Business and Economic History
On-Line
Vol. 1 2003

Uplifting Makeup: Actresses' Testimonials and the Cosmetics Industry, 1910-1918

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Throughout the late nineteenth century, manufacturers actively solicited testimonials from popular actresses for products ranging from cosmetics and corsets to pianos and patent medicine. By the turn of the century, however, the use of testimonials as a general advertising practice had fallen into disfavor, and while they never completely disappeared, celebrity testimonials were noticeably absent from the pages of most women's magazines for almost a decade. For this reason, the subsequent resurgence of actresses' testimonials in cosmetics advertising of the 1910s raises important questions about the use and desirability of actresses as endorsers, and offers new insight into the cosmetics industry's efforts to alter preconceptions about the use of cosmetics as a social practice. By 1910, actresses had gained a more respectable position within society and were widely recognized as fashion leaders, often appearing in the pages of *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazar* dressed in their latest stage clothes. For emerging cosmetics specialists such as Forrest D. Pullen and Helena Rubenstein, as well as for established beauty product manufacturers like the Pond's Extract Company, an association with fashionable actresses was an effective way to promote their product line and, more important, the cosmetics industry as a whole.

In 1914, the newly incorporated Pond's Extract Company stopped advertising its signature product, Pond's Extract, and with the help of its long-time advertising agency, the J. Walter Thompson Company, launched a national campaign to promote its lesser-known products, Pond's Vanishing Cream and Pond's Cold Cream. In 1916, Thompson copywriter Helen Landsdowne Resor developed an innovative strategy to encourage women to incorporate both creams into their daily beauty regimen. Ads bearing the slogan, "Every normal skin needs these two creams," appeared in major newspapers and magazines throughout the country including the number one women's magazine, *The Ladies' Home Journal,* and the

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URL: http://www.thebhc.org/publications/BEHonline/2003/Schweitzer.pdf

"high-class" fashion magazine, *Vogue*. The campaign was an undisputed success; between 1914 and 1916, sales for Pond's Cold Cream grew by 27 percent, and sales for Pond's Vanishing Cream increased by as much as 60 percent.[1] By 1920, sales for both creams had tripled, firmly establishing Pond's as one of the leading beauty businesses in the United States.[2]

Most accounts of the "two creams" campaign focus on Resor's brilliant marketing tactics and her persuasive copy, and overlook another important aspect of the campaign: the use of testimonials from stage and film actresses. Testimonials were nothing new for Pond's. As early as 1907, the J. Walter Thompson Company had used actresses' testimonials to promote the Vanishing Cream; but the majority of these ads appeared only in city newspapers and did not play a role in any major campaign.[3] After 1914, however, actresses' photographs and testimonials appeared in half- and full-page magazine advertisements for the Vanishing Cream and were featured in the "two creams" campaign throughout its eight-year history.

The Pond's campaign of 1916 marks a major turning point in the interrelated histories of advertising and beauty culture; it not only stands as one of the first coordinated attempts by a cosmetics company to reach a broad, middle-class market, but also reflects a changing attitude within the advertising industry toward the use of testimonials in general, and actresses' testimonials in particular. Throughout the late nineteenth century, beauty product manufacturers, most famously Pears' Soap, were among the first companies to solicit testimonials from female performers. By the turn of the century, however, testimonial advertising as a general practice had largely fallen into disfavor, and while they never completely

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[1] Ellen Gartrell, "More about the Pond's Collection," Emergence of Advertising On-Line Project, John W. Hartman Center for Sales, Advertising & Marketing History, Duke University Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library; Viewed: 6 Aug. 2002. URL: **http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu/eaa/ponds. html**.

[2] Kathy Peiss, *Hope In a Jar: The Making of America's Beauty Culture* (New York, 1998), 121-122.

[3] Advertising Ephemera Collection–Database # P0027, Emergence of Advertising On-Line Project, Hartman Center; Viewed: 6 Aug. 2002. URL: **http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu/eaa/ponds/P00/P0027-72dpi.html**; Advertising Ephemera Collection–Database # P0033, Emergence of Advertising On-Line Project, Hartman Center, Viewed 6 Aug. 2002. URL: **http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu/eaa/ponds/P00/P0033-72dpi.html.**

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disappeared, celebrity testimonials were noticeably absent from the pages of most women's magazines for almost a decade.

The subsequent resurgence of actresses' testimonials in cosmetics advertising in the 1910s raises important questions about the use of testimonials, the desirability of actresses as testimonial figures, and the cosmetics industry's efforts to alter public opinion about beauty products. What motivated advertisers to begin using celebrity testimonials again after shunning them for close to a decade? Why was the cosmetics industry, more than other industries, so eager to associate with actresses?

Most advertising histories ignore testimonial advertising in the 1910s, focusing instead on the J. Walter Thompson Company's innovative use of testimonial advertising in the Pond's campaign of 1924, when endorsements solicited from "three of the reigning queens of Europe, six princesses, titled ladies, and leaders of American society," redefined the celebrity testimonial.[4] These histories pay relatively little attention to the period when the cosmetics industry (along with the fashion industry) first renewed its interest in testimonials, and in doing so, overlook the important connection between the decline of testimonial advertising in the 1890s and its rebirth in the 1910s.

As I argue in this paper, advertisers returned to the celebrity testimonial in the 1910s for the same reason they had rejected it in favor of other strategies in the 1890s: out of a need to distinguish their products and to establish a personal relationship with consumers. The re-emergence of celebrity endorsements in the 1910s coincided with a growing debate within the advertising industry about the relative merits of using illustrations to attract consumers. Inspired by the "truth in advertising" movement, advertising agents argued that consumers were unable to identify with the highly idealized men and women depicted in illustrations. Instead, they promoted the use of photography, "living models," and testimonials as a more effective way to make a personal connection with consumers. People were more likely to follow the advice of someone they knew and respected, they argued, than accept the claims of a faceless corporate entity.

As "real" beautiful yet accessible women, actresses represented the perfect solution for advertisers wishing to appeal to middle class female consumers. Not only were actresses widely respected for their knowledge of fashion and beauty, but by the 1910s middle-class women were modeling themselves after their favorite stars, copying their hair-dos, dress styles, and even experimenting with theatrical makeup. For cosmetics companies like Pond's, establishing an association with star performers was the most logical way to attract female consumers and convince them that "making up" was both fashionable and acceptable.

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[4] For example, see Peiss, *Hope in a Jar*, 126, 137-40, and Stephen Fox, *The Mirror Makers: A History of American Advertising and Its Creators* (New York, 1984), 88, 90. Gartrell, "More About the Pond's Collection."

Testimonial Advertising in the Nineteenth Century

Historians have traced the roots of testimonial advertising to the eighteenth century (although there are undoubtedly examples from earlier periods), but it was in the late nineteenth century, when the craze for collecting celebrity photographs was at its height, that testimonial advertising first attracted widespread public interest.[5] Capitalizing upon the public's familiarity with famous names and faces, advertisers paid celebrities (noted medical professional, military officers, preachers, and performing artists) to testify to the quality and worthiness of their products. During a period of rapid urbanization when it was becoming increasingly difficult to "know" people based on family history and reputation, advertisers used celebrity testimonials to make a personal appeal to consumers and invite them to join, through consumption, a community of familiar faces.

In 1882 A. & F. Pears Ltd. paid British actress Lily Langtry 132 pounds for the statement, "Since using Pears' Soap for the hands and complexion *I have discarded all others*."[6] On tour in the United States, Langtry, the former mistress of Edward VII and considered by many to be "the world's most beautiful woman," captured the hearts of the American people with her charm, talent, and extensive wardrobe. Wherever she appeared, crowds clamored to catch a glimpse of "the Jersey Lily," snapping up her photographs and any other products, including Pears' Soap, associated with her name. Pears' investment in Langtry more than paid for itself. For two decades the company prominently displayed her statement in its newspaper, magazine, and trade card advertisements, sometimes in a shorter, edited version ("I prefer Pears' Soap to any other").[7] In subsequent years, Pears solicited testimonials from other famous beauties, including the American actress Mary Anderson and opera singer Adelina Patti.[8]

Following Pears' lead, American beauty culturist Harriet Hubbard Ayer approached Langtry to endorse her line of Mme. Recamier

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[5] Charles Goodrum and Helen Dalrymple, *Advertising in America: The First 200 Years* (New York, 1990), 28.

[6] Lois Rather, *Two Lilies in America: Lillian Russell and Lily Langtry* (Oakland, Calif., 1973), 50. Langtry later explained that she had named this price because it matched her weight at the time, although other accounts suggest that Langtry was not paid for her endorsement. See Tim Shakleton, "Introduction," in *Bubbles: Early Advertising Art from A. F. Pears Ltd.*, ed. Mike Dempsey (London, 1978), 3.

[7] In 1884, Langtry's endorsement of Pears was the subject of a parody in *Punch* magazine that became almost as famous as the original. See Dempsey, *Bubbles*, 48.

[8] Pears also solicited a testimonial from religious leader Henry Ward Beecher, who famously drew a connection between cleanliness, Pears' Soap, and godliness. See *Bubbles*, 3.

Preparations, offering the actress a furnished apartment in exchange for her statement. Ayer also enlisted the services of popular American actresses Lillian Russell, Cora Brown Potter, and Fanny Davenport, and the internationally renowned French actress Sarah Bernhardt, who each received payment in cash or kind. Ads featuring the actresses' handwritten testimonials appeared in the *New York Times* throughout the 1880s and soon prompted other cosmetics companies to wage their own testimonial campaigns.[9]

Despite the testimonial's popularity, however, it is difficult to gauge the success of these campaigns. While middle-class women were beginning to experiment with cosmetics by the 1880s and 1890s, few were willing to admit that they did, fearful of being labeled "fast" or "cheap."[10] A lingering association between actresses and prostitutes, both professional women who "painted" for a living, may in fact, have deterred middle-class women from buying the beauty products endorsed by such socially marginal women.[11]

For their part, actresses were more than happy to comply with advertisers' requests to endorse their products. In addition to the financial rewards offered, testimonial advertising provided a simple, yet highly effective, way to remain in the public eye. Actresses willingly traded on their looks, their fame, or both, in exchange for the free publicity that accompanied each endorsement.

By the early 1890s, actresses and other popular performers endorsed an ever-widening range of products that included everything from chocolates and cigars to dentifrice and patent medicine.[12] Adelina Patti, one of the first stars to endorse Pears' Soap, earned the nickname "Testimonial Patti" for her frequent advertising appearances.[13] Throughout her career she endorsed corsets, pianos, tooth polish, and various other products; the program for her 1904 "farewell performance" in Salt Lake City, for example, includes testimonials for Crème Simon, a cold cream, the Apollo Piano Player, Steinway and Sons, and Hill's Pure California Olive Oil.[14]

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[9] Rather, *Two Lilies in America*, 50.

[10] Peiss, *Hope in a Jar*, 26-31.

[11] For more on the association between actresses and prostitutes see Claudia D. Johnson, *American Actress: Perspective on the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago, 1984), 29-30.

[12] *Printers' Ink: A Journal for Advertisers—Fifty Years, 1888-1938* [special 50th anniversary edition] (28 July 1938), 111.

[13] Irwin Leslie Gordon, ed., *Who Was Who: 5000 B.C. to Date: Biographical Dictionary of the Famous and Those Who Wanted to Be,* as included by Jone Johnson Lewis on "Women's History—Humorous Biographies," Viewed: 27 May 2002. URL: **http://www.historynet.com**.

[14] "Patti, Adelina," box 12, Theater, Warshaw Collection of Business Americana, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

Performers' indiscriminate endorsement of anything and everything ultimately undermined the value of the testimonial by raising questions in consumers' minds about the truthfulness of their claims. Advertisers had no way to prevent actresses from endorsing other products, including those of their competitors, and rather than distinguishing their product, the testimonial merely cheapened it. By the late 1890s, a series of scandals involving the use of fake or "tainted" testimonials by patent medicine companies further tarnished the testimonial's reputation.[15] Although two major companies, Mariani wine and Sozodont, a dentifrice, continued to use celebrity testimonials, testimonial advertising was largely discredited and actresses all but disappeared from advertising for close to a decade.[16]

New Advertising Strategies

The testimonial scandal cast a pall over the advertising industry, which (somewhat ironically) found itself the subject of theatrical satires and parodies.[17] In an effort to restore dignity to the profession and refute lingering charges of charlatanism, advertising agents abandoned their Barnumesque tactics of persuasion and began to reinvent themselves as professional business peopple.[18] No longer mere brokers of advertising space, agencies such as the N. W. Ayer Company and the J. Walter Thompson Company promoted a scientific, rational approach to advertising, and worked on behalf of major manufacturers to transform a diverse nation of consumers into a mass market. Responding to fears of overproduction and increased competition between manufacturers of similar (or in some cases, identical) goods, these agencies developed branding strategies to distinguish their clients' products and secure consumer loyalty.[19]

Funny names, catchy jingles, and cute or interesting trade characters were some of the first techniques advertising agents devised to establish brand identity and create a positive and memorable impression with consumers.[20] In many ways, trade characters promised to do everything that the testimonial did without raising troubling questions

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[15] *Printer's Ink, A Journal for Advertisers—Fifty Years, 1888-1938* (28 July 1938), 111, 370.

[16] "I consider Sozodont a peerless dentifrice" [ad], *The Ladies' Home Journal* (April 1898), 27; "Vin Mariani" [ad], *The Theatre* 1, no. 6 (Aug. 1901): inside cover.

[17] *Printers' Ink A Journal for Advertisers—Fifty Years, 1888-1938* (28 July 1938), 118.

[18] Jackson Lears, *Fables of Abundance: A Cultural History of Advertising in America* (New York, 1994), 89-90.

[19] Susan Strasser, *Satisfaction Guaranteed: The Making of the American Mass Market* (New York, 1989), 89-123. See also Fox, *The Mirror Makers*, 40-77.

[20] Fox, *The Mirror Makers*, 44.

about the truthfulness of their statements or its source. As advertising agent Charles W. Hurd argued in a 1913 *Printers' Ink* article, "The Campbell Kids, the two grape juice children, Phoebe Snow, the Gold Dust Twins, the Dutch Boy Painter and the host of them all testify to the value of the product." Like the testimonial,"[t]hey do not merely identify the product but they *identify satisfaction with it*, which must be regarded as a highly important thing."[21] Furthermore, trade characters belonged to the company they represented, and therefore could not be used to promote any products other than those for which they had been created.[22]

In addition to trade characters, companies also used illustrations of attractive, smiling women to appeal to consumers. These women were similar to trade characters in that they also "identified satisfaction" with the product, but were intended to suggest a real, rather than fictional, user. After 1904 trade characters and jingles gave way to the more sophisticated "salesmanship-on-paper" strategy, which offered rational-minded consumers a list of reasons "why" they should purchase a product.[23] Advertisers for common commodities such as dentifrice and chewing gum (products that in themselves lacked any unique features) continued to use these illustrations of highly idealized women to individualize their products.[24]

By 1909, however, advertisers were beginning to question the relative merits of "pretty pictures." Following the publication of Frank H. Holland's article, "The Sex Appeal in Advertising," agents generally agreed that "pretty pictures" were now used so frequently that they failed to convey distinction upon the products they promoted. Just as the ubiquitous testimonial had ceased to be effective, "pretty pictures" were failing to fulfill their intended purpose. "Putting women in advertising has always seemed as arbitrary as the constant tendency of a certain friend of mine to put a border of flowers around his ad," wrote B. D. Walthouser, "I'm glad someone has the courage to step out and condemn the positively disrespectful flaunting of womankind on the advertising pages."[25]

In 1910, William Colgate of the Gagnier Advertising Agency in Toronto suggested that, in addition to their extensive use, "pretty pictures" failed to attract consumers because they were not *real*. "[T]he public is commencing to grow tired of 'pretty picture' illustrations," he argued,

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[21] Charles W. Hurd, "Different Uses of the Testimonial: Several Varieties of the Real Thing and a Few of the Imaginary Ones," *Printers' Ink* (28 Aug. 1913), 40.
[22] I wish to thank Charles McGovern for first pointing out this interesting connection between trade characters and testimonials.
[23] Fox, *The Mirror Makers*, 50-51.
[24] William G. Colgate, " 'Pretty' Pictures in Copy Becoming Passe," *Printers' Ink* (15 Sept. 1910), 62.
[25] R. F. R. Huntsman and B. D. Walthouser, "Are Pretty Women Pictures Good Advertising? Arguments for and Against their Use in Advertising—Room for Difference of Opinion," *Printers' Ink* (11 Aug. 1909), 8.

"consonant with the desire for truth and human interest in advertising copy."[26] Colgate, an obvious supporter of the "truth in advertising" movement, claimed that pictures of "tall, willowy, sylphlike creatures" alienated, rather than attracted, consumers from the products they promoted because they lacked "real human interest and sincerity."[27] Instead, he urged advertisers to strive for greater realism and "truth" in their advertising copy and illustrations.[28]

For advertisers aiming to make a strong, personal appeal to consumers, photography offered one of the best, and most obvious, solutions. "This method, I should imagine, would impart a most favorable impression and carry a far more convincing appeal," Colgate observed, noting the Stein-Bloch Company's innovative use of "living models" in their latest clothing catalogue.[29] Four months earlier L. B. Jones, advertising manager for the Eastman Kodak Company, had presented a similar argument in support of photography. "[T]he very fact that the photograph has a reputation for veracity is a help to the honest advertiser," Jones had explained. "It helps him in the telling of a frank story; brings him in close touch with the prospective consumer."[30]

Photography was certainly nothing new to the advertising industry in 1910, especially for advocates of the "reason why" approach. As Elspeth H. Brown observes, "The faithful reproduction of detail offered by a halftone provided the visual analogue for 'reason-why' copy."[31] Ads featuring photographs of everything from canned goods to carriages allowed rational-minded consumers to assess the quality of the products they desired well in advance of buying them. By 1910, however, as a result of new research into consumer psychology, most advertisers had exchanged their concept of the "rational consumer" with that of the "emotional consumer," and were abandoning "reason why" copy for the "soft sell" approach. With this philosophical shift, Brown explains, "Photography's value as the preferred medium of efficient rationality became a distinct liability."[32] Advertisers rejected photography for its realistic sterility and opted instead for fanciful, idealized illustrations to stimulate consumer desire and convey a unique aura upon their goods.[33]

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[26] Colgate, " 'Pretty' Pictures," 62.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Fox, *The Mirror Makers*, 67-69; Colgate, "'Pretty Pictures,'" 64.
[29] Colgate, " 'Pretty' Pictures," 65.
[30] L.B. Jones, "The Photograph in Display Advertising," *Printers' Ink* (4 May 1910): 3.
[31] Elspeth H. Brown, "Rationalizing Consumption: Lejaren à Hiller and the Origins of American Advertising Photography, 1913-1924," *Enterprise & Society* 1 (Dec. 2000): 720.
[32] Brown, "Rationalizing Consumption," 722.
[33] According to Brown, it was only when formally trained photographers like Lejaren à Hiller began to apply artistic principles to their photographs (c. 1913) that photography became an effective medium for the "soft sell" approach.

Considering the advertising industry's general disregard for photography in 1910, why did some advertising agents continue to argue for photography based on its "convincing, compelling, selling power far beyond that of any painting?"[34] The answer to this question is found in Stephen Fox's observation that "Reason-why did not give way to suggestion [soft-sell copy] in the sudden dramatic fashion that reason-why had pushed aside jingles and trade characters." Instead, Fox argues, the two approaches "coexisted in a sniping stalemate."[35] Given "reason why's" durability, then, it is no longer surprising to discover that some advertisers, particularly those who upheld "truth in advertising," favored photography over illustration.

Just as reason-why copy continued to serve the needs of certain advertisers, photography was well suited to specific products and campaigns. Although it could not yet compete with illustration based on emotional appeal, photography could, through the use of "real" models, offer advertisers a powerful way to establish an immediate, personal connection with consumers. Whereas "pretty pictures" failed because they lacked "human interest," advertisers believed that photographs of real men and women would encourage consumers to identify with both the users and the product. "It is my opinion that the *real* has a much greater appeal to a large majority of the public than the work of an artist, which cannot carry the same personal element, could ever have," explained Edward A. Olds, of the Packer's Tar Soap Company. "The effect of the use of actual people, whether in photographs or some other medium that preserves the human characteristics of the model, is sure to carry a certain amount of personality to the reader."[36] Alan C. Reilly of the Remington Typewriter Company agreed that advertisements with photographs of real people "stand out distinguished from the herd of illustrations by their own individuality."[37]

With the advertisers' heightened interest in "living models" and their desire to relate to consumers on a personal level, the return of the testimonial was inevitable. Ironically, the very strategy rejected by the advertising industry for over a decade for its inability to convey distinction upon advertised goods and its failure to win consumers' trust was now being hailed as a way to achieve these goals. Despite the public's continuing skepticism, what made the testimonial such an effective advertising strategy was its ability to make a direct appeal to consumers through its association with people they could (supposedly) trust. Just as photographs of living models helped to personalize an otherwise

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[34] Jones, "The Photograph in Display Advertising," 3.
[35] Fox, *The Mirror Makers*, 74.
[36] George H. Whitney, "The Personalities of Advertising Models: Woman's Antipathy to Certain Types a Real Factor," *Printers' Ink* (15 Dec. 1910), 12.
[37] Whitney, "The Personalities of Advertising Models," 12-13.

impersonal product, the testimonial format established intimate contact with consumers in a way that illustrations could not.

In 1911, *Printers' Ink* ran a five-part series on the testimonial in which it presented case studies of successful campaigns and outlined important rules for advertisers interested in starting one of their own. While acknowledging that several prominent ad agents continued to condemn testimonials, "lock, stock, and barrel," the journal concluded that it did not see any reason why testimonials could not be used to establish consumer loyalty if advertisers chose respected and knowledgeable sources, and took steps to ensure that their products lived up to the claims being made.[38]

The Testimonial and the Cosmetics Industry

The revival of the testimonial and the corresponding interest in "living models" came at a pivotal moment in the history of beauty culture. By the 1910s, hostile attitudes toward cosmetics were gradually subsiding. Most women used some form of facial cream or powder, and women who were more adventurous were also beginning to add color to their cheeks and lips. "[N]ow women and young girls of respectable society are seen on our streets and fashionable promenades with painted faces," one woman wrote to the *Baltimore Sun* in 1912.[39] Despite this growing acceptance, however, a number of men and women continued to hold reservations about the morality of "making up." *Ladies' Home Journal* editor Edward Bok observed in 1912 that most men considered the use of products like rouge a sign of moral depravity.[40] Working- and middle-class women were divided on the issue, seduced on the one hand by cosmetics' promise of self-transformation, but worried on the other about maintaining their respectability.

Between 1910 and 1914, the cosmetics industry found itself on the verge of breaking through to the middle-class market it had been pursuing since the late nineteenth century; first, however, it had to find a way to convince women that "making up" was an acceptable social practice. Its most viable option, the industry quickly discovered, was the testimonial, complete with photographs of the endorsing personalities. Beginning in 1911, beauty specialists and cosmetics manufacturers seized upon what they interpreted as the female consumers' desire to learn from real women by launching a series of testimonial campaigns that drew upon the actress's newly acquired status as a trendsetter and role model. No longer stranded on the margins of society, actresses such as Billie Burke, Maxine

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[38] James W. Egbert, "What Makes a Good Testimonial: A Discussion of the Kinds of People Whose Names are Worth Having as Endorsements," *Printers' Ink* (12 Oct. 1911), 44, 46; Hurd, "Different Uses of the Testimonial," 31, 34.
[39] Peiss, *Hope in a Jar*, 53.
[40] Ibid., 56.

Elliott, and Julie Opp appeared in society dramas in gowns that increasingly rivaled those worn by society women and attracted the attention and admiration of women everywhere.

Newspapers and magazines responded to actresses' improved status by creating special departments devoted to stage fashions. Beginning in the 1890s with the introduction of the women's page, newspapers such as the *New York World* and the *New York Telegraph* featured lengthy descriptions of actresses' costumes with accompanying sketches or photographs, and they published articles on fashion and beauty that were attributed to, if not actually written by, leading performers.[41] By 1913, most major women's magazines, including *Vogue, Harper's Bazar,* and *Vanity Fair* covered stage fashions regularly, and *The Ladies' Home Journal* introduced a monthly series featuring Sarah Bernhardt, Laurette Taylor, Geraldine Farrar, and other "Famous Actresses as Fashion Editors."[42] Also in 1913 the *New York World* ran a series of articles describing emerging stars in the process of "making up" for the stage. Ostensibly lessons in stage make-up, these articles offered specific information on the application of such products as cold cream, face powder, eyeliner, and rouge, accompanied by sketches illustrating the different stages in the process.[43]

With thousands of women already looking to actresses for advice on cosmetics and other beauty issues, the cosmetics industry simply hitched its wagon to the stars. Actresses were not only famous, but as acknowledged beauty experts, their opinions were both highly respected and eagerly sought after. Moreover, actresses' testimonials allowed advertisers to appeal to consumers on the basis of reason and emotion; they not only presented women with a compelling "reason why" they should buy the product, but also stimulated their desire to look like their favorite stars. In such a way, actresses conveyed distinction upon the products they endorsed (by bestowing what Jackson Lears would call their "aura" upon them), offered authoritative proof of quality, and implied that every woman could become more like them if they purchased the "right" products.[44]

In 1911, Brooklyn-based beauty specialist Forrest D. Pullen launched a major campaign to introduce Créme Nerol, a new cold cream.

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[41] Elsie de Wolfe, vol. 161, 20-1, Robinson Locke Collection, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts; Anna Held, vol. 264, 112, Robinson Locke Collection, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

[42] "Gowns Seen on the Stage," *Harper's Bazar* (July 1913), 53; [Ad for *The Ladies' Home Journal]*, *The Delineator* (Nov. 1913), 72.

[43] Eleanor Schorer, " 'Making Up' With Stage Stars—IV. Laurette Taylor," *Evening World*, March 1913, Laurette Taylor, vol. 451, 86, Robinson Locke Collection.

[44] Lears, *Fables of Abundance*, 222, 289; William M. Freeman, *The Big Name* (New York, 1957), 183, 211.

The first full-page ad appearing in *Vogue* displayed testimonials, photographs, and signatures from Broadway's most admired stars: actresses and opera divas. Their statements characterize Créme Nerol as "an unsurpassed preparation," "a most agreeable cleanser and food for the skin," and "exceptional both as to quality and results."[45] As the ad copy suggests, Pullen knew that consumers were more likely to believe these words coming from respected, fashionable actresses than from an unknown, faceless male beauty specialist. "The efficacy of Créme Nerol does not depend on what I *say* Créme Nerol *is*," he explains, "but on what Créme Nerol actually *does* for those who use it."[46] His comments implicitly urge women to identify with one or all of the actresses appearing in the ad, while directing their desire for emulation toward his new product.

The Créme Nerol campaign ran for several years (at least until 1918) in the pages of *Vogue* and *Vanity Fair*, with the occasional new name appearing among the list of established stars. By 1916, other beauty businesses were also using actresses' testimonials to attract potential customers, most notably Helena Rubenstein, who had recently emigrated to New York, and the Pond's Extract Company.[47]

What most distinguished the Pond's campaign from those of its competitors, however, was the way it used celebrity testimonials to reach a broad, middle class market.[48] Unlike the ads for Créme Nerol and Helena Rubenstein's "Valaze," which primarily targeted society women (as indicated by their presence in "class" magazines like *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazar* and their absence from middle-class magazines like *The Ladies' Home Journal*), the ads for Pond's Vanishing Cream and Cold Cream (appearing in *The Ladies' Home Journal* and *The Woman's Home Companion* in addition to *Vogue*) were designed to appeal to a large and diverse group of women.

More than merely urging consumers to use its products, however, the Pond's campaign needed to convince women to adopt a beauty regime that included both Pond's Cold Cream and Pond's Vanishing Cream. In an increasingly competitive market, in which "every toilet goods manufacturer has too many products," the J. Walter Thompson Company faced a daunting task.[49] Although most women were now comfortable using some form of cold cream or facial cleanser, they were less familiar with, and therefore less inclined to use, the Vanishing Cream, which was

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[45] "The Face Beautiful and Créme Nerol" [ad], *Vogue* (15 Oct. 1911), 69.
[46] Ibid.
[47] "Women Who Have the World at Their Feet Unite in Praise of Valaze" [ad for Mme. Helena Rubenstein], *Vanity Fair* (Dec. 1915), 99.
[48] **http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu:80/eaa/ponds/P00/P0080-72dpi.jpeg**.
[49] "From Fifth to First" [ad for the J. Walter Thompson Company], *Printers' Ink* (23 Aug. 1918), 8-9.

intended as a base for face powder; they may also have been reluctant to use a product so obviously connected with "make up."[50]

Having dabbled with testimonials for several years, the J. Walter Thompson Company made celebrity testimonials an important focus of the Vanishing Cream ads in 1914, enlisting the help of actresses Elsie Janis, Frances Starr, and Anna Pavlova, who each offered their enthusiastic endorsement of the lesser-known cream.[51] Photographs of these and other actresses (most ads featured two or three performers) were prominently displayed in half- and full-page magazine advertisements, along with a highlighted list of other well-known users. The ads emphasized the actresses' expert status, and affirmed that it was Pond's Vanishing Cream that allowed them to maintain "the purity and clearness of the skin." Women were invited to discover for themselves "why it is used by more women on the stage than any other cream," with the promise that they too would "obtain just the effect so marvelously attained on the stage."[52]

When Helen Landsdowne Resor launched the "why every skin needs these two creams" campaign in 1916, she continued to use the actresses' photographs and testimonials for Pond's Vanishing Cream. In addition to the persuasive, scientific ad copy, the photographs and testimonial statements implied that women who used Pond's Vanishing Cream shared the beautifying practices of the stars, and in doing so became more "like" the women they admired. While the cream itself vanished after being rubbed into the skin, the consumer's dream of self-transformation was more visible than ever.

By 1918, as an ad for the J. Walter Thompson Company boasted, Pond's Vanishing Cream was "the largest selling disappearing cream in America today."[53] It is difficult to determine the extent to which the actresses' testimonials guaranteed the success of Pond's Vanishing Cream, but the fact that Pond's continued to use actresses in its advertising, and later began commissioning special photographs of performers using the product, suggests that the J. Walter Thompson Company recognized the value of the celebrity testimonial years well in advance of its famous 1924 campaign.[54] When sales for Pond's Cold Cream and Vanishing Cream

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[50] Peiss, *Hope in a Jar*, 121.

[51] "Send 4 cents for two weeks' supply. See for yourself what one application will do!" Advertising Ephemera Collection –Database # P0074, Emergence of Advertising On-Line Project, Hartman Center, Viewed: 6 Aug. 2002. URL: **http://scriptorium.lib.duk.edu/eaa/ponds/P00/P0074-72dpi.html**.

[52] "The charm every actress knows," [ad for Pond's Vanishing Cream] The Ladies' Home Journal (April 1916), 64; **http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu:80/eaa/ponds/P00/P0096-72dpi.jpg**.

[53] "From Fifth to First," *Printer's Ink* (21 Feb.1918), 8-9.

[54] Ibid. Prior to 1918, Pond's likely purchased standard promotional photographs from local studios. For example, see "Free! Write for samples of these two creams today," Advertising Ephemera Collection–Database # P0087, Emergence of

began to slow in the early 1920s, the J. Walter Thompson Company quite simply shifted its focus from actresses to society women to compete with Pond's upscale competitors, Helena Rubenstein and Elizabeth Arden.[55] Alva Belmont, Alice Roosevelt, and Mrs. Reginald (Gloria) Vanderbilt replaced Elsie Ferguson, Billie Burke, and Constance Collier, but the testimonial format itself remained the same.[56]

The Pond's campaign of 1924 sparked a testimonial craze similar to that of the 1890s, and its end was ultimately the same. Advertising historians tend to focus on the testimonial's blaze of glory in these two periods and overlook its contribution to beauty culture in the 1910s, thereby failing to observe the role of the actress in both its decline and subsequent rise. As I have shown, the testimonial is a phoenix that burns for a decade and then bursts into flame, only to rise from its own ashes. In 2003, when cosmetics companies from Loréal to Maybelline pay millions of dollars to attract celebrity "spokesmodels," it is worth wondering if the testimonial has once again reached the point of conflagration.

Advertising On-Line Project, Hartman Center, Viewed: 6 August 2002. URL: **http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu/eaa/ponds/P00/P0087-72dpi.html**.

[55] Peiss, *Hope in a Jar*, 137.

[56] Peiss, ibid., 137-40. It is important to note that Pond's and other cosmetics companies continued to use actresses in their advertising throughout the 1920s. Film actresses, in particular, appeared in numerous ads throughout the decade, with some actresses testifying to an alarming variety of different products. In 1927, these abuses, reminiscent of the testimonial craze in the 1890s, led to the introduction of legislation on the use of testimonials. Despite tighter restrictions, however, the celebrity testimonial trend continued, almost unabated, throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first.