

The Modern Girl Around the World

Consumption, Modernity,
and Globalization

The Modern Girl

Around the World Research Group

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DUKE UNIVERSITY PRESS

DURHAM AND LONDON

2008



In memory of MIRIAM SILVERBERG

CCCS

CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF CULTURE AND SOCIETY

Acc No. 010380

Call No. 305.242 209 04

WEI

Date: 20.4.10

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DESIGNED BY KATY CLOVE

TYPESET IN SABON BY KEYSTONE TYPESETTING, INC.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOGING-IN-PUBLICATION

DATA AND REPUBLICATION ACKNOWLEDGMENTS APPEAR

ON THE LAST PRINTED PAGES OF THIS BOOK.

Duke University Press gratefully acknowledges the support of the University of Washington and the Simpson Center for the Humanities, both of which provided support for the production of this book.

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Buying In

Advertising and the
Sexy Modern Girl Icon in
Shanghai in the 1920s and 1930s



TANI E. BARLOW

To discover the various use of things is the work of history. MARX, "Commodities," *Capital*

This chapter concerns trite, black-and-white drawings like figure 13.1, which depicts a sexy Modern Girl icon exterminating bedbugs using a DDT-loaded Flit gun. The scene transfers an intangible promise of carnal pleasure, a girl, onto a seemingly tangible object, the transnational, corporate, commercial commodity. Sexualized Modern Girls embody the promised pleasures of industrial society. Visual icons are line drawings of real persons, the movie star Hu Die, for instance, or imaginary ones, like Betty Boop, stylized, widely reproducible, and immediately identifiable. During the interwar years, 1919–37, renditions of the sexy Modern Girl icon acting out imaginary social scenes connoted Shanghai's economic primacy and fantasy, high-society fashions.

At the same time, media in which sexy girl iconography appeared were also promoting cutting-edge vernacular sociology (popular, au-

thoritative ideas about subjectivity and the relation of individuals in society). This widespread social philosophy was vernacular in relation to the classical conventions of Qing dynasty (1644–1911) norms, in relation to U.S.-financed, academic social science in the interwar years of the twentieth century, and in relation to European philosophy, because it claimed to establish a Chinese expression of universal modernity. Read in the same glance, vernacular theories about social life and advertising iconography sutured modern personhood to visual fantasies about commodity use in an imminent future via the sexy Modern Girl icon.

Neither vernacular sociology nor cartoon advertising media "represented" contemporary social truth. They did not reflect an existing reality. The iconic girl and her pretend activities opens to historical analysis the fantasy of modern social life in a colonial modern arena. While advertising cold cream or chemical fertilizer using a girl image aims to increase sales and thus add to the company's profit, advertisements actually put into play fantasies in the social world that do not index the realities of exchange value. "A use-value," may indeed be a "property that satisfies some human need, such that someone might want to purchase the commodity." But once the advertising industry on the China mainland had placed into circulation these banal and effective images, the scenes and figurative women that condensed into iconic form took on a career of their own. One cannot exhaust the meaning of these banalized popular images solely in economic terms which is why I define these ads as "other scenes of use value."¹

Žižek and Balibar defined the other scene to be a way of thinking that inhabits consciousness, is neither consciousness nor the unconscious, but which nonetheless shapes everyday thinking.² Balibar, for instance, proposes an "other scene of politics" as the moment when destructive passions shaping catastrophic political behavior flicker into visibility inside rationalized practices like genocide.³ For me, the other scene of use value is the moment when knowing how to use modern commodities and modern erotic or bodily pleasure is manifested in a commercial advertising scene that visually encourages consumers to fantasize that they, too, are using the sexy commodity.

The first section of this chapter examines the advertiser Carl Crow's role in developing the prototypical Shanghai sexy Modern Girl icon. Section two sketches out core ideas in vernacular sociology. Section three closely examines a long-running set of Cutex hand-care products ads, which explicitly linked industrial commodities and their uses to vignettes of everyday life in the futuristic new society. The concluding section puts under the microscope a series of sexy Modern Girl icon advertising images that explicitly fuse erotic pleasure, imaginary use values, and the experience of being a subject.



13.1 “Sexy modern girl icon with her Flit gun.”
Fünü zazhi 17, no. 4 (April 1931).

In 1931 when the ad for insect spray appeared in the *Ladies' Journal* (*Fünü zazhi*, hereafter *FNZZ*), the Shanghai Modern Girl icon already stood at the “confluence of commerce and desire” typical of international commodity culture during the interwar years.⁴ The figure in the first cell in figure 13.1, her tiny face anxious and frustrated, highlights the other scene of modern use value. There the iconic girl pumps her DDT gun in a bedroom flush with European-style vanity table and chair, electric lamp, perfume and cream bottles, and princess bed. While the advertising copy introduces frightening ideas about blood, dirt, and dangerous old methods for controlling household pests, hygiene theory takes a back seat to the image of a delighted girl.

The Shanghai Advertising Industry and the Early Modern Girl Image

On 7 March 1920, the visionary Shanghai advertising agent Carl Crow took out a full page in the Chinese language paper *Shenbao* to place his first ad for

Pond's Vanishing Cream (see figure 13.2). This image retooled a progressive icon already familiar from the covers of *Fünü shibao* (1911–17), early *Fünü zazhi* (1915–31), and other early-twentieth-century publications, a curious girl (see figure 13.3). Putting the image to use selling industrial commodities was not conventional, however, and Crow says in his memoir that, to his surprise, the business made money for years to come from the Pond's account on the strength of this one composite commercial image.⁵

The Carl Crow Inc. advertising agency was part of an industry that had apparently originated in Hong Kong but mushroomed in Shanghai during the interwar years.⁶ Native or not, directly and indirectly, Shanghai advertisers operated on business principles just coalescing into the U.S. social science of advertising. Together with the Australian, British, Italian, Japanese, Hong Kong, U.S., and local entrepreneurs like Huang Chujiu, Jin Xuechen, and Ni Gaofeng, foreign advertisers including Carl Crow formed a self-conscious community of interest. Between 1918 and 1923, the Advertising Club of China met regularly in Shanghai to hear lectures on the science of advertising.⁷ Tipper's *Advertising, its Principles and Practice* was available in Shanghai bookstores.⁸ Additionally, all of the larger agencies, not just the British, Japanese, or American-owned firms, handled international accounts. The Chinese-owned Dongya Advertising Agency had the Osaka-based Nakayama Taiyodo soap and cosmetics company account, for instance. C. P. Ling (Lin Zhenbin), a U.S. university-educated, Shanghai-born advertiser who established his agency in 1926, had the Ford, General Motors, Coca-Cola, Philip Morris Cigarettes, ASPRO (an Australian branded aspirin), KLIM milk powder, Horliks, Parker Pen, and Pan American World Airlines accounts.⁹ The point is that Crow and his Crow agency belonged to a large transnational community of interested, profit-seeking, colonial entrepreneurs.¹⁰

The Shanghai advertising agency was a modern, business administrative innovation that took two basic forms: the in-house department of a larger concern like Chinese Commercial Press or British American Tobacco, and independent, proprietor-centered entities like Lang Jinshan's Jinshan guanggao she or Crow's Carl Crow Inc. Both count as agencies by virtue of the three defining services they provided. First, they all employed or organized professional artists, often, but by no means exclusively, Chinese trained in the *Shanghaipai* style. Second, from one-man or one-woman outfits to Millington's Agency, which had a staff of seventeen named executives in one 1930 *Directory*, all advertisers bought space.¹¹ They placed ads in the various print media, newspapers, journals, and supplements, as well as selling outdoor venues like billboards and posters.¹² Third, advertisers gathered information. Crow was convinced that he succeeded because he was able to shape advertising messages



13.2 Carl Crow's first Pond's Advertisement. *Shenbao*, 7 March 1920.



13.3 "A typical curious girl image." *Min'guo ribao*, 9 March, 1917.

around already existing consumer preferences. "We make market surveys," Crow said, "speculate on what articles they [Chinese consumers] will buy, how the article should be packed, how advertised, and what merchandising methods should be followed."¹³ He surveyed consumers in part to teach them about products, how to procure and use them. Particularly agencies handling corporate accounts sold directly to retail consumers in the Shanghai region and by mail order to readers all over China and Southeast Asia.

The sexy Modern Girl icon cannot be extricated from these embryonic, interlocked, and international commercial practices.

Fabricating the Sexy Modern Girl Icon

The primary challenge of the 1920s was to shift from an already lucrative business advertising wholesale commodities to a postwar, retail market aimed at the new professional middle class.¹⁴ In this regard, there was nothing singular about advertising in Shanghai.¹⁵ Two advertisements for oil will illustrate this point. In 1921, Devoe's Brilliant Oil advertised its usefulness to commercial consumers in Shanghai. This company, a New York-based kerosene producer, was already a significant transcontinental player by 1876 (see figure 13.4).¹⁶ There is nothing distinctive about this ad. It meets international standards for commodity advertising of the time, simply establishes a trademark image, alleges its useful and patented packaging, and extols the product's virtues. *Millard's Review*, the Shanghai English-language news-weekly like the British-owned, Chinese-language daily *Shenbao*, had generated revenue from this sort of ad (in the case of *Shenbao*, since the late nineteenth century). A mere ten years later, in 1931, Ditmar Brunner Bros., a Vienna-based company, put a sexy Modern Girl image into a complex, educative mise-en-scène (see figure 13.5). She is caught in the process of enjoying her domestic goods. The scene is socially complex. It mirrors hundreds of similar advertising mise-en-scènes.¹⁷

The example of Carl Crow is a good way to show how the innovation worked because he appears to have had a decisive hand in creating the Shanghai sexy Modern Girl icon. Crow established his agency in 1919, and by 1929 he was handling "25 accounts—American, British, German, Japanese and Chinese—including some of the heaviest advertisers known."¹⁸ Apparently Crow operated the Pond's account at the behest of J. Walter Thompson, the giant U.S.-based international advertising firm. Crow acknowledged on record, "We always *redraw* the pictures in China,"¹⁹ and JWT iconography was clearly the prototype for his innovative advertising image (see figure 13.6). To sell cold cream, however, commodity adverts had to teach potential consumers the proper uses of the new cosmetic cream. In line with Pond's general,



13.7 "A Shanghai Pond's girl and her mirror."
Dongfang zazhi 22 (25 December 1925).

13.8 "Mistress and curious girl launder with Sunlight soap."
Dongfang zazhi 22, no. 11 (25 November 1925).

13.9 "Sexy Shanghai girl at European vanity table."
Funü zazhi 11, no. 4 (April 1925).

directly into a commodity, rather than the mirror.²⁴ Eventually Crow's sexy Modern Girl icon drifted out of commodity ads for cosmetics and into black and white fantasy mise-en-scènes across the board.

Self-Love of the Modern Girl and Core Concepts of Vernacular Sociology

In contrast to identifiable girl icons elsewhere in China, the sexy Shanghai Modern Girl signified everyday life in the most advanced sector.²⁵ If, as Marx demonstrated, the usefulness of a thing or commodity rests on what you need, then, as Donald M. Lowe has shown, advertising is a major venue for explaining the ways commodities work, how they can be used, why we need them, what is desirable about them.²⁶ These Shanghai images are typical of thousands of similar drawings. Collectively they suggest how repetition of the sexy Modern Girl icon contributed to restructuring femininity, as well as linking erotic modernity to clichés about everyday modern use values. Of course these cartoons intimate that Vanishing Cream, Colgate perfume, Nanyang Bros. machine-rolled cigarettes, Ditmar Brunner kerosene, Flit insect spray, and so on are proofs of a luscious, new, modern, scientific femininity. What they do as well is to ingratiate a way of seeing *as if* scientifically and objectively. If your body used to belong to your parents, but applying modern, scientific Cutex manicure products puts *you* in charge of your own hands, then Carl Crow and Giorgio Agamben have a good point: commodity culture does make bodies tangible in new ways.²⁷ Your body belongs to you now, these interwar years' scenes of use value seem to say, in the same ways your cold cream or your education or your erotic choices do (or ought to) belong to you. This reiterates a point Henri Lefebvre made decades ago, that in a capitalist society "subjectivization and objectivization go hand in hand, inseparably."²⁸

"Subjectivization," or personhood, in Shanghai's colonial modern years had many sources of inspiration. The point to stress is that these ads did not cause personhood, nor did they represent subjects already existing in the world. Emotional, happy iconic girls appear to inhabit a world of commercial commodities and to know all about their use values. Sunlight brand soap, Stay-comb Hair Cream, and Kodak film and camera advertising show a future possibility of modern femininity via knowledge of commodity use. Because the sexy Chinese Modern Girl icon is intimately linked to knowing how goods work and how they make one modern, her desire is a mirror of modern self-recognition. The increasingly explicit anatomical references to her breasts, legs, lips, feet, and so on open her up as a modernist erotic object, and emotions such as we see in the Flit advertisement depict the joy of an icon who knows how to exterminate vermin. In other scenes of use value featuring the sexy

Modern Girl's savoir faire, the elements combine in a sensual appreciation, perhaps suggesting to hopeful consumers of imported commodities how use value works, how in modern society it improves the self, and thus why self-love is good for society and social relations as such.

Vernacular sociology, a kind of thinking and writing which explained everyday life in terms of Chinese enlightened social theory and legitimated the ascendant elite's new social relations (small families, companionate marriage, possessive individualism, and so on), and social practices (scientific birth control, domestic hygiene, professional training and so on), suffuses advertising copy, particularly in mise-en-scènes where the Shanghai sexy Modern Girl icon appears. Sociology is globally the science of modernity. Chinese vernacular sociology preceded and then encompassed professional and university styles of sociological reasoning, which, in China at least, were, as Yung-cheng Chiang has established, largely funded through ongoing, U.S.-based Rockefeller Foundation grants.²⁹ Contemporary readers of vernacular (as opposed to professional) social theory had an acute interest in the question of subjectivity, and from its inception, Chinese vernacular sociological writing focused on the problem of how individuals are created and why the psychodynamic processes of identification and self-forming should, in the natural course of things, produce healthy, individual persons. Endo Ryukichi's *Sociology in Modern Times* (1903), for instance, summed up international sociology's contents, materials, and methods, as well as its major problematics and typologies or systems. Endo stressed how humans had emerged out of general mammal culture into an assertive, self-evolving, self-willing, individuated social species with a perceivable, traceable evolutionary timeline. Like most vernacularists, Endo theorized that the constituent parts of individual subjectivity were will, desire, spirit, and self-consciousness. Drawing heavily on the American sociologist Lester Ward's speculative ontology, Endo spent a lot of energy elaborating on philosophies of human will and particularly Ward's notorious belief in the capacity of human beings to control their own evolution as a species. Endo assumed that theory captured social realities and historical evolutionary movements such that when an educated person consumed a précis of modern thought, the reader like the theorist was grasping real social processes.³⁰

Vernacular sociological thinking came in the interwar years to form a preserve where educated Chinese people, like their peers elsewhere in the world, read key social theories in modernist journals of opinion. *Funü zazhi* (Ladies' Journal), *Dongfang zazhi* (Eastern Miscellany), *Xin qingnian* (New Youth), and national newspapers like *Dagong bao* (The Observer) published capsule accounts of the thinking of diverse social theorists ranging from Comte, Spencer, Mill, Adam Smith, Montesquieu, Marx, Shimamura Tamizo, Kuriyakawa

Hakuson, and Lester Ward, to Havelock Ellis, Yosano Akiko, Robinson, Sanger, and Perkins-Gilman. Professionalized sociology shared with these vernacular predecessors the view that the historical catachresis of "society" is a real, tangible space that individuals occupy and where norms, conflicts, and relationships are mediated in family and other social collectivities. The point is that questions about how to live a good life are wedded to knowing about the new social scientific theories and to understanding personal experience through them. Social theory published in the mass media that presumes the existence of the social contract, introduces psychosocial dynamic theories of subjectivity, or invokes a "social question" is vernacular sociology. In my reasoning, the assumption that society is an epistemic given underpins middle-class, modernist thinking in Shanghai as elsewhere.

Two examples illustrate how these modernist vernacular sociological clichés were variously expressed. In 1921, Jun Zuo celebrated a sociological method he claimed was mushrooming among his classmates. Youth were thinking in new ways about social questions, he said, and they consequently required sociological theories to get a handle on the new realities of modern society. Jun's essay assigned a use value to theory itself, but more importantly it drew a clear link between the assumption that society is a thing and the belief that sociological theory explained the truths of society.³¹ A mature example is Pan Guangdan, who shared with Carl Crow the assumption that society is a universal matrix composed of autonomous individuals, and that women should appear publicly in society as themselves. What that "self" was had yet to be established, of course, and particularly in regard to the question of women's future, modern personality captured the imagination of male and female theorists and social scientists in the interwar years.³²

Later an illustrious eugenic social scientist, Pan first published vernacular-style social theory in 1924, a twelve-page article in *Funü zazhi* titled "Research on Feng Xiaoqing" (Feng Xiaoqing kao), which he had drafted in 1922. Its first part, "Historical Xiaoqing" (Lishi de Xiaoqing), listed known facts about the girl poet: a fateful meeting with a nun who warned Xiaoqing's mother to keep the child illiterate, marriage as a child concubine into the Feng family, Feng's wife's vendetta against her, Xiaoqing's close relationship to her girlfriend Yang, Xiaoqing's death at age seventeen, the destruction of her poetic legacy by the jealous wife, the poet's eventual entombment, and the enshrining of her few remaining poems into a largely male literary cult. In part two, "Xiaoqing in Literature and Sexual Psychology" (Xing xinlixue de ji wenxue de Xiaoqing), Pan used Freudian psychoanalytic techniques to diagnose this sad history as a sociologically typical case of female narcissism.³³

Part two began: "Sex is the origin of religion, literature and art, a point that

modern, educated psychologists have said clearly and publicly.” Indeed, psychoanalytic psychologists go so far as to say that “sexual desire explains everything about human behavior” (1710). Among the varieties of abnormal psychologies that Freudian analysis identified, Pan continued, is narcissism or *yinbian*, which in Xiaoqing’s case meant that she had declined heterosexual and homosexual intimacy in favor of self-gazing activities, particularly writing, and had directed her libido into a pattern of subjective development typical of too many Chinese women. Given the paucity of evidence about her historical existence, Pan highlighted Xiaoqing’s importance as a social signifier or icon of “Chinese society’s attitude toward women” (1716). In expanded versions, the 1927 “An Analysis of Xiaoqing” (Xiaoqing zhi fenxi) and 1929 “Feng Xiaoqing: A Study in Narcissism” (Feng Xiaoqing: I jian yinbian zhi yanjiu), and smaller afterthoughts published over the 1930s, Pan expanded his theory.

Pan Guangdan’s “historical research” into the female subject question using the poet Xiaoqing is consistent with vernacular sociological truism. It also usefully reflects a contemporary interlocked relation between the other scenes of use value in commercial advertising art and middlebrow social theory. Pan used the poet-painter Wen Yiduo’s pretentiously highbrow rendition of the sexy Modern Girl icon to illustrate his book.³⁴ Wen’s highbrow appropriation of commercial drawing reverses what I show in the next section as a common appropriation of highbrow theory into sexy Modern Girl iconography. Eugenics’ association with the sexy Modern Girl worked downward into popular culture, too. A vulgarized version of the broad-spectrum eugenics theories that Pan used to ground sociology appear in a visually explicit Five Continents Pharmacy advertisement. Here the naked, sexy Modern Girl icon fan-dances with what appears to be a large sponge or placard extolling eugenics and female reproductive health (see figure 13.10). Less explicit, more European-style references to sexy Modern Girl icons and eugenics appear in the twenties and thirties in long-running, banalized ads for Tampax, Modess, Kotex, Comfort, Veramon, Santogen, Byla’s Musculosine, Cryogenine-Lumiere, Hemegene Taillieur, and Agomensin-Sistomensin menstrual products.

In the explosion of theoretical writing that characterized the Chinese Enlightenment (1919–37), advertising itself became a topic of vernacular theory projects. In his lengthy introduction of contemporary theories of advertising social psychology, Shi Quan offered readers of *Eastern Miscellany* important new theoretical advances from the United States and Europe. Discussing at length the ideas of Hollingworth on advertising and selling, Scott on the psychology of advertising, and Starek on basic principles of advertising science, Shi concluded with a critique and an admonition. Shanghai stores should stop using crude ads and get more sophisticated while socially responsible Chinese



13.10 “Naked eugenics sexy girl dances with sponge board.”
Funü yuebao, 10 October 1936.

people ought to learn more about the psychology and arts involved in advertising and catch up with the West. Shi Quan’s awareness of the extra value that sophisticated advertising brought to commodities lends further credence to my point that while a commodity might sell in Shanghai because Flit really does kill bedbugs better than hot water, it might have appealed to enlightened consumers because buying soap stamped with the Colgate trademark or oat grain with the Quaker trademark reinforced attractive and increasingly widespread polemics on social evolution, progressive feminism, human sexuality, nuclear family formation, or contemporary motherhood.³⁵

These examples suggest ways that making general arguments, which is to say

theorizing, about the values of enlightened social thinking paralleled elements of the burgeoning advertising culture. But vernacular sociology and new commodity ads shared direct links, too. Crow (and probably other agencies) used product placement advertising to amplify the connection between commodities and the new social theory. His memoir references the chronic problem he had getting placements right, particularly in provincial media, where editors habitually clustered ads together by type of product.³⁶ But metropolitan advertisers and the major, monthly opinion journals seem to have been more responsive to this internationally developing advertising practice. Juxtaposed with the first page of a long, informative article by Liu Shuqin entitled “From Natural Sociology to Cultural Sociology,” in an issue of *Eastern Miscellany* in November 1926, for instance, appears a striking advertisement for the Ford Motor Company.³⁷ In the familiar curlicue script of the Ford brand, the advertising copy lists the comfort and uses of the family auto and gives the price and address for a Ford car franchise in Shanghai. Just behind the engraved image, a modern Chinese couple is entering their apartment after a refreshing ride in their car. Liu’s essay, meanwhile, asks what sociology is and how it can be defined and analyzes questions ranging from natural evolution to cultural social evolution.

Vernacular sociology and advertising copy instructions about how to use commodities (with libidinous illustrations) reinforced each other. After all, learning the various uses of such things as Brunner Mond chemical fertilizers or Sunmaid Raisins is not unlike learning the modernist values encoded in the powerful universalisms of the new vernacular social theory. These shared values included imported standards of cleanliness, personal and collective hygiene, evolutionary racial improvement, athleticism, modern sexual expression, aesthetic modernism, national sovereignty, and rapid modern economic development.³⁸ My underlying assertion here is that sociological theories and scientific advertising technologies shared the same assumptions and practical objectives. Each put a premium on gathering accurate information about an as yet undifferentiated mass, reflecting back information in a categorical framework of collective categories that resorted people into “classes,” “sexes,” and other social scientific categories.

Lurking behind Endo Ryukichi’s abstractions about will and willed behavior, sexuality and sexual choices, race improvement and stories of degeneration, in other words, is the pressing matter of why individuals would buy Parker pens and Victrola brand record players, Two Gorgeous Girls toothpowder, Parisian hosiery, Viennese kerosene, Australian milk powder, American soap, and all the other trademarked commodities that elite consumers apparently regularly preferred to Chinese national products. Will, desire, emotion, and other new categories of vernacular sociology were theoretical ways to

ask the question of what people want and how they get what they want. That certainly was also the central concern of advertising agents.

The Cutex Campaign

In the mid-1920s, an elaborate Cutex advertising campaign appeared in the major venue for vernacular sociology topics, the *Ladies’ Journal* (see figure 13.11). Designed to establish its flashy trademark and brand name, each episodic drawing had a number in the lower right-hand corner, a Romanesque frame, a coupon etched with the number of the ad (allowing the agency to gather information about which scenes most captivated what kinds of readers), and three design elements. These consisted of a girl drawn into a social scene, a short text about the scene, and an unobtrusive drawing of the product with its logo clearly depicted. The Cutex campaign is a modification of that formula pervasive in interwar Shanghai advertising culture—the girl, mirror, and commodity ad. Although many advertising campaigns for transnational, branded commodities had a similar structure, the Cutex campaign is particularly compelling for three reasons. First, it explicitly placed the branded commodity into social evolutionary developmental time. Second, the written copy accompanying the series of images drew explicitly on vernacular sociological terms and neologisms (those newly created words that facilitated the translation of Japanese, European, and American social theory into modern Chinese). Third, more clearly than the many other national products and transnational commodity campaigns I have tracked, Cutex illustrates the powerful moment of the other scene of use value.

Keep in mind that in the mid-1920s when the Cutex fingernail and hand skin products campaign hit its stride, marketers were confronting the need to carve out a market in a cosmetic terrain where conventional beauty products already existed and, according to none other than Carl Crow, were widely used. Particularly imported luxury brands like Cutex confronted the need to invent a counterlogic that would justify buying something new and expensive. Social evolutionary dogma had become the prevailing elite truism in Chinese circles, as it had in educated communities in Europe, Latin America, the United States,



13.11 “School girl and school boy shake hands.” *Funü zazhi* 11, no. 5 (May 1925).

and Japan. To create a campaign based on social evolution and on the role of commodity use in social progress exhibited a modernist sensitivity to the new theories of social life. Chinese social evolution itself forms the developmental logic linking the dozens of individual images together into a continuous story. The point to stress is that like so many other brand advertisers, the Cutex campaign made the sexy Modern Girl icon its dramatis persona in staging truisms current in vernacular sociological theories. The evolutionary story arc, which links each numbered cartoon cell to the campaign as a whole, narrates a tale about modernity growing organically out of a once graceful but ever more historically moribund Chinese beauty culture.

The campaign begins in the era of the mythic ruler Fu Xi (ca. 2850 BCE), and each successive cartoon cell documents the evolutionary development of nail enhancement. Ad cells 1–7 (I am referring to ads by the number assigned to them in the story arc) trace a trajectory from the archaic period through the Han dynasty (206 BCE to 220 CE), the Later Han dynasty (25–220 CE), and the Shu Han dynasty (221–263 CE), noting in each case that while tradition had its virtues, beauty culture way back when was not always perfectly safe and usually based on secret formulas the beauty took with her to the grave. To market a scientific commodity as both superseding old practices and as an evolutionary vehicle for social progress, the advertiser went after noncommodified or “traditional” nail care products for women. For instance, since time immemorial, according to ad cell 3, the use of balsa flower dyes for fingertips had been celebrated in poetry and practiced by all the great beauties.³⁹ But flower dyes are not real manicure items, nor is their use scientific, because in Fu Xi’s time there was no science! Women today can get scientific Cutex manicure items in an adorable box that makes the Cutex manicure set your vanity table’s best friend (many subsequent cells repeated this comparison and reiterated the stock phrase about Cutex being “the vanity table’s best friend”).

In ads set in times before modernity, artists often drew the traditional beauty or the Modern Girl inside each other’s thought bubbles, placing the beauty in a scene and the sexy Modern Girl in the same episode. Ad cell 3, for instance, showed a Modern Girl at her vanity table in a bubble at the top of the screen. This sexy icon is gazing obliquely out of her bubble in a linear perspective beyond her vanity table mirror and thus directly into the cell’s dominant scene, which shows a traditional fairy beauty in a garden, while the text draws a comparison between superseded practices and the happiness of the modern icon. The copy in cell 5, to give another example, castigates Li Zhuang, the Han Wudi emperor’s (reigned 141–86 BCE) lady-in-waiting, whose failed treatment for maintaining her alabaster jade skin is compared unfavorably to today’s products. There is no danger to the skin in the potion you can buy now, in

either powdered or already mixed and bottled form, the legend reads. Ad cell 6 featured the fictive Wang Magu who took her beauty secrets with her when she became a celestial fairy. In this case, the copy says that, in comparison to Magu’s exclusive or elitist beauty secrets, girls in modern society mingle democratically with boys and their beauty culture is open to the admiring eyes of all. When these ads illustrate the relationship between new consumer and outdated traditional beauty, they show how individual choices affect social development. They also specularize the immediate past, literally incorporating ghosts into a present where intelligent girls can prevail over the vestiges of a discredited history.

The point is established repeatedly that all societies evolve historically and they all begin with good traditional practices (made obsolete by science) but grow, as China is growing, into a market of universally available products that anyone can buy in a department store. Evolutionary developmental history overcomes the defunct (albeit, again, utterly praiseworthy) elite beauty practices of the past, and the Cutex timeline leads directly to the modern present. With time, the volume of contemporary vignettes and images increased and the archaic historical references declined. The campaign’s story arc and objectives shifted to hammering home the difference between generic and branded modern manicure products. Social life and social evolution into the future come to rest on the application of science to everyday personal care.

The second point to be drawn from this long Cutex campaign is the tendency in interwar era advertising to draw on vernacular sociological theory and its modernist vocabulary. This style of campaign probably owes a debt to the popular illustrated fiction of the earlier part of the twentieth century. “Huabao”-style stories pictured curious girls in modernist social spaces for readers, a technique readily apparent in cell 10, which shows a girl and a boy shaking hands (see figure 13.11). She is wearing the fashion a la mode of chignon in the shape of a hair bob, earrings, and a two-piece proto-*qipao*; both figures are holding books. The text reads: “Coeducation of men and women and public intercourse involves shaking hands in greeting since this is now the fashion in society.” The use of the neologism “society” here is significant, as is the association of “society” with the advanced space of the classroom. Of course, you will be utterly humiliated unless you are able to meet the gaze of other modern people, particularly because the school is one of those modern sectors of Chinese society where the comingling of women and men is moving progressively toward ending gender segregation.

In ad cell 11 we are in a colonial ballroom where heavily made-up girls dance with young men dressed in European suits, hair slicked back (no doubt with Staycomb) (see figure 13.12). Everyone is engaged in the mixed social inter-



13.12 "Sexy girl and sexy boy ballroom dancing." *Funü zazhi* 11, no. 7 (July 1925).

course of ballroom dancing. In this scene, the ad copy explains that while people in the olden days liked to keep their fingernails long, the new custom is to prefer them short. "In the field of social intercourse, no matter what sort of dress you have on your back you still want your makeup to look great. If your hands are coarse and your skin is flawed people will most surely laugh at you." The term to stress is "field of social intercourse" since it appears regularly in vernacular sociological writings. It is a place, like "society" where the progressive woman and man mingle in order to forward the aims of modern China and, not unimportantly, to select mates and form modern, procreative, eugenically sound families. To accomplish the evolutionary imperative, therefore, young people will need a good manicure.

One way the campaign asserted Cutex brand's ability to declare a modernist space to be modern comes in ad cells that show how commodity use transforms your social interactions. Ad cell 12 presents this vividly through Ms. Wang Balsa, whose name is a parodic wordplay on the use of balsa flowers by beauties in the past.⁴⁰ Wang Bal-sa's arrogance about her delicate, white hands has made her friend, Ms. Li Xiuying, weep with inferiority. One day while Ms. Li is reading the newspaper, she finds an ad in the paper for "such-and-such company," so she immediately sends off her postal coupon, and after waiting with great anticipation, she receives her goods. After that, Ms. Wang can no longer lord it over Ms. Li because the company in question is the oh-so-modern Cutex. Family hierarchy is yet another site for transformation in ad cell 9, "Private Chat in the Women's Quarters," in which a girl says, "Big Sis, look how ugly my nails are. How can I face people?" Big Sis replies that she has just gotten some "Really Cute Method of Manicure" product, which she has kept a secret. The pesky little sister replies that she will give anything to know about it. Big Sis laughs and says that if Lil' Sis tells her about her sweethearts and shares her love letters, she will disclose the secret of beautiful nails. In the end Lil' Sis learns that "really cute method of manicure" is just a descriptive term, and the trademark is, of course, "Cutex Manicure Products." Certainly, Big and Lil' Sis are sexy Modern Girls whose social relationships are being re-defined through evolutionary commodity choices.

Third, the Cutex campaign helps expand a point raised earlier about the

other scene of use value in commercial advertising culture. These drawings help to establish how the use of the commodity, Cutex, became fused to new forms of public erotic pleasure, which the sexy Modern Girl icon presents to readers as being indisputably modern and feminine. (A similar argument can be made for cars, cigarettes, chemicals, insecticides, medicines, kerosene, and the many cosmetics and hygienic products that flooded into advertising culture and China's contested commercial capitalism in these years.)⁴¹ Of course, these advertisings involve mystification, since while the cartoon cell drawings depict stylized Modern Girl icons at play, the rationale given for using the product does not address the question of *whether* nail care makes the woman but *how* using Cutex products leads to an excellent progressive, modern femininity. As in the case of other girl practices or products — hair bobbing, toothpaste using, skin whitening, underarm deodorizing, and so on — Cutex ads inhabited contemporary consciousness of what it took to be modern and female. In that moment the ad becomes the sine qua non, the never fully articulated but always inhering basis, of everyday thinking about being a modern woman. Using the product realizes the promise. Using the product, even in fantasy, sutures the reader into a modern subject position.

Like all the other sexy advertising "girls," Cutex icons are desiring agents. They bring the fingernails and the skin of one's cosmetically altered hands to bear on what the advertising copy and vernacular theory both propose is social evolution. From the mid-twenties, Cutex's major selling points had to do with the application of modern science to the material body. The finger to which the polish would be applied was "miraculated" or made visible in a short, violent but legible vestment of tangibility into the modern or commodity body. The eroticized hand arises in some part as an effect of this product advertising campaign. But as the ad copy makes clear, Cutex is the scientific expression of a modern feminine aesthetic: this touch is antiseptic, desirous, self-willing, socially inventive, open to public scrutiny. Anyone with money and her wits about her can purchase it. On the other hand, anyone seeking to enter that sine qua non of modernity, the "society," will have to buy and apply the product. This association is not singular to Shanghai or even to China, of course. I fully agree with Agamben, who has noted that in Europe, in the 1920s "when the process of capitalist commodification began to invest the human body," even anticapitalist critics "could not help but notice a positive aspect to it, as if they were confronted with the corrupt text of a prophecy that went beyond the limits of the capitalist mode of production and were faced with the task of deciphering it."⁴² These commodity adverts shifted the sources of bodily comfort and purchasable pleasures away from the ineffable body of traditional Chinese medical foods or general tonics and toward effable domestic com-

modities like bathtubs, kerosene-fueled heaters, hormonal birth control agents, antiseptic soaps, Cornflakes, all drawn as making the effable body feel good.

At the center of these Cutex stories is the mimetic sexy icon whose constant companions are the vanity table and cosmetics and whose arena is the metropolis of Shanghai. Her performance of the activity of self-improvement rests on the values of ease, comfort, safety, and evolutionary promise embedded in the industrial commodity. In every image, the user of the product is pleased. Her future looks good. Because she can handle the anxiety of scrutiny, the social life of modern times opens before her. The ads sketch out the pleasures of all girls in their self-directed yet educated use of the commodity. Hands are no longer the concern of emperors, husbands, or magical beings since they now belong to the modern woman herself. This illusory sense of self-ownership, personal pleasure, and the pleasure that others will take in her self-care, together with the sheer visibility of the bodily satisfaction she feels, justify commodity life as such. By the late 1930s, the photo image of the self-polishing woman's hands was as much a part of the scene in use value as other commodities that we associate with the Modern Girl icon.

The Iconic Self

In an advertisement appearing in the early twenties and endlessly thereafter, a woman who might be the Pond's girl sits facing the viewer, her gaze cast into a mirror mounted on a stand in front of her. She is gazing downward into her own reflection (see figure 13.13). In one hand she holds her artist's palette and in the other hand a brush. The ad catches her in the act of self-portraiture. The condensed classical language text explains that the delicate hand of the girl is tracing her own self-likeness. This is a remarkable advertising *mise-en-scène* for several reasons. Certainly no better illustration of mimesis is imaginable: girl, mirror, commodity, and self-representation, gazing at the self in the mirror while setting up the *mise-en-abyme* of the real and its representations. The self-desiring gaze of the painter reflects the same preoccupations as high-tide male-dominated vernacular sociological writing. The difference is how happy the sexy icon is. She is pleurably and mimetically representing herself with the help of an industrially produced, scientifically crafted mirror, European paints, and Ribbon Dental Cream.⁴³

In 1928, one year after the White Terror against the Chinese Communist Party, three years before the Japanese occupation of Northern China, and nine years before the Japanese Imperial Army occupied Shanghai and most of littoral China, Kotex joined other transnational corporations and began advertising in Chinese- and English-language venues. One of the most striking ads the

COLGATE

各處大商店均有出售



花月影。纖手自描
一筆一回頭。維妙
維肖。最難摹。兩
排皓齒。宛如編
貝添風貌。素
紙無其光澤
設色又恐清
有牙如是好
足自豪 豈
知此亦是人
工。祇要日日用



各處大商店均有出售
上海江西路
B字七號
任博洋行總經理

絲帶牌牙膏

請聲明由婦女雜誌介紹

Please mention the LADIES' JOURNAL.

13.13 "Oil painting girl uses Colgate dental ribbon paste."
Fumū zazhi 11, no. 2 (February 1925).

一第爲全安

告勵生醫進應生衛女婦



中國總經理 上海北四川路 美商高登洋行

每盒一打
大小兩種

此為衛生第一之用品
凡婦女經期之時
必用此物以資保護
其利便之處
非他物所能及也
且其質極其柔軟
絕不致有痛苦
且其力極其強大
足以吸收經血
而無滲漏之虞
且其味極其芬芳
絕無臭味
且其色極其潔白
絕無污穢
且其形極其美觀
絕無醜陋
且其價極其低廉
絕無昂貴
凡欲購者
請向各藥房
或各百貨公司
或各洋行
均有出售

WOMEN! Safety First

Follow Doctor's Advice in
Feminine Hygiene

TAKE no chances with your health when to be safe is so simple. No longer risk the dangers of unsanitary "sanitary pads" that may do more harm than good. They are not cheap at any price.

Science has perfected Kotex for you—a sanitary pad that the medical profession indorses. Kotex, made of softest materials, is utterly comfortable and scientifically designed to fit perfectly without revealing its presence.

It brings peace-of-mind because you know it is 5 times more absorbent than cotton. And that means absolute protection. You dispose of it without bother—no laundry.

It deodorizes—and ends all fear of offense in that direction.

You owe it to yourself to try Kotex. Get a package today at any drug, dry goods or departmental store.



KOTEX

Sanitary Napkins

In 2 sizes: Kotex Regular and Kotex-Super; 12 to the package

Agents for China: Wm. Golding & Co., 64 Peking Road, Shanghai.

13.14 "Chinese modern girl finds Kotex in her suitcase."

Funiu zazhi 14, no. 8 (August 1928).

13.15 "English modern girl finds Kotex in her suitcase."

North China Daily News, 6 December 1928.

campaign produced is the image of a Modern Girl stooped before a box of Kotex that she has lifted out of a suitcase (see figure 13.14). Consistent with the formula of the icon, the mirror, and the commodity, this girl (who looks like a curious girl, minus the braid) gazes right into the commodity with a literally speechless (since she has no mouth) intensity, as she seems to lift the package toward eye level. The image in the English-language version shows a similar girl icon (see figure 13.15). In both, the icon's gaze cannot be detached from the product. She looks into the box as if it is a mirror, fixed with longing for what it alleges to deliver. She is absorbed in the same mimetic self-cognition as the Ribbon dental paste painter, but she is making her body a publicly visible source of pleasure. In straightforward classical Chinese, the ad informs readers that in matters of hygiene, safety is the number one theme, so it is best to take health matters quite seriously. Homemade menstrual padding is more harmful than good, the copy says, because it is unhygienic, unsafe, and an obstacle to good health. This drawing is physically affecting because it literalizes the reproductive body. The object of the icon's gaze is not only unspeakably related to what makes her body singular, her menses; it also uses words that define and dissipate possible, delicate unease (about odor, blood, pain) while putting this unease irrevocably into public rhetoric. Focusing attention on the menstrual commodity, the ad seals the girl and the remedy to what becomes, through advertising culture, an openly, publicly secularized physical part of all women's everyday life. At least in theory: gazing at the menstrual pads hidden in the suitcase, the iconic sexed girl freezes in self-reflection, as if catching sight of her real self in a mirror. Perhaps she (and through her, the sutured viewer of the advertising image) is seeing in the transparent modern physiology of the menstrual cycle performed in a subtle other scene of use value.

It is not really surprising, then, that the pose of the Kotex girls is rather similar to a feminine performance of pleasure associated with movie actresses, or that gazing at commodities is a spectacle that advertising in these years repeated over and over. No image I have found better conveys this provocative cliché than the endlessly reiterated drama of the Sincere girl. Sincere Department Store, founded by an Australian Chinese overseas business family and one of the great wonders of Shanghai before Japanese bombing destroyed it, designed its own sexy Modern Girl icon in the company's heyday. "Material civilization discards the old and promotes the new," its banner reads (see figure 13.16). As the Sincere girl's efficiently drawn posture of delight captures visual attention, the text assures that the department store keeps you on an evolutionary track with all current commodities, which is why you should choose Sincere over the competition. While other iterations of this girl have her gazing in awe at a packaged ham, this one focuses on soaps and cosmetics. It is the

婦女用品
衛生藥品
家庭用具
應時新裝
繡花手帕
衣邊針線
國產絲襪
西式革履
疋頭綢緞
金銀首飾
化粧香品

通信現購
概照市價
寄發快捷
郵寄章程
函索即寄

上海郵政第七號
先施公司



13.16 "Sincere Department Store girl icon gazes in awe."
Fumü zazhi 17, no. 8 (August 1931).

物質的文明、推陳出新、無日不在前進中、本公司
是專以最時新的貨品、供獻社會、所以需用最時
新的貨品、應向本公司採購、

relationship between the gaze of the ecstatic girl and the inert but intensely attractive commodity that charges the little drawing with emotion and thus draws us into the scene.⁴⁴

Conclusion

Philosophy must be caught up in the "minutiae of everyday life," Lefebvre has argued, if it is to become more than ideology or class prejudice.⁴⁵ The relation of modernist vernacular sociology and the sexy Modern Girl icon—or, more broadly, philosophy and its visualization—is a mystery. Capitalist commodification of the human body brought with it the ambiguous redemption of women. That process has played out all over the world. But, as the evidence amassed here suggests, commodified eroticism came alive in the most banal fashion, in the pages of middle-class opinion journals and, in more bastardized form, at the physical margins of the leading daily newspapers. Littered inconspicuously in thumbnail images that framed the news columns of *Dagong bao* or *Shen bao*, tiny Cutex, Colgate, and Sincere Department Store ads combined fun with serious ideological work.

The sexy Modern Girl icon is in this sense a philosophical phenomenon. Consolidated in the tumultuous world of capitalist Shanghai, iconic commercial art naturalized the other scene or fantasy where the imagined use values of commercial commodities and modernist styles of eroticism fused. But the ideas, which I have called vernacular sociology here, are not so abstract as we might imagine, either. Like Balibar's other scene of politics, the other scene of use value was the moment when the passions shaping modern social behavior were given a visible form; where the commodity became the "modern" part of modernity. Vernacular sociology, sophisticated ideas about self and society, personhood, evolution, progress, and a future when China, as Japan already had, would belong to the family of advanced nations, shared the logic of the iconic sexy girl advertising scene.

This expression of philosophy through commercial minutiae means that lofty questions like "Who is a Modern Girl?" are better addressed historically within the ephemeral and tactile, outside the fake clarity of self-expression. Because, as Lefebvre put it, "philosophic categories" like "the subject," to raise a concern of this study, "can only be separated from social categories a posteriori." With attention to ephemera, "our consciousness of these things becomes transformed." Debris that has not been highly valued in its time, like these simple cartoon advertising images, loses its "triviality, its banality since in each thing we see more than itself—something else which is there in everyday objects, not an abstract lining but something enfolded within which hitherto

we have been unable to see.”⁴⁶ Here I have called this something the other scene of use value. It is the philosophic categories of Chinese colonial modernist sociology that saturate 1920s advertising culture. But it is in these sophisticated other scenes of use value starring Shanghai’s sexy Modern Girl icon that this “something enfolded” in modernity was most powerfully expressed.

Notes

- I gratefully acknowledge the intellectual generosity and careful reading of this chapter in draft form that Ruri Ito and Lynn Thomas provided. To Donald M. Lowe for his criticism of repeated drafts I am as always deeply grateful. Teresa Mares, Brandy Parris, Helen Schneider, Pamela Tang, and Mengliang Zhang have helped me a lot over the years in handling images and copy editing my prose.
1. “A use-value is a property that satisfies some human need, such that someone might want to purchase the commodity. An exchange-value is a quantitative measure of the value of a commodity in relation to other commodities. It is the possession of exchange-value that makes a product a commodity. To be produced as a commodity is to be produced for exchange. Commodity production is production for exchange.” Osborne, *How to Read Marx*, 12–13.
 2. Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, 19. Žižek defines the “other scene” as a “form of thought whose ontological status is not that of thought” and thus is “external to the thought whereby the form of the thought is already articulated in advance.” In Žižek’s thinking, the other scene has a second element. That is an unconscious “theater,” where modern personhood is staged psychically.
 3. Balibar, *Politics and the Other Scene*, xiv. In this view such a locality is “not so much a concrete or theoretical place . . . as the moment where it becomes manifest that politics is not ‘rational’ (but is not simply ‘irrational’ either).” See also Lacan, “The Signification of the Phallus,” 285.
 4. Benton, Benton, and Woods, eds., *Art Deco 1910–1930*, 13.
 5. Crow, *Four Hundred Million Customers*, 32.
 6. Xu Junji, *History of Chinese Advertising*, 148–59. The longer version of this chapter (unpublished) lists an astounding number of ad agencies.
 7. Laing, “The Fate of Shanghai Painting Style,” 953–1003, 981. Her primary source is *Millard’s Review*, 8 June 1919, 70.
 8. *Ibid.*, 983.
 9. See Bacon, “Advertising in China,” 745. Also consulted was the Chinareach Company profile, <http://www.chinareach.com/profile.htm> (visited 15 July 2002). Lin Zhenbin studied advertising and marketing at Rochester University and took his M.A. at Columbia. According to his son, Ling created his own campaigns.
 10. Yi, Liu, and Gan, *Lao Shanghai Guangao*, 1–19; Cochran, *Big Business in China*, 1–9, 201–20; Cochran, “Marketing Medicine and Advertising Dreams,” in Yeh, ed., *Becoming Chinese: Passages to Modernity and Beyond*, 62–97; and Cochran, “Transnational

Origins of Advertising in Early Twentieth Century China,” in Cochran, ed., *Inventing Nanjing Road*, 37–60.

11. See *Directory and Chronicle for China*, 193.
12. Laing, “The Fate of Shanghai Painting Style,” 983, cites the *Weekly Review* (formerly *Millard’s*), 30 December 1922.
13. Crow, *Four Hundred Million Customers*, 314. Crow established a coupon feedback system and ways of using newspaper distribution circuits to advantage clients. To compensate for illiteracy among clients (he cites a wealthy, illiterate carpenter who owned a private motor car), Crow hired high-priced artists to create drawings of beautiful women (175).
14. You Guoqing, *Byebye Old Style Advertising*, 23–108.
15. It reflected the international moment and development of the global advertising industry.
16. <http://www.scvhistory.com/scvhistory/pioneer-asme-ii.htm> (visited 29 June 2005).
17. Complex images like these appear in *Shenbao* (1872–1949), the foreign-owned, Chinese-language daily; *Liangyu huabao*, established in 1926 by overseas Chinese entrepreneurs; *Meishu shenghuo* (1934–37); as well as *North China News*, *South China Morning Post*, *Dongfang zazhi* (*Eastern Miscellany*; hereafter *DFZZ*), and *Funü zazhi* (*Ladies’ Journal*; hereafter *FNZZ*), to list the venues that I or my assistants have examined. See Li Yensheng, *Zhongguo baokan tushi*, 1–64.
18. Bacon, “Advertising in China,” 759.
19. Crow, *Four Hundred Million Customers*, 105 (my emphasis).
20. *Ibid.*, 38.
21. Eclat girl advertisement, *FNZZ* 10, no. 6 (June 1924): n.p.
22. Colgate vanity, *DFZZ* 18, no. 10 (20 October 1921): n.p. Since the vanity table is an integral element of all contemporary Pond’s ads, I am suggesting (1) that it is Crow’s habit of recopying American corporate ads that “translated” the image into common commercial parlance in the banal line-drawing ad, and (2) that the process of imitation is the motile element in the creation of the sexy modern girl icon.
23. Laing, *Selling Happiness*, 144–45.
24. *Pepsodent ads*: *FNZZ* 10, no. 12 (December 1924); *DFZZ* 25, no. 7 (10 April 1928); *FNZZ* 11, no. 10 (November 1925). *Palmolive ads*: *FNZZ* 14, no. 7 (July 1928) and *FNZZ* 16, no. 7 (July 1930).
25. This section is indebted to Barlow, “Wanting Some,” 312–50.
26. Marx, *Capital*, and Lowe, *The Body in Late Capitalist USA*.
27. Agamben, *The Coming Community*, 47–84. See also Zito and Barlow, eds., *Body, Subject and Power in China*, 1–102.
28. Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life*, 159.
29. Yung-chen Chiang, *Social Engineering and the Social Sciences in China, 1919–1949*.
30. Endo, *Modern Sociology*.
31. Jun Zuo, “New Thought and New Art, Sociological Research Method” (Xin sixiang yu xin wenyi, shehuixue de jianjiu fa), *DFZZ* 18, no. 21 (1922): 73–77.
32. Barlow, *The Question of Women in Chinese Feminism*, chap. 3.
33. Pan Guangdan, “Feng Xiaoqing kao,” *FNZZ* 10, no. 11 (1924). See Ko, *Teachers of the*

- Inner Chambers*, 69, 91–112; Widmer, “Xiaoqing’s Literary Legacy,” 111–55; Jing Tsu, *Failure, Nationalism and Literature*, 149–53; and Zhang, “Literary Uses of Psychoanalytic Criticism by Chinese Psychologists,” 132–39. I am particularly grateful to the latter.
34. See Barlow, “The Women in the Mirror,” unpublished manuscript essay, “Family Values Workshop,” Weissbourd Conference, Society of Fellows, University of Chicago, April 2005, on linking Pan Guangdan and the late imperial visual cliché of mirror gazing women. I gratefully acknowledge the help of Ellen Laing, Ann Waltner, and particularly Christine Tan.
 35. Shi Quan, “Outline of Advertising Psychology” (Guanggao xinlixue gailun), *DFZZ* 21, no. 21 (1924).
 36. Crow, *Four Hundred Million Customers*, 170–85.
 37. Liu Shuqin, “From Natural Sociology to Cultural Sociology” (Cong ziran shehuixue xiang wenhua de shehuixue), *DFZZ* 23, no. 19 (1926): 57–70.
 38. On hygiene and modernism, see Rogaski, *Hygienic Modernity*.
 39. *FNZZ* 10, no. 6 (1924): n.p.
 40. *FNZZ* 11, no. 8 (1925): n.p.
 41. Barlow, “History and the Border,” 8–32.
 42. Agamben, *The Coming Community*, 46–47.
 43. Elam, *Feminism and Deconstruction*, 27–66.
 44. An advertisement for the Lihua department store visually conveys the commodity world’s magic: a crowd sleepwalking toward the open door of the department store. With one exception, a man loaded with packages, the figures have their backs to the reader. While arresting, it does not have the force of the *mise-en-scène* of the icon and her gaze. *DFZZ* 23, no. 8 (1926): n.p.
 45. Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life*, 76, 74, 134.
 46. *Ibid.*, 159.

14

Fantasies of Universality?

Neue Frauen, Race, and Nation

in Weimar and Nazi Germany

UTA G. POIGER

In 1928, a U.S. advertising executive complained in the German professional design journal *Gebrauchsgraphik* that German graphic artists had developed a recognizable signature style. In particular he criticized Ludwig Hohlwein’s ads for an American account: “The people in his posters were not American or cosmopolitan types, they were distinctly local types, peculiar to Germany, not idealized types.”¹ Hohlwein was one of Germany’s foremost graphic artists in the first few decades of the twentieth century, and in the 1920s he, like most of his colleagues, participated in the construction of images of Modern Girls, or *neue Frauen* and “girls,” as German contemporaries frequently called them. In the early and mid-1920s, he was also successful in the United States.²

His ads did feature idealized types, but apparently not the “cosmopolitan” look that many U.S. advertisers, and some German ones as well, were striving for by the late 1920s. A cosmetics ad from 1924 signed by Hohlwein for the Kaloderma brand of powder, soap, and gel by the German cosmetics company F. Wolff and Sohn portrayed a young white woman with a wavy bob turning her dreamy gaze away from a vanity. The image of a recognizable