thomas, Ontario.

Mail the coupon for this up-to-date trial package of the Armand Ten-Minute Beauty Treatment.

The package contains:

- 1 copy, Armand's New "Ten Minutes a Day" beauty treatment.
- 1 trial package Armand Cold Cream Powder—for a rose petal complexion.
- 1 trial package Armand Foundation Creme—a marvelous discovery for powder base and skin tone.
- 1 trial package Armand Eau de Cologne Cleansing Cream—that liquefies the moment it touches the skin.
- 1 trial package Armand Lip and Cheek Rouge—a new creation!

ARMAND

102 Des Moines St., Des Moines, Iowa
I enclose 10c, for which please send me "The Ten-Minute a Day Beauty Treatment," including the four essential preparations.

Name _____
Address _____
City _____
State _____

In Canada, Armand Ltd., St. Thomas, Ontario

*Armand
Cold Cream
Powder

June 1928 Good Housekeeping

Fig. 10. *Good Housekeeping*, June 1928, 194.