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Beauty, Business and German International Relations

From the 1920s to the 1930s the marketing strategies of cosmetics companies based in Germany changed dramatically. While these companies had introduced brand names for their products prior to World War I, visuals and text deployed in their advertising varied considerably, both between companies and in the ads developed by any one company. For, example in 1924, the German Mouson company advertised its product line Tai Tai with the image of a Chinese-looking servant in front of a white woman. That same year another Tai Tai ad depicted a white woman traveler with short hair and a cloche-like hat in a kimono-like gown in front of a Buddha. By the 1930s, however, companies consolidated the textual and visual imagery associated with their brands while portraying their products as modern, scientifically proven, and respectable. The visual strategies deployed for different cosmetics brands continued to be distinct and at times differed for domestic and foreign markets, but for both German and international companies the range was more narrow from the 1930s to the 1960s than it had been in the 1920s.

During this period, skin creams – among the main products of major German companies such as Beiersdorf with its Nivea brand and Mouson with its brand by the same name – increasingly became goods of everyday use for most Germans. According to one survey, by 1963, 75 percent of West German women used hand and face creams, a considerably higher percentage than in France, Britain, or Belgium. By contrast, »color cosmetics« such as powder, rouge or lipstick, remained far more controversial and used less in Germany than in other West European countries or the United States. The same survey found in 1963 that 38 percent of West German women used lipsticks, considerably fewer than 51 percent of Belgian women, 58 percent of French women, and 73 percent of British women questioned. Only in Italy did fewer women, 25 percent, apply lipstick. American women outdid all their European counterparts: a 1948 survey had found that between eighty and ninety percent of American women painted their lips.[1]

In this article, I analyze how two major cosmetics manufacturers in Germany, Beiersdorf and Mouson, presented their brands, product range, and company histories in their marketing strategies from the 1920s to the 1960s. Beiersdorf, the bigger of the two, had German Jews among its founders. Based in Hamburg, the company specialized (and specializes) in skin care and pharmaceutical products such as band-aids. By the 1920s Beiersdorf was

1 For comments of earlier versions of this essay, I would like to thank Tim Brown, David Ciarlo, Ruth Feldstein, Alison Frank, Melani McAlister, Robert Moeller, Dorothee Wierling, and Jonathan Zatlin. This work grows out of my participation in a research collaboration with five colleagues at the University of Washington, Seattle. See Modern Girl Around the World Research Project (Tani E. Barlow, Madeleine Yue Dong, Uta G. Poiger, Priti Ramamurthy, Lynn M. Thomas and Alys Weinbaum), The Modern Girl Around the World, Durham 2008 (forthcoming) and idem, The Modern Girl Around the World: A Research Agenda and Preliminary Findings, in: Gender and History 17 (August 2005), p. 245–294. For statistics, see Geoffrey Jones, Globalizing the Beauty Business before 1980, Harvard Business School Working Papers, 11.7.2006, Table 3, p. 18. http://www.hbs.edu/research/pdf/06-056.pdf, accessed January 8, 2007; Kathy Peiss, Hope in a Jar: The Making of America«s Beauty Culture, New York 1998, p. 245.

owned by shareholders. Mouson was founded and owned by the Mouson family with Huguenot roots. Its main base was Frankfurt and the company specialized in cosmetics, but with a broader product range than Beiersdorf that included perfume, soap and cream. In surveys Beiersdorf's Nivea brand and Mouson's brand with the family name emerged repeatedly as the most used facial products in Germany. Moreover, both companies also exported or licensed their products abroad. As we will see, the politics of company ownership influenced how these companies presented themselves and their products, especially so during and after the Third Reich.

An explosion of cosmetics advertising started in the 1920s when more women in Germany and other parts of the world were entering the workforce in white-collar jobs or as professionals. At the same time, the anonymity of big cities and a progressive breakdown of class or status boundaries made body and face, clothing and cosmetics, important in portraying the self for quick assessment by others. For domestic and foreign markets, the majority of Beiersdorf and Mouson ads represented women, who were also the main consumers of the companies' cosmetics products. In the first decades of the 20th century, and in many parts of the world, the use of mass-produced skin preparations and the display of color cosmetics became signs of what it means to be modern, especially for women. At the same time, in Germany as elsewhere, associations of cosmetics, especially of the coloring variety, with social evil remained a staple of public commentary. Critics variously labeled cosmetics an unnecessary luxury, or a province of women interested in illicit sex. Given these ambiguities, I analyze what aesthetic representations of female bodies and faces cosmetics companies developed and into which social situations they placed the protagonists of their ads. Like their competitors, Beiersdorf and Mouson walked and influenced changing lines between luxury and necessity, and between titillation and respectability. Their ads thus need to be analyzed in relation to larger debates about the healthy body under consecutive political regimes.

Cosmetics ads presented multiple possibilities for expressing a national or cosmopolitan sense of self that was sometimes explicitly, more often implicitly racialized. Visual and textual representations in ads and company publications positioned the companies, their histories, and their brands in relation to foreign markets and to visions of national and ethnic difference. These varied representational strategies also related to changing class formations. We cannot fully understand these dynamics without placing marketing strategies into a transnational and comparative framework. Therefore I examine both domestic and international marketing strategies of Mouson and Beiersdorf and show how their strategies compared to those of foreign, especially U.S. competitors operating in Germany.

Visual Imagery in Cosmetics Advertising before the Depression

In the years immediately after World War I, Beiersdorf and Mouson experimented with various messages for their brands. Both companies directed their advertising in-house, creating ads often influenced by art nouveau that generally depicted upper-class women as the main consumers of their products. Dress or activity made these women recognizable as wealthy. Designers for Mouson and Beiersdorf also created posters in bold letters and colors focusing on the attractiveness of Nivea or Mouson packaging, rather than depicting consumers of their products.[2]

2 See ads in Claudia Hansen, Nivea: Evolution of a World Famous Brand, Hamburg 2001, p. 34–37; Creme Mouson, Leipziger Illustrirte Zeitung (LIZ), 6.8.1925, p. 231.

A 1924 Mouson ad for a toiletries series named Tai Tai put its upper-class clientele into an explicitly racialized context. Promoting a perfume and other products, including a cream, it hearkened back to pre-war advertising conventions that had depicted blacks or Chinese as inferior to whites: the ad figured a stereotypically portrayed diminutive, apparently Chinese servant, who served perfume to a modern white woman with a bob, nude shoulders, white skin, and a long slim evening or nightgown.

Figure 1: Ad for Tai Tai toiletries by the German Mouson Company, 1924

As Germany had lost its formal overseas colonies with the Versailles Treaty and claimed to be humiliated by the presence of Senegalese French colonial troops in the Rhineland, Mouson (and some German competitors) depicted a fantasy of white power over people of color. The Tai Tai ad figured the visibly modern woman as a central agent in such a colonial fantasy. This depiction of a modern woman likely had special resonance in the early 1920s Germany when the French occupation of the Rhineland, and the relations between German women and West and North African men that resulted, had heightened anxieties about interracial sexual relations. The control that the white modern woman exerted over the body of the servant in the Tai Tai appeared to preclude the possibility of interracial sex.[3] This ad is indicative of a moment when race was articulated explicitly in ads aimed at convincing consumers to imagine women's bodies as zones of improvement.

Ads with racialized servant themes were not the province of German companies alone. The Japanese cosmetics company Shiseido, for example, created an ad for its domestic market in the early 1920s that featured a white woman clad in Rococo dress with a black servant in Middle Eastern dress including a white turban. These servant ads disappeared from Ger-

3 On German debates about sexual relations between ethnic Germans and colonized people, see Lora Wildenthal, German Women for Empire, 1884–1945, Durham 2001; Tina Campt, Converging Spectres of An Other Within: Race and Gender in Prewar Afro-German History, in: Callaloo 26 (2003), p. 322–341.

man, and Shiseido, cosmetics advertising after 1925, not to return in later decades.[4] In the United States, Germany, and other countries, the Palmolive Company ran ads for Palmolive soap in the first half of the 1920s that also drew on servant imagery, but located it in ancient Egypt. At least one of these ads can be read as racialized. A scantily clad dark haired »harem woman« who is standing is serving a blonde woman covered by a toga and seated. The extensive copy put this scene in the time of Cleopatra. Like Japanese and German racialized servant ads, such imagery disappeared from U.S. advertising by the late 1920s as well.[5]

Other advertisements for Tai Tai from the 1920s drew on a range of Orientalist images. One newspaper ad from 1924 figured a white woman traveler with short hair and a cloche-like hat in a kimono-like gown with her shoulder exposed in front of a Buddha, and appealed to a longing for access to the world outside of Europe (which had in fact become difficult even for wealthy Germans in the war and postwar years). It also drew on long-lasting stereotypes of the Orient as a place of sensuality, but in contrast to the moralizing depictions of the Orient in mass circulation periodicals of the pre-War period which had juxtaposed the restrained Western bourgeois housewife with the lascivious female inhabitants of the harem, it figured the white upper-class woman's sensuality as opened up by travel to the Orient.[6]

Beiersdorf in the meantime pursued a different strategy and did not participate in the creation of racialized servant or orientalist imagery. By the middle of the 1920s the company moved away from ads that portrayed upper-class women who, advertisers hoped, would be emulated by a broader segment of the female population. The company was among the first to introduce photographs as its main visuals. Soon its ads in Germany took up explicitly the body culture movement *Körperkulturbewegung* that had gained popularity in Germany since the pre-World War I years. Resonances with the body culture movement were particularly prominent in the summer months when Beiersdorf marketed Nivea cream as both sun protection and tanning aid, and ads usually featured young women in swimsuits. From 1927, for example, the company advertised use of its cream for achieving »a bronze tone« in the summer with a photograph of a brunette at a lake. In posters such photographs were directly transposed into images with less text and with striking colors, while retaining the bodily proportions of the photo originals.[7] With such ads, Beiersdorf aimed for images that were less class-specific than those of its competitors.

4 See David M. Ciarlo, Rasse konsumieren: Von der exotischen zur kolonialen Imagination in der Bildreklame des Wilhelminischen Kaiserreichs, in: Birthe Kundrus (ed.), Phantasiereiche: Zur Kulturgeschichte des deutschen Kolonialismus, Frankfurt/M. 2003, p. 135–179, especially p. 147–148. For examples of racist toiletries advertisements in the United Kingdom, see Thomas Richards, The Commodity Culture of Victorian England: Advertising and Spectacle, 1851–1914, Stanford 1990, p. 119–67; for Japan, see exhibit in Shiseido Corporate Museum, Kakegawa, Japan.

5 Palmolive soap ad, Pictorial Review, 1922, in Ad Access database at Duke University: http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu:80/dynaweb/adaccess/beauty/soaps1920s/@Generic__BookTextView/798;nh=1?DwebQuery=palmolive+in+%3Cc01%3E#X, accessed January 9, 2007.

6 See LIZ, 1925, p. 967. On German depictions of the Orient, especially in the popular press of the 19th century, see for example A. Harnisch, Der Harem in Familienblättern des 19. Jahrhunderts: Koloniale Phantasien und Nationale Identität, in: German Life and Letters 51 (July 1998), p. 325–341.

7 Nivea ad in LIZ, 5.5.1927, p. 644; LIZ, 23.6.1927, p. 920; poster in Hansen, Nivea, especially p. 43.

Figure 2: Körperkultur: Nivea ad, 1927

Along with its advertising strategies, the material qualities of its Nivea cream have most certainly been a key factor in the company's success. Nivea, invented in 1911, is a strikingly white cream that does not disintegrate in the jar and effectively moisturizes the skin. While Beiersdorf sometimes gave detailed explanations of the chemical properties of Nivea in its pre-1920s German ads, such extensive references disappeared from its domestic marketing in later years.[8]

Beiersdorf was the first German cosmetics company to build a campaign with images that remained consistent over many years, with considerable success. Its reliance on body culture imagery also facilitated marketing to both men and women. For both men and women, the body culture movement put an emphasis on athletic »natural« bodies, trained in natural surroundings, to achieve perfect health and beauty. By the early 1930s, Nivea, less expensive than Mouson or American competitor Ponds, had become a *Universalcreme* in Germany, used by different socio-economic groups for a range of purposes. In fact its sales increased during the Depression, as consumers switched from more expensive products to Nivea.[9]

As Michael Hau and others have shown, *Körperkultur*, initiated in the late 19th century by members of the petit bourgeoisie and frequently rooted in anxieties over economic suc-

8 On Nivea's invention and composition, see Rainer Gries, Produkte als Medien: Kulturgeschichte der Produktkommunikation in der Bundesrepublik und der DDR, Leipzig 2003, p. 457–459.

9 J. Walter Thompson Company m.b.H., Memorandum on Pond's in Germany, 1.7.1932, JWT Collection, John W. Hartmann Center, Duke University, Research Reports, reel 224, part I, p. 9–10; Gries, Produkte als Medien.

cess, was associated with a range of political groupings in the Weimar years. Thus it was compatible with right-wing racist ideologies and their eugenic thinking. However, eugenics – the idea of improving the biological stock of the nation – and ideal body types were by no means the province of right-wing racists alone. In Weimar Germany, they could also be found in the publications of the left as well as in publications such as *Berliner Illustrirte Zeitung*, which did not necessarily have a clear political affiliation. By the second half of the 1920s these publications celebrated physical exercise for women in Germany and abroad, with sporty dress that revealed more and more parts of women's bodies. Such body imagery emanated for example also from the Soviet Union. What united these portrayals by different political groupings was an insistence that ideal bodies were beautiful but not erotic, and a more general rejection of materialism and artifice. Especially in the far left press, this went often hand in hand with strong criticisms of color cosmetics such as lipstick, powder or rouge which were perceived as creating an »unnatural mask« for women. However, commentaries that saw the use of cosmetics, including color cosmetics, as desirable or necessary could also be found in the mainstream Weimar press, and an increasing number of German women was making use of such products.[10]

A 1929 study of workers conducted by Erich Fromm found that, largely independent of political leanings, most accepted short skirts and bobbed hair for women, yet at the same time the majority rejected the use of powder or lipstick. Answers in the Fromm study included pronouncements such as »Short skirts, yes. [...] With short skirts, one can see a woman's build (position of the legs). If we wish to have a good choice for breeding this is necessary.« Visible legs here made it possible to observe eugenic imperatives. Rejections of cosmetics were the flipside of this interest in hygiene and healthy breeding. Said one respondent »The use of every artifical cosmetic is a betrayal. Sensible ways of living and a healthy diet do more for the beauty of a woman.« Some answers explained that cosmetics were »not German« and explicitly racialized this rejection, connecting powder, lipstick, and perfume use to South Europeans, Jews, or »primitive tribes.«[11] Those workers who saw themselves as leftists rejected cosmetics as »unnatural« in even higher numbers than those with Nazi leanings.

Eugenic discourse thus helped make sense of a new, more revealing and athletic body culture that was explicitly hostile to visible cosmetics. In taking up imagery associated with life reform and a new natural »body culture« then, Beiersdorf chose to avoid any associations with artifice. Beiersdorf ads in Germany showed women, and some men, in pursuit of nature and sports, but indicated no use of lipstick or other color cosmetics. And the reverse odalisque in some of the Beiersdorf ads who turned her face away from the viewer avoided the issue of color cosmetics altogether.

Beiersdorf deployed some of the images introduced in Germany also in its advertising abroad. In 1930, for example, Beiersdorf used an image of an athletic man lifting a heavy ball to advertise Nivea oil. In Germany this man, photographed from the rear and turning his profile towards the viewer sometimes wore boxer shorts, sometimes not. An ad for the Spanish-speaking market featured the image, dressed in the shorts. Perhaps the image of

10 See Michael Hau, The Cult of Health and Beauty in Germany, Chicago 2003; Vicki Baum, Pariser Platz 13: Eine Komödie aus dem Schönheitssalon und andere Texte über Kosmetik, Alter und Mode, ed. and afterword by Julia Bertschick, Berlin 2006.

11 Erich Fromm, The Working Class in Weimar Germany: A Psychological and Sociological Study, Lemington Spa 1984 (originally published in German in 1929), p. 150–161.

male nudity associated with the body culture movement was deemed too revealing for Spanish-speaking, usually Catholic markets.[12]

Beiersdorf's American subsidiary apparently perceived beauty standards in the United States to be different from body culture imagery – geared more towards explicit eroticism and the use of color cosmetics. Ads run for Nivea cream in the United States in 1929, for example, emphasized the scientifically proven, yet 'natural' qualities of Nivea cream and stressed Nivea's appeal in Europe: »Clever women on the Continent know how to outwit the ravages of sun, wind, dust, powder, and rouge – they use Nivea Creme! [...] Nivea – rich in skin-stimulating Eucerite – is the creation of a famous German dermatologist.« Both the reference to science and the effort to sell Nivea as foundation for color cosmetics was a bow to U.S. marketing strategies. The visuals accompanying the copy were likewise a departure from the German ads; some ads featured a kneeling white female nude, blonde or brunette, breasts covered by the position of the arms. Lighting, posture and facial make-up made these images more overtly erotic than the nudes the *Körperkulturbewegung* was using in its publications in Germany. These images also departed from visual conventions in U.S. cosmetics ads, which did not include portrayals of nudes. Likely, the U.S. Beiersdorf subsidiary misjudged American expectations. While it largely retained the messages of the ad text in following years, the images of nudes were gone by 1931, replaced by close-ups of visibly made-up women's faces.[13]

Nivea ads in India sent yet a different message. A Nivea ad that appeared in the *Times of India Annual* in 1931, addressed a wealthy European clientele, with watercolors of a young blonde white woman in modern dress, including a cloche hat and slim-fitting short dresses, who used Nivea cream in a range of situations: as day cream, as night cream, to prevent sunburn. The ad also depicted her white male partner using Nivea for shaving while a darker-skinned Indian male servant in white dress and white turban entered through the door behind him. In two further sections of the ad her children played sports protected by the cream, and her brown-skinned and black-haired Indian nanny rocked a white blonde baby made content by Nivea. In contrast to the German Nivea ads of the time, this ad associated Nivea more explicitly with a specific upper-class position signified especially by the Indian nanny and servant. In what was then the British colony of India, Beiersdorf, like U.S. competitors in the same market, addressed a white clientele. In the meantime, some Indian companies began to use images of women that contemporaries would have read as Indian to address consumers. Wrestling with how to distribute its Nivea brand globally, Beiersdorf opted to adjust its advertising strategies locally.[14]

While Beiersdorf, in the second half of the 1920s, continued its *Körperkultur* marketing in Germany and at least some other countries, Mouson and other German cosmetics companies, like many of their international competitors, participated in the creation of what I

12 Hansen, Nivea, p. 44–45.

13 Ads USA, 1929, and 1931, Beiersdorf Company Archive, Hamburg. Beiersdorf had a representative in the United States since 1892, a subsidiary since 1921. See http://www.beiersdorf.de/Area-About-us/Unternehmensgeschichte/Tochtergesellschaften.aspx?l=1, accessed January 20, 2007; on references to science in cosmetics advertising see Peiss, Hope in a Jar; Roland Marchand, Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity, 1920–1940, Berkeley 1985; Barlow et al., The Modern Girl Around the World.

14 Times of India Annual, 1931. For cosmetics marketing in India, see Barlow et al., Modern Girl Around the World.

have called a cosmopolitan aesthetic.[15] Part of a worldwide art deco wave, the cosmopolitan aesthetic featured stylized and abstract images of women's bodies and faces. Frequently it depicted women who may be read as East Asian through the shape of their eyes and lips, or it combined a range of visual racial markers, such as East Asian eyes, brown or blond hair, and brown or white skin. These ethnically ambiguous women were figured as modern through their fashions, hairstyles, and use of cosmetics.

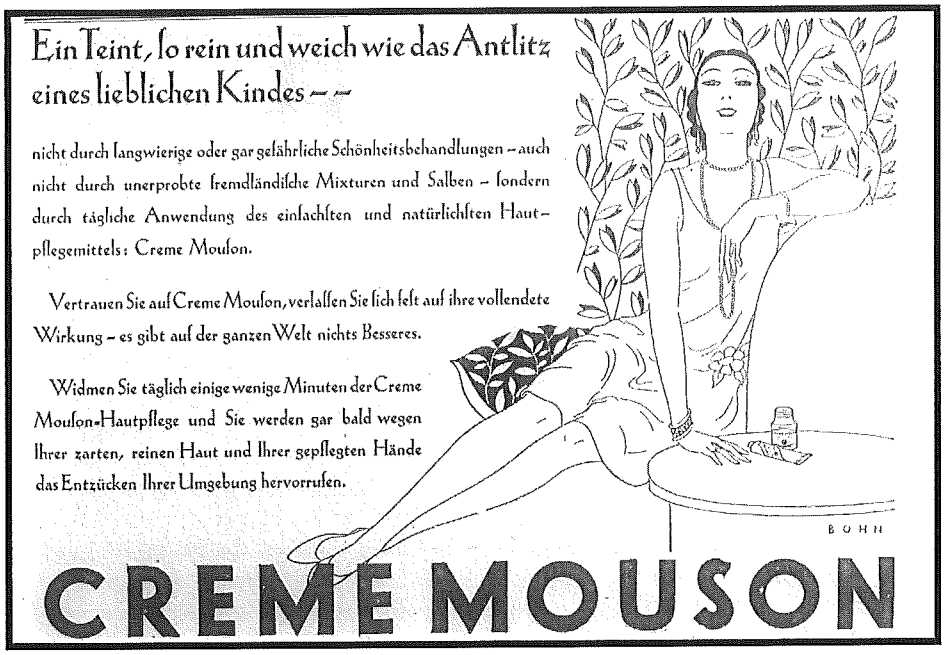

Figure 3: Cosmopolitan Aesthetic: Creme Mouson ad, 1927

Examples of this aesthetic include ads for Creme Mouson from 1927 and 1929. In one line drawing from 1927 a woman with abstract features and black hair is sitting back on a sofa, trusting Creme Mouson, because »there is nothing better in the entire world.« In another ad, a watercolor from 1929 with the slogan »Mother and Daughter: the Same Teint« two female heads shown from the neck up with necklaces earring, and boyish haircuts look out between oversized Mouson packages.[16] The German graphic artist Jupp Wiertz produced one of the most striking examples of the cosmopolitan aesthetic in a poster for one of Mouson's German competitors, F. Wolff and Sohn, depicting a woman with reddish brown hair and eyes that may have been read as East Asian. Her hairstyle, jewelry, and cloche hat all marked her as modern. The class character of these women was somewhat indeterminate

15 See Uta G. Poiger, Fantasies of Universality? *Neue Frauen,* Race and Nation in Weimar and Nazi Germany, in: Barlow et al., The Modern Girl Around the World.

16 Creme Mouson ad, LIZ, 13.10.1927, p. 565; Creme Mouson ad, 1929, Institut für Stadtgeschichte, Frankfurt/M. (ISGF) W1/17/1:172.

since such ads generally avoided depicting social situations such as a ball or travel, although the accessories suggested some access to wealth.[17]

The cosmopolitan aesthetic was by no means a German invention, rather it appeared in cosmetic ads around the world, in the United States and Japan perhaps slightly earlier than in Germany. The cosmopolitan aesthetic was also deployed by a U.S. company such as Richard Hudnut in German marketing, for example in an ad that featured a highly abstracted profile in 1930.[18] In the second half of the 1920s, German professional design journals *Die Reklame* und *Gebrauchsgraphik* featured many examples of this aesthetic from designers working in the United States, Germany, and other countries.

This cosmopolitan aesthetic was motivated by fantasies of universality. By fantasies of universality, I mean visions, textual or visual, that imagined different people in different parts of the globe reaching identical or nearly identical ways of living and looking. For corporations, including export-oriented German cosmetics companies, the cosmopolitan aesthetic could be part of efforts to express a business logic of universality in the short »golden twenties« that sought to appeal to consumers at home and abroad before the onset of the Depression in 1929. The cosmopolitan aesthetic was apparently easily transposed from market to market, from nation to nation, and eliminated the need to create culturally specific imagery.

U.S. companies ran ads in Germany, regularly claiming appeal for their products all over the world. The copy of a 1927 ad for Creme Elcaya for example told potential German consumers that the product was a creation of the New York based Elcaya Company »which is well known all over the world as one of the foremost beauty laboratories.« Perhaps U.S. companies were making a virtue out of a potential problem: in the post-World War I era an increasing number of countries required foreign products to be labeled with their place of manufacture. In Germany, likely because of high import tariffs, Creme Elcaya was actually produced by a German subsidiary, Jünger und Gebhardt in Berlin, and thus the company would not have had to make reference to the U.S. roots of its products. However, by the second half of the 1920s U.S. cosmetics companies apparently found that references to the origins and reach of their products were an asset. Such references played on and reinforced ideas of U.S. women as especially modern.[19]

A second U.S. company, Elizabeth Arden, was perhaps the only company to associate a photographic image with a cosmopolitan aesthetic. From the late 1920s onward the company operated a beauty salon in Berlin and advertised the salon, Arden's products, and Arden's international reach in the national German press. Its cream was five times as expensive as that of competitors such as Mouson. Its standard image was that of a woman with large dark round eyes, even features, and skin of indeterminate color, her hair and head hidden in tightly wrapped white bandages that were part of her spa treatment.[20] In 1928,

17 Vogue ad in Arnold Friedrich, Anschläge: Deutsche Plakate als Dokumente der Zeit 1900–1960, Eberhausen 1963, p. 64, dated there 1929.

18 Hudnut ad in: Die Dame 21 (1930), p. 43. Compare work by Zero in: Seventh Annual of Advertising Art (1928), p. 28.

19 Ad for Creme Elcaya, Berliner Illustrirte Zeitung (BIZ) 27.5.1927; Ausschuß zur Untersuchung der Erzeugungs- und Absatzbedingungen der deutschen Wirtschaft. Die deutsche Seifen- und Parfümerieindustrie, Berlin 1931, p. 239.

20 Arden ads in: Die Dame 28 (1927) and BIZ 16 (1931). On price, Memorandum on Pond's in Germany, part I, p. 11. For U.S. Arden ad from 1928 with the same motif, see Peiss, Hope in a Jar, p. 157.

Mouson used a similar image in an ad, claiming that its Creme Mouson made the »torture« of beauty wraps unnecessary.[21]

While German companies at times copied international campaigns, by comparison with American companies, they made textual references to the »world reputation« of their products more rarely. Beiersdorf, in the 1920s the German cosmetics company with the broadest international presence, hardly participated in the cosmopolitan aesthetic and rarely made reference to its international reach when advertising in Germany or abroad. Perhaps the name Nivea appeared so flexible that it and the associated products could be made to appear in a number of contexts as if they originated locally.

Depression and Ad Imagery under National Socialism

The cosmopolitan aesthetic largely disappeared from cosmetics advertising by the early 1930s, replaced in Germany by an aesthetic of variant whiteness. Multiple factors played a role. Advertisers replaced drawings with photographs, while much nervousness existed, not just on the political right, about visual representations of so-called new women, about modernist art, and the alleged relation of both to an upheaval in gender mores and social norms. With the withdrawal of many foreign loans, the German economy took a dramatic downturn, as production fell and unemployment rose. As efforts to insulate the German economy from world markets gained in strength, references to the international reach of German products were deployed even more rarely by German cosmetics advertisers.

Negative commentary on cosmetics use and advertising came repeatedly from the Nazis, including the party leadership. One U.S. paper even reported that Hitler had issued an edict »barring the use of cosmetics by German women.«[22] While the Nazis did not ban color cosmetics, soon after they came to power, one of Germany's journals for advertising professionals, *Die Reklame*, asked, »Are our women really the way they are represented in advertisements?« The author applauded Nivea for having used German motifs, but was very critical of other advertisers who used only »film stars« and »dolls made up with shaved eyebrows and well-formed (*wohlgeschwungenen*) lips, often in coquettish positions.« According the author »this type of woman has no trace of Germanness. The German woman is well-groomed, but she is not made up with shaving knife, lipstick, and powder.«[23] Advertisers who were explicitly sympathizing with the Nazis saw the construction of a *modern* German woman as their ideal.

The Mouson Company, like others involved in cosmopolitan aesthetic in the 1920s, fundamentally changed its advertising strategies in the 1930s. It pursued a two-pronged strategy, while no longer making any references to a worldwide reputation of its products. The company advertised Creme Mouson »*mit Tiefenwirkung*,« with a scientifically proven »deep-penetrating effect« (behind Nivea the second most used cream in Germany)[24] with photographs of a range of white women.

21 1928 Mouson Ad, ISGF Mouson W1/17/1:172.

22 Beauty Experts Protest Hitler Ban on Cosmetics, in: The Journal of Commerce, 29.3.1934, Hamburger Weltwirtschaftsarchiv Pressedokumentation (HWWA)

23 Die Reklame 26 (1933), p. 392–393, quoted in: Dirk Reinhardt, Von der Reklame zum Marketing: Geschichte der Wirtschaftswerbung in Deutschland, Berlin 1993, p. 408.

24 See Memorandum on Pond's in Germany.

The campaign for its lavender perfume was a more overt adjustment to the Nazi regime and its appeals to autarchy and a German people's community: in 1934 or 35 the company tried to introduce a perfume with the English/German combination »Old English Lavendel,« but was apparently heavily criticized by the local branch of the Nazi party. The company quickly renamed the perfume into »Mouson Lavendel with the Stagecoach« (*Postkutsche*), thus eliminating the reference to England and stressing the 18th- and early 19th-century Frankfurt, that is German, roots of the family business and to counter any connotations of Frenchness that the recognizably French, Hugenot family name might have caused.[25]

In a 1936 ad run in a Nazi Party brochure, Mouson featured a profile of the company founder, printed the seat of the company Frankfurt am Main in the same size as its name and stressed that its products »could be found in every German house.«[26] German cultural conservatives, including many Nazis, saw »decadent France« as an unwelcome influence on German culture, hostilities not expressed for the first time during the Nazi period. In the meantime, at least one of the sales representatives of the Mouson Company was involved in anti-Semitic attacks on the Nivea brand of its Hamburg competitor Beiersdorf.[27]

Beiersdorf found itself in a difficult position with the Nazi's rise to power. On the one hand *Die Reklame* portrayed its German advertising campaign as an example of healthy German advertising with properly modern women. At the same time private competitors started a smear campaign in stores and in the press about Beiersdorf's »Nivea-Cream-Jews.«[28] Beiersdorf responded to these attacks with »self-Aryanization.« It changed its capital structure and moved all Jewish members of its board into retirement or to is subsidiary in Amsterdam. From 1933 to 1944 the company was led by Carl Claussen, who was Aryan according to Nazi racial classifications, while married to a niece of one of the Jewish founders of the firm.[29] Since in 1933 the Nazi regime was more interested in the consolidation of its power than in business competition that might lead to economic upheaval, Beiersdorf successfully sought state and Nazi party support to stop the campaign by its competitors and even received some compensation.[30] In its German ads after 1933 the company left no doubt about the German whiteness of Nivea's users. Nivea's ad campaigns were now designed by Elly Heuss-Knapp, wife of future West Germany president Theodor Heuss whom the Nazis had removed from his position of teaching political science. Heuss-Knapp supported the family as an advertising consultant. Drawing on *Körperkultur* imagery and featuring mostly blond models, Nivea images resembled Nazi portrayals of women dancing, doing sports, or sunbathing. And at a time when references to science had become prevalent in cream ads of German and foreign competitors, Heuss expressed satisfaction that Nivea

25 »Wo Duftakkorde komponiert werden,« Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ), 15.4.1967, ISGF, clipping file Mouson.

26 Ad in brochure for »Gautag Hessen-Nassau,« 1936, ISGF, clipping file Mouson.

27 Gries, Produkte als Medien, p. 467–486; Frank Bajohr, »Aryanisation« in Hamburg: The Economic Exclusion of Jews and the Confiscation of their Property in Nazi Germany, New York 2002, p. 22–26; also Frank Bajohr and Joachim Szodrzynski, »Keine jüdische Hautcreme mehr benutzen!«: die antisemitische Kampagne gegen die Hamburger Firma Beiersdorf 1933/34, in: Arno Herzig (ed.), Die Juden in Hamburg 1590 bis 1990: wissenschaftliche Beiträge der Universität Hamburg zur Ausstellung »Vierhundert Jahre Juden in Hamburg,« Hamburg 1991 (Die Geschichte der Juden in Hamburg 1590–1990, vol. 2), p. 515–526.

28 Bajohr, »Aryanisation« in Hamburg, p. 23.

29 Ibid., p. 24.

30 Ibid., p. 24–26.

ads worked »without scientific preaching about the *epidermis*« – likely a direct quip about Nivea's competitor Mouson.[31]

Compared to Beiersdorf, other German competitors used a wider range of white women in their ads, at least until the mid–1930s. Ads for Kaloderma by F. Wolff and Sohn featured the photograph of a dark-haired woman with plucked eyebrows and painted lips in 1935. Her looks resonated with images of »vamps« whose sexuality had endangered men in dance and film since the turn of the 20th century. Also in 1935, Creme Mouson accompanied the slogan »natural beauty is looking at you,« with a frontal shot of a young woman who appeared to have her blond wavy hair pulled back in a bun. Both ads portrayed women as sensual.[32] While Nivea ads of the 1930s may have been read as proper portrayals of Aryan women by some, they also went against Nazi conventions: they put emphasis on the individual woman taking pleasure in touching herself, and with the angle of their camera shots, they did not adhere to photographic conventions that the Nazis promoted for correctly representing the racially desirable. By the late 1930s, the Nazi-controlled supervisory Council for Advertising whose mission was to assure »cleanliness« helped to narrow portrayals of women somewhat but neither obvious use of lipstick nor plucked eyebrows disappeared from ad images of German cosmetics companies.[33]

Elizabeth Arden's German subsidiary continued to use the company's cosmopolitan photographs in Nazi Germany and also imported much of the other imagery the company used in the United States. In contrast to German companies, Arden drew explicitly on exoticsm, for example in May 1939 when it advertised its lipstick and rouge »Copper Rose« (untranslated in the German ad) as »*apart*, different, interesting and a bit exotic.« This ad depicted a woman with dark hair and fairly dark complexion who was labeled Mexican through clothing and cactus (but not in the text). As Kathy Peiss and Sarah Berry have shown, exoticsm for white women that urged identification for example »with a Chinese Manchu princess« had in the meantime become a staple in U.S. cosmetics advertising. In Arden's ads in Nazi Germany the idea that a white woman might take pleasure in approximating looks of people from »exotic« places was put only into pictures, not words.[34]

During the Nazi period, Nivea and Mouson ads in other countries departed from the imagery used in Germany. In some cases Beiersdorf's advertising in foreign countries was more risqué than its portrayals of sporty women in Germany. A 1935 French poster, most likely designed in France, advertised Nivéa Huile Solaire with a color drawing of a woman skier, her blond bob blowing in the wind, while she was sunning herself in front of a white mountain and blue sky background. The subject of sports also appeared in German Nivea ads, but in the French poster the woman had lowered her shirt to bare her shoulders, her back and even part of her chest.[35] Acts of suggestive undressing, as opposed to the »natural«

31 Gries, Produkte als Medien, p. 468–471; http://www.bundespraesident.de/12103/Theodor-Heuss.htm, accessed 9.1.2007.

32 LIZ, 17.1.1935.

33 Uwe Westphal, Werbung im Dritten Reich, Berlin 1989; On photographic conventions, see Rolf Sachse, Die Erziehung zum Wegsehen: Fotografie im NS-Staat, Frankfurt/M. 2003.

34 Arden ad, Die Dame 2 (1936); Arden ads, Vogue, 1936, http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu:80/adaccess/BH/BH14/BH1422–150dpi.jpeg and http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu:80/adaccess/BH/BH14/BH1423–150dpi.jpeg. See Sarah Berry, Hollywood Exoticism: Cosmetics and Color in the 1930s, in: David Dresser (ed.), Hollywood Goes Shopping, Minneapolis 2000, p. 108–138.

35 French Nivea ad, in: Hansen, Nivea, p. 48–49.

nude body were regularly criticized in the Nazi press, and were not part of German Nivea ads from the second half of the 1920s onward throughout the Nazi period, and beyond.[36]

A Swedish Nivea poster from 1943 depicted a color-enhanced photo of a dark-haired white woman with brown wavy shoulder-length hair (internationally the preferred style of the 1940s), shiny red lips and shiny read fingernails sitting on a beach in a bikini. Like so many of Beiersdorf's international ads it made no reference to the German origins of Nivea.[37]

Mouson too advertised in neutral Sweden during World War II, with imagery different from Beiersdorf's A 1942 ad used drawings of fashionable women with painted nails marked as upper-class by fur and evening gown and extensive copy to promote the idea that Creme Mouson »met djupverkan« (*Tiefenwirkung*) would prevent rough »winter hands.«[38] Ads for the Mouson Lavendel in Sweden featured similar drawings of white women in a stylish short summer dress or a fashionable suit accompanied by a picture of the perfume bottle that featured an English-language label »Mouson Lavendel with the mail coach.« Nothing in these ads suggested to Swedish readers that Mouson products were imported by a company located in Nazi Germany, which during the war, had substantial sales increases in Sweden.[39]

Elsewhere in Europe, Mouson marketed its cream to German speakers. Ads from 1942 in the *Südostdeutsche Tageszeitung* published in Transylvania (*Siebenbürgen*), featured ads with the same line drawings and text that could also be found in German papers. The copy stressed the scientifically proven effect of the cream, which allegedly penetrated the upper layer of skin and made the skin appear more smooth and younger. Some of these drawings were based on a series of photos of a dark-haired woman with wrapped hair and visibly painted lips that circulated in Mouson's international and domestic advertising.[40] Ads for Mouson Lavendel in the same Transylvanian German paper avoided any depictions of women and instead featured the perfume bottle (with German letters) next to a line drawing of a stage coach »in remembrance of the time of the mail coach and as a sign of good tradition.« Facilitated by the German occupation of much of Europe and Nazi alliances with other regimes, Mouson was able to increase its sales outside of the 1938 borders during World War II until 1943.[41]

After 1943, cosmetics companies in Germany, which like other German businesses, by this time often operated with the help of slave labor, were only allowed to produce a so-called *Einheitsseife* and a no-name cream distributed to the Wehrmacht and to consumers under rationing systems. In Germany cosmetics advertising and use were reduced heavily during World War II. Beiersdorf advertised its products with letters from consumers that acknowledged war shortages, but expressed appreciation for their remaining Nivea prod-

36 See Frauenwarte, April 1940.

37 Swedish ad for Nivea, 1943, in: Hansen, Nivea, p. 50–51.

38 »Låt inte kylan ge Er 'vinterhänder,« Creme Mouson ad, 1942, ISGF Mouson W1/17/1:37.

39 »Den rena friska doften,« Mouson Lavendel, and »Frisk som ungdomen själv,« Mouson Lavendel, both 1942, ISGF W1/17/1:37; Exportumsätze, no date, ISGF W1/17:1/251.

40 Mouson ads in Südostdeutsche Tageszeitung, 25.4.1942 and 14.3.1942, ISGF Mouson W1/17/1:37; Poster in Helmut Nordmeyer, Die Creme mit der Tiefenwirkung: Zur Geschichte der Frankfurter Seifen- und Parfümeriefabrik J. G. Mouson & Co, Frankfurt/M. 1999, p. 16, http://www.stadtgeschichte-ffm.de/download/mouson.pdf, accessed 11.1.2007.

41 Mouson Lavendel, Südostdeutsche Tageszeitung, 4.4.1942, ISGF Mouson W1/17/1:37; Exportumsätze, no date, ISGF W1/17:1/251.

ucts.[42] How central German cosmetics companies understood brands and ads to be for their existence, becomes clear when one examines their use of so-called *Erinnerungswerbung* in the 1940s. Remembrance advertising consisted of ads, posters, leaflets, or brochures designed to remind consumers of the existence of brands at a time when consumers increasingly could no longer purchase the actual products.

In the 1940s Mouson advertising expanded the vision of Mouson's reach portrayed to German consumers. Its *Erinnerungswerbung* of the 1940s lined up with Nazi and industrialists' war planning and their visions of a greater German economic sphere that was to ensure German domination in large parts of Europe. One company leaflet from the »sixth year of the war« looked forward to fulfilling all desires »of the women of Europe« for Mouson Lavendel with the stage coach through exports »after the final victory.« The »women of Europe« were represented here with the drawing of an exotic-looking blonde with lipstick reminiscent of contemporary fashion drawings.[43] Advertising by German cosmetics companies and their U.S. competitors did not draw on visions of national or racial hierarchies that was central to much of the war propaganda. Apparently these companies judged overt racism not to be in their interest.

German Appeals to World Reach

After the Allied victory in 1945, the Western Allies initially gave permits for the production of rationed soap and soon they allowed a broader range of products, while restricting imports and exports through the Joint Export Import Agency (JEIA). With the currency reform, numerous cosmetics brands and the associated product range reappeared on the West German market. In the period of relative deprivation for Germans in the late 1940s, the West German illustrated press presented »*Schönheitspflege*,« beauty care, and the use of cosmetics as part of the »daily hygiene of the woman of today,« important to »women's health« and a »necessity,« »not a luxury.«[44] When researchers surveyed brand recognition in the British Zone in 1948, Mouson and Nivea were the two leaders in the category »beauty creams.« Mouson's products reappeared in 1947 and 48, whereas Beiersdorf sold Nivea again in 1949.[45]

In the post-World War II context positive editorializing on soap and cream use also responded to fears about women's interest in luxuries that the contemporary anxieties about relations between German women and occupation soldiers heightened. By this time attitudes about lipstick continued to be more negative in Germany than in the United States, where lipstick had been declared a wartime necessity.[46] In Germany, by contrast neither Beiersdorf nor Mouson marketed such color cosmetics from the 1920s to the 1950s. Mouson began to sell lipstick and nail polish in the 1960s, whereas Beiersdorf waited until 1994 to introduce a line of Nivea color cosmetics.[47]

Positive commentary on cosmetics in the postwar press was not surprising, given that cosmetics use had become more common in the interwar years and given that cosmet-

42 See Gries, Produkte als Medien.
43 Leaflet, »Die Welt der Frau,« without date, ISGF W1/17:1/176.
44 »Schön zu sein,« Radio, 5.12.1948, ISGF, clipping file Mouson.
45 Braunschweig/Strauf 1949, p. 94, quoted in Gries, Produkte als Medien, p. 486.
46 Peiss, Hope in a Jar, p. 238–245.
47 This line appeared under the name Nivea Beaute.

ics companies were among the first advertisers in the new West German press of the late 1940s. In 1958, the free-lance Hesse economic historian and Mouson »house historian« Franz Lerner assessed the strong postwar performance of the toiletries and cosmetics industry: »Hygiene and civilization have without a doubt increased in significance because of World War II – so to say in order to balance the primitiveness into which people have been forced, they now want to be better cared for.« Lerner also concluded that many items that were considered luxuries before the war, had now become items of daily use. Echoing contemporary social science research, Lerner argued that these developments had been fostered by an increased standard of living without significant differences between classes and by a »cult of beauty.« The toiletries industry systematically had fostered these developments through its advertising, but »fashion, press, and film, and a certain tendency to extravagance among the youth« had all contributed to increase cosmetics and toiletries sales substantially. Sales of the cosmetics industry and its advertising expenditures increased in tandem. By 1958, the Mouson Company was able to more than double its sales of perfumes, creams and soaps, when compared to 1938.[48] And in 1962, advertising expenditures for cosmetics in West Germany were with DM 132 mio the second highest of any product group, only marginally outdone by cigarette ads.[49]

How did advertising strategies change? After 1945, the Mouson Company made explicit claims to the global reach of its products. In many of its self-representations, such as press releases or brochures and even books, the company now referred to its brands as »*Weltmarken*« or »global brands,« at once pursuing export opportunities and constructing a positive history of Germany's and the company's own relationship to foreign countries. Telling the history of Mouson's export successes since the 19th century was an important part of this strategy. According to a 1948 booklet compiled for the 150th anniversary of the company, the years after 1939 and »especially after 1943,« had largely brought a halt to exports. Positioning itself as a war victim the Mouson Company used a common trope of West German narratives of the Nazi past. However, the assessment of export losses during the war is not born out by internal company records that show export increases until 1943.[50]

Mouson accompanied references to export successes with stories of Mouson's friendly connections abroad. The 1948 memorial booklet stressed that those who created perfumes for Mouson had learned their craft in firms in »Southern France, Spain, England, and America,« which were linked to the Mouson Company by friendship. It is probably not by chance, that with the exception of Southern Spain, this list consisted of the Western Allies occupying Western Germany in 1948. According to the booklet, family members' education abroad had resulted in the »international maturity« that made it possible for the company to successfully compete against the best products of other companies.[51] In contrast to the climate of the 1930s, and altering the European claims of the 1940s, the international connections of Mouson now appeared once again an asset.

Just like American ad campaigns had done earlier in Germany, West German cosmetics companies claimed international reach in postwar ads. Thus F. Wolff and Sohn, the maker

48 Franz Lerner, Frankfurt am Main und seine Wirtschaft: Wiederaufbau seit 1945, Frankfurt/M. 1958, p. 209–211.

49 »Postkutsche mit Tiefenwirkung,« Die Zeit, 4.10.1963, Hamburger Weltwirtschaftsarchiv Pressedokumentation (HWWA).

50 Lichter, Seifen, und Lavendel, 1948, no pages; Exportumsätze, no date, ISGF W/17:1/251.

51 Lichter, Seifen, und Lavendel, 1948.

of Kaloderma brand products, cited the »international reputation« of Kaloderma soap in a 1949.[52] Mouson made similar claims in company histories and brochures, and also used them in advertising in the late 1940s and 1950s. In one ad from 1956, for example, Mouson described its Mouson Lavendel soap as a »precious soap that has conquered the world.«[53]

A 1955 volume traced Mouson's »path onto the world market« in the 19th and early 20th century, and stressed that its brands enjoyed a »Weltruf,« a world reputation, in spite of the loss of international brand rights as part of the postwar settlements, an ongoing issue for the German cosmetics industry over the next decades. In the 1950s Mouson's exports still lagged behind the numbers of the prewar period.[54] Even so, in 1958, a brief article on the Mouson company history claimed that the stagecoach was just as well known in the »sky scrapers of New York as in Bangkok,« and was »as highly esteemed in Helsinki as in Swakopmund.« This vision of world reach included with Swakopmund the former German colony of Southwest Africa/Namibia. Mouson cream was now sold in 75 countries, the article reported.[55] This selection of export destinations was likely a bit deceiving: in 1965, for example the company exported merely DM 40,000 worth of goods to the United States, but earned 400,000 from licensing in Nigeria. It appears that in the United States and Namibia the company was particularly successful marketing its products to German speakers, whereas elsewhere it reached a much broader public.[56]

In terms of visual imagery Mouson ads continued themes used since the 1930s. Mouson Lavendel perfume ads of the postwar years featured the glass bottle with the stagecoach prominently, and in the 1950s they combined it with drawings of a range of uncontroversial social situations, such as train travel or a woman sitting at a coffee table.[57] Ads for Creme Mouson continued to use the slogan »mit Tiefenwirkung« and appealed to a more modernist sensibility through the use of modernist typefaces and drawings of women reminiscent of contemporary movie posters. Mouson's memorial volumes of 1948 made no visual reference to the cosmopolitan aesthetic of the 1920s. Rather, a pre-World War I ad was reprinted, as was imagery developed in the 1930s related to the use of the stagecoach.

Beiersdorf sold its cream in Germany after 1949 with the slogan that had individual and national resonance: *Nivea macht's wieder gut – Nivea makes it whole again.* And letters written to the company in the late 1940s and early 1950s do indeed reveal that many Germans experienced the reappearance of Nivea cream as a return to civilization after years of deprivation. In the 1950s Beiersdorf advertised the cream as one for the entire family with photographs of happy children and adult Nivea users wearing the latest fashions. By the 1960s, as travel became increasingly common for Europeans and as Nivea marketed more products designed specifically for sun protection and tanning under the Nivea brand, ads in Germany and other European countries frequently featured family beach scenes without

52 Kaloderma ad, Der Spiegel, 28.7.1949.

53 Mouson ad, Der Spiegel, 4.7.1956.

54 Franz Lerner, Diener der Schönheit: Gedenkblätter zum 150jährigen Bestehen des Hauses J. G. Mouson & Co., Frankfurt am M. 1798–1948, Frankfurt/M. 1948; Franz Lerner (ed.), Das tätige Frankfurt im Wirtschaftsleben dreier Jahrhunderte, Frankfurt/M. 1955, p. 73; Lerner, Frankfurt am Main und seine Wirtschaft, p. 212.

55 J. G. Mouson & Co.: Das Haus der Postkutsche, without reference (1958), ISGF, clipping file Mouson.

56 Länderübersicht, ISGF W1/17/1:267.

57 See ad for Mouson Lavendel soap, Der Spiegel, 14.7.1949; ads in ISGF W1/17:1/91–96.

clearly identifiable locations.[58] In the meantime, the company was working hard to reacquire international brand rights lost as a result of World War II. Yet, unlike Mouson, Beiersdorf made few references to its international reach in its marketing campaigns until the 1970s and 1980s.[59]

In 1963, a report on the Mouson brand in the weekly *Die Zeit* asked whether the marketing of Lavendel with the stagecoach with its references to tradition and the »*Duft der guten alten Zeit*« – »the smell of the good old times« – was still the proper strategy in »a time that had committed itself to the '*Duft der weiten Welt.*'« According to the author, this longing for the wider world was a more universal desire. Five years earlier, Mouson's »house historian« Lerner had already concluded that Germans exhibited a »strong love for everything foreign – a psychological fact of considerable economic significance« which had apparently led to great successes for foreign competitors on the West German toiletries market. In the aftermath of National Socialism, international consumption was one way for many Germans to show a departure from the past.[60]

Responding to and participating in the creation of such desires, Mouson made links to foreign lands a more explicit part of its advertising campaigns in the course of the 1960s. Thus the company introduced a new

Figure 4: »Fresh and International,« Mouson Bambus ad, 1966

58 Gries, Produkte als Medien, p. 487–515; Hansen, Nivea, p. 54–59.

59 See Harm G. Schröter, Marketing als angewandte Sozialtechnik und Veränderungen im Konsumverhalten: Nivea als internationale Dachmarke, 1960–1994, in: Hannes Siegrist, Hartmut Kaelble and Jürgen Kocka (eds.), Europäische Konsumgeschichte: zur Gesellschafts- und Kulturgeschichte des Konsum, 18. bis 20. Jahrhundert, Frankfurt 1997, p. 615–47; Gries, Produkte als Medien, p. 529.

60 Lerner, Frankfurt am Main und seine Wirtschaft, p. 210. On »world« cuisine in German kitchens, see Michael Wildt, Am Beginn der Konsumgesellschaft: Mangelerfahrung, Lebenshaltung, Wohlstandshoffnung in Westdeutschland in den fünfziger Jahren, Hamburg 1994.

Eau de Cologne with the name Bambus and marketed it to both men and women with an Asianistic aesthetic in its packaging that referenced East Asian calligraphy and art and with ads that showed a white couple, traveling abroad, the woman visibly made up.[61] Such references to foreign travel had been a staple of 1920s perfume advertising, but had not been used by the Mouson company since then.

One of Mouson's posters from the late 1960s featured for the first time since the late 1920s, the representation of a figure who might have been read as ethnically not white: A photo of a girl band receiving Mouson Lavendel from a ridiculous-looking white servant marching in early nineteenth-century uniform, featured among a bunch of white young women one woman who may have been viewed as East Asian or South East Asian.[62] Such a visual image remained an exception however, as cosmetics companies in Germany continued to subscribe to an aesthetic of whiteness, now varied in new ways.

Late 1960s changes in marketing strategies went hand in hand with a new combination of references to »modernity,« »progress,« »youth,« »world,« and »tradition.« Under the slogan »With youthful freshness, Mouson enchants (*begeistert*) the world,« a brochure on the company in 1969 stressed its tradition of more than 170 years and the French Hugenot roots of its young owner who »represents the modern consciousness, which also shapes the company in constant adjustment to progress.«[63] By this time, however, the finances of the family-owned company were increasingly in shambles and in 1972 it declared bankruptcy, while another German corporation bought its brands and production.

Conclusion

The aesthetic of variant whiteness that Mouson and other cosmetics companies used in their visual representations in the post-World War II period reveals much continuity with ad imagery since the early 1930s, and with visual representations in international advertising imagery. However, some differences emerged: as German companies adapted their images to foreign markets, their subsidiaries abroad chose ads that would have been considered too sexually suggestive in Nazi Germany. While the women of the ads became more overtly sexy in Germany by the late 1950s, cosmetics companies like Mouson refrained from making any references to a cosmopolitan aesthetic or from depicting controversial female behavior, as they had done until the 1920s. The aesthetic of whiteness changed in the 1960s, as Mouson sought to link up its marketing with an international youth culture and with the possibilities for international travel that increased West German wealth began to offer. Compared to visual representations, textual representations underwent clear changes with the German defeat in World War II. Marketing strategies of the 1940s and 1950s claimed a departure from the Nazi past by stressing that cosmetics were linking Germans again with international tastes, products, and markets, thus constructing the Third Reich as a period of deprivation and isolation for all Germans.

My research examines links between domestic social stratification, foreign relations and cultural representations for 20th-century Germany. Beauty and cosmetics use could be such

61 Bambus ad, Der Spiegel 28 (1966); »Mit jugendlicher Frische begeistert Mouson die Welt,« FLS 2 (1969), ISGF, clipping file Mouson.

62 Poster for Mouson Lavendel, ISGF ML 2/1268.

63 »Mit jugendlicher Frische begeistert Mouson die Welt,« FLS 2 (1969), ISGF, clipping file Mouson.

politicized issues from the 1920s to the 1950s because body and adornment were part of eugenic thinking – and in the not so far past looks had been a fairly certain means of identifying social status. Eugenicists frequently argued that body and face were expressions of character and race. It is in this context that a range of political regimes used gender roles and associated beauty ideals as one way of portraying themselves. Possibilities here were narrower in the 1930s than in the 1920s, and narrower in Nazi Germany than in Sweden or the United States. The highpoint of international uniformity came likely in the 1950s, when clean looks with limited but visible use of color cosmetics dominated advertising (and beauty education) across Europe and in the United States.

In spite of recent attention to globalization, histories of consumption and of advertising tend to rely on the nation-state as a unit of analysis. For much of the 20th century the specific states mattered in that they regulated the cosmetics industry through tariffs, product labeling, and also regulations for advertising. At the same time state regulations by themselves do not explain convergence or divergence in marketing strategies. Gender ideals, different views of personal styles, as well as race and class formations all influenced efforts to sell cosmetics. Advertisers, and with more limited means also consumers, regularly looked abroad in order to find inspiration or affirmation for their efforts at styling the face and the body. Existing scholarship has traced European responses to U.S. business models, but economic and cultural developments ought to be cast in broader international terms.

In 1944 Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno ended their indictment of the culture industry in »Dialectic of the Enlightenment« by stating that »personality scarcely signifies anything more than shining white teeth and freedom from body odor and emotions. The triumph of advertising and the culture industry is that consumers feel compelled to buy and use its products even though they see through them.«[64] The authors of course did not so much criticize the use of toiletries, but rather the status that the use of these commodities had attained through the work of the culture industry. Critiques like this contain much truth, but they underestimate the culturally specific workings of capitalism.

References

Figure 1: Ad for Tai Tai toiletries by the German Mouson Company in: Radiowoche, Nr. 47, 1924.
Figure 2: Körperkultur: Nivea ad in: Leipziger Illustrirte Zeitung, 5 May 1927.
Figure 3: Cosmopolitan Aesthetic: Creme Mouson ad, Leipziger Illustrirte Zeitung, 13 October 1927.
Figure 4: »Fresh and International«, Mouson Bambus ad, Der Spiegel, Nr. 28, 1966.

64 Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, Dialectic of the Enlightenment, transl. John Cummings, New York 1996 (originally published in 1944), p. 167.