

2008

# 1920-1940 and beyond : the path of the visual advertising image to the utter confusion of consumer self-identity

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Beyond: The Path  
of the Visual  
Advertising Image  
to the Utter  
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Consumer Self-  
Identity**

**May 2008**

**1920-1940 and Beyond: The Path of the Visual Advertising Image to the Utter  
Confusion of Consumer Self-identity.**

By

James Adkins

A Thesis

Presented to the graduate and Research Committee

Of Lehigh University

In Candidacy for the Degree of

Master of Arts and Sciences

In American Studies

Lehigh University

May 2, 2008

Approved and recommended for acceptance as a thesis in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in American Studies

5/1/08

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*Abstract:*

Media shape the content and character of public discourse. As media shift from one form to another, so do the content and character of the discourse media shapes. The shift of media from the written word to the visual image is evident in the study of the evolution of American advertising during the 1920s and 1930s. This shift from written word to visual image, as this study reveals, has effected a decontextualization of information in public discourse, rendering it less effective on social, political, and intellectual levels. Within this trend, the relative success of advertisers in confusing consumer self-identification can be traced from earlier, partially successful efforts to the complete success of the effects of the visual cliché.

You've heard it all before: *Americans are self-centered; no one seems to talk to his neighbors these days; Americans are too lazy to vote, or perhaps too uninformed to participate in the process; is it just my imagination, or are most people unable to focus on a conversation for more than twenty seconds?* These are complaints that call into question the quality of American culture, which beg the question: where does one look to identify the causes of such degradation of public discourse? Perhaps it would be worthwhile to explore the decontextualization of information within the process of public discourse affected by the visual images employed by advertisers since the 1920s. It is this medium of the visual image, after all, that evolved to facilitate the breaking down of informational contexts of time and space, rendering the consumers at whom advertisers aimed these images the subjects of decontextualized discourse.

The evolutionary apex of these effects of advertising's visual imagery was the visual cliché, a vestige of which is that of the family circle. From simple illustrations accompanying written text explaining a product's use value, to the visual cliché of the family circle, the medium of the visual image has been used by advertisers as an ever-more-decontextualized part of public discourse, in effect influencing the character of public discourse to this day. While advertisers of the 1920s and 30s discovered ever-changing ways of manipulating visual images in their discourse with consumers, it was the evolution of the visual cliché and its temporal and spatial decontextualization of information that achieved an utter confusion of consumer self-identity that earlier advertising images attempted with limited success.

Like Marshall McLuhan before him, Neil Postman, in *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business*, laid out a model for

understanding the effects of media on culture. Likewise, in *Advertising the American Dream*, Roland Marchand traced the effects of the medium of advertising on American culture during the timeframe from 1920-1940. What is so striking about Marchand's work is that the timeframe it covers coincides with what media theorists have deemed a shift of media within American culture's public discourse: namely, the decline of the written word and the emergence of the visual image. This shift in media was noted by McLuhan as he observed both that "the graphic revolution has shifted our culture away from private ordeals to corporate images," and that visual media such as photography and television "seduce us from the literate and private 'point of view' to the complex and inclusive world of the group icon."<sup>1</sup> Indeed, this media shift signified a trend in which an increase of decontextualization led to certain degrees of manipulation of consumer self-identity.

The timeline used by Marchand and others includes not only the decline of the "typographic mind" and a corresponding emergence of a culture based ever increasingly upon the visual image, but also an epistemological shift in American culture. Put more plainly, the American cultural experience of the 1920s and 1930s became one that, with the growing prominence of advertising, gradually lost the social, political, and rational contexts provided by the then-waning age of exposition that based itself on the medium of the written word. As Americans from that era accepted advertising as a medium for understanding their world, they accepted, on an epistemological basis, increasingly decontextualized representations of their world

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<sup>1</sup> McLuhan, *Understanding Media: the Extensions of Man* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1994), 230.



with which to form their judgments of it. Consequentially, people related to their worlds by means of increasingly decontextualized contexts; their self-identities as consumers were affected accordingly.

This is not to say that visually-oriented advertising came out of nowhere to redirect American culture; rather, it had innocent enough roots. Advertising images initially reflected both the dominance of the printed word and the effects it had on public discourse, for as Postman claims, “as late as 1890, advertising . . . was regarded as an essentially serious and rational enterprise whose purpose was to convey information and make claims in propositional form.”<sup>2</sup> Yet, the problem that advertising as a medium posed originated when its images, slowly replacing words, became part of public discourse: “Our attention here is on how forms of public discourse regulate and even dictate what kind of content can issue from such forms.”<sup>3</sup> Further, if one considered whether advertising images could indeed represent the culture in which they originate, this concern arises: “Advertisements also contributed to the shaping of a ‘community of discourse,’ an integrative common language shared by an otherwise diverse language.” Marchand saw this kind of image-oriented discourse arise as “through repetition, bold display, and ingenuity, advertisements infused their images and slogans into America’s common discourse.”<sup>4</sup> Clearly,

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<sup>2</sup>Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business* (New York: Penguin, 1985), 59.

<sup>3</sup>Postman, 6.

<sup>4</sup>Roland Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: 1985), xx.

these concerns are echoed by contemporary questions regarding the seeming futility of today's public discourse.

In order to trace the effects of written and visual texts, this essay will first offer an understanding of the epistemological nature of media. A second section will illustrate the growing conflict between the written words and visual images of advertisements of the period between 1920 and 1940; this section will highlight what many view as the golden age of advertising, as commercial images and the increasingly decontextualized information within them secured what was once typography's position of dominance in American public discourse. Within this section there is a general overview of Marchand's account of consumer representation in advertising images; this account will illustrate the increasing, yet incomplete, confusion of consumer self-identification as an effect of these images. A third section will explore the dominance of the visual image as the primary medium of advertising, particularly as this medium first decontextualized concepts of time and space, then representations of the consumer at whom the images were aimed, as it displaced the context-oriented American typographic mind.

To more closely focus on the effect of images on a once-exclusively word-based public, it helps to first define key terms; from there, a brief overview of Postman's notion of the epistemological nature of media will further discussion. For the purposes of this essay, "phenomenon" refers to what actually happens, or has happened in everyday life. "Artifice," to the contrary, refers to an imitation or representation of how things happen, can happen, or have happened, in everyday life. Phenomena, as this essay argues, are more accurately represented by the medium of

the written word, while artifice, notably visual imagery in this case, is more likely to skew phenomena in its representation of it. “Decontextualization” refers to the process whereby information involved in public discourse, particularly the discourse between advertisers and consumers, becomes separated from its traditional understandings, a la typographic context. The definition of “public discourse” as it relates to this essay concerns one’s social, political and intellectual means for understanding his culture, her neighbor, his government, or the way her own ideas relate to one another.

### *Phenomenon and Artifice*

That which a culture accepts as information has much to do with the ways that that given culture sees information--a culture relies for accuracy upon the medium it accepts as purveyor of its information. Here, what makes media epistemological is that, in effect, a culture needs media in order to understand the phenomena it experiences; knowledge of any kind cannot be known if there is no way to know it. As media shift from one form to another, there is a corresponding shift in the way a culture is able to see and read the phenomena of its world; says Postman:

As a culture moves from orality to writing to printing to televising, its ideas of truth move with it. . . . Every epistemology is the epistemology of a stage of media development. Truth . . . is a product of a conversation man has with himself about and through the techniques of communication he has invented.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Postman, 24.

In effect, this view of media is one that not only asserts the necessity for some medium through which to see one's world, but also notes the transformative nature of media inasmuch as various forms of it have evolved through time.

It is important to realize, though, that certain media are more conducive to effective public discourse than others; it is the degree of context of information made possible by media that is the crucial determinant of effective discourse. This is to say that, judging by the effects each kind of medium has on a culture's public discourse, one medium may allow for discourse that is more effective than another, insofar as it does not confuse the self-identity of its participants. Postman, addressing the notion that media are ways to communicate information, concludes that "since intelligence is primarily defined as one's capacity to grasp the truth of things, it follows that what a culture means by intelligence is derived from the character of its important forms of communication"-- namely, media.<sup>6</sup> Here, there is a relative value assigned to intelligence that is based on the type of medium a culture employs in its public discourse in order to represent, if not understand, the phenomena of that culture's everyday life.

In order to fully grasp the epistemological nature of media—how it influences how things can be known depending upon which medium is primary in a given culture-- a closer examination of the typographic mind as a starting point from which the eventual decontextualization of American public discourse ensued will help. The Lincoln-Douglas debates of 1858, as they represented a medium for public discourse, posed an example of both how deeply based in typography American public discourse

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<sup>6</sup> Postman, 25.

once was, and how a written-word-based medium allowed for informational context that proved meaningful to Americans. Since each man who participated in the debates would be allotted two or three hours at a time to form elaborate, textured arguments for his case, and since what would now seem an unheard of attention span was then required and given by the citizens who attended the debates, it is fair to say that these citizens were “people who regarded such events as essential to their political education, who took them to be an integral part of their social lives, and were quite accustomed to extended oratorical performances.”<sup>7</sup>

These Americans were so accustomed to oratorical performances because they read about the issues of debate beforehand, for, as McLuhan noted, “political unification of populations by means of vernacular and language groupings was unthinkable before printing turned each vernacular into an extensive mass medium.”<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, those who witnessed the debates could be assessed thusly: “as to the conscience of the audience, or even to its judgment, it is difficult to say very much. But, as to its understanding, a great deal can be assumed.”<sup>9</sup> It is this type of public discourse, of course, that illustrates the power of the written word over the character of its discourse; namely, that it necessarily involved participation by individuals on social, political and intellectual levels.

What makes the written word and its corresponding typographic mind superior as a medium and basis for effective public discourse is that it “has a content: a semantic,

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<sup>7</sup> Postman, 44.

<sup>8</sup> McLuhan, 177.

<sup>9</sup> Postman, 45.

paraphrasable, propositional content.”<sup>10</sup> Likewise, “whenever language is the principal medium of communication—especially language controlled by the rigors of print—an idea, a fact, a claim is the end result,” with it logically following that “it’s very hard to say nothing when employing a written English sentence,” as was the case for the content of the Lincoln-Douglas debates.<sup>11</sup> Take, for example, several image-free, typographic advertisements from 1920 (see Appendix, figures 1-4): while there can be some doubt as to figure 1’s claims regarding the ability of the advertised exercise regimen to make inferior men war-ready, there is little room for misunderstanding the aim of the advertisement; likewise, figures 2-4 offer information in direct, propositional fashion, excluding images while including textual information ranging from dates of sales to sizes to prices of objects—there is again little room for interpretation here. Likewise, Americans connected with the fairly complex expositional form of the Lincoln-Douglas debates if only because understanding the detailed content therein was a commonplace ability inasmuch as the ruling medium of the day allowed for content of such detail. As a medium, typography has affected the content of the arts, public discourse, and the sciences for some five hundred years.<sup>12</sup>

This sort of content made possible by the written word was something in which people had to engage to be socially relevant, politically sound, or intellectually

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<sup>10</sup> Postman, 49.

<sup>11</sup> Postman, 50.

<sup>12</sup> McLuhan, 177.

coherent when participating in public discourse. The printed word played a key role in providing meaningful content for public discourse, if not intellectual growth itself:

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, print put forward a definition of intelligence that gave priority to the objective, rational use of the mind and at the same time encouraged forms of public discourse with serious, logically ordered content. It is no accident that the Age of Reason was coexistent with the growth of a print culture, first in Europe and then in America. The spread of typography kindled the hope that the world and its manifold mysteries could at least be comprehended, predicted, controlled.<sup>13</sup>

It is clear that this Age of Reason is an age of exposition. It is one that demands in its discourse a sensitivity toward the relation of ideas that surface within it; the context required for this sort of discourse allowed for a depth of meaning in social, political, and intellectual experience that would soon feel the effects of the emergence of a new dominant medium.

### **Phenomenon versus Artifice**

The visual images in advertisements did not come into their own as a cumulative medium until they became something more than mere representations of objects that were advertised on the merits of use value. It was only when visual images became associated with modernizing tendencies—“the hegemony of technical expertise and bureaucratic organization [ . . . with an emphasis on ] the mass production of goods”<sup>14</sup>-- that this medium differentiated itself completely from that of the written word, as it began to decontextualize information in its renderings. But, while early attempts of

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<sup>13</sup> Postman, 51.

<sup>14</sup> Lears, 299.

advertising images may have been aimed at consumer self-identity, the full effect of this aim—to utterly confuse consumer self-identity-- would not be reached until visual images would break down traditional understanding of space and time in their renderings; this would become evident with the emergence of the visual cliché.

By the 1920s, advertisers were attempting to capture the attention of consumers by manipulating the ways with which consumers were to associate themselves with advertisements; these manipulations included a shift of focus from advertised products to ways that consumers were intended to relate to them. The focus of advertisements went from the use value of products, to a sense of “modernity” that permeated American culture of that era, to an implied sense of inferiority or guilt based on consumer choices, to the drama of the tabloid/confessional form, to the absurdity and scare tactics of the super-advertising form that followed the eventual, unavoidable saturation of advertising images in American newspapers and magazines.

Marchand illustrates these points—that the effects of earlier visual ads appealed to self-identity but did not quite undermine it—in several ways. For example, he compares advertisements from Proctor and Gamble between 1916 to 1926, citing the way that the company abandoned an earlier “‘reason why’ tone of voice for less product-oriented ads, with person-to-person illustrations and copy.”<sup>15</sup> This shift in focus is also evident in Fleischman’s Yeast’s advertising campaign from 1926 (see figures 5 and 6). These advertisements feature a fairly even blend of focus on both product use value and consumer representation, thereby exhibiting the influence that both the written word and visual image had to offer. The first example (figure 5), for

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<sup>15</sup> Marchand, 10.



instance, features copy that represents how each of several consumers of Fleischman's Yeast reaps his or her own benefits from including it in his or her diet; to represent a broad consumer base for this product, the advertisement reveals how a dancer, a laborer, and professional golfer all are pleased by the difference the product makes in their lifestyles. Likewise, figure 6 reveals the "reasons why" the product shared by the represented artist, proper lady, and outdoorsman, is the product to buy. People—or at least various representations of the consumers at whom advertisements were aimed—were very much involved in advertising images; by 1926, a notion of social interaction was implied by the process of ad-making.<sup>16</sup>

The idea of "modernity" in advertisements helped to perpetuate a sense of legitimacy for America's growing consumer class as it simultaneously involved consumers on a level increasingly detached from the social, political, and rational contexts associated with the medium of the written word. For example, one furniture advertisement demonstrates the way that visual imagery dominated printed text within it as it dictated what it was to be modern for the consumers at whom the advertisement was aimed (see figure 7); the caption, used here to augment the visual effect of a dazzlingly appointed parlor, reads as follows: "this luxurious sofa and lounging chair [are] modeled on English lines but designed for modern homes." In effect, this ad tells its viewer precisely what it is to be modern, and by extension, inasmuch as modernism came to be a dominant force in sculpting culture at that point in history, what it was to be American by 1930—namely, a consumer.

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<sup>16</sup> Lears, *Fables of Abundance: a Cultural History of Advertising in America* (New York: BasicBooks), 309.

From the above examples it is obvious that consumers were invited to participate on some personal level with advertisements. According to Marchand, a related method used to accomplish consumer participation in advertisements was for advertisers to represent consumers in advertisements in such a way as to instill an inferiority complex in the viewers who chose to participate in the content of the advertisement. For example, in figure 8's 1926 advertisement for a fire safe, it is plain to see how both the illustration and copy of the advertisement could evoke from its viewers—at least those who have so far failed to purchase this product—emotions such as guilt, anxiety, or self-doubt; no one wants to be unprepared should a disaster such as a fire strike. This tactic of appealing to one's emotional instability in order to sell a product signifies a kind of confusion of consumer self-identity; these advertisements also affected consumers on an individual-to-individual basis, which undermined the social context between those who participated in viewing the advertisements.

Advertising's use of the visual image as cultural medium involved more than having consumers participate by feeling inferior; there were other effects of increasingly decontextualized information of "modern" advertising images which led to somewhat confused consumer identity emerging; Jackson Lears summarizes these effects thusly:

American advertising agencies had at last caught up with "the machine age." The emphasis on technique over subject matter linked formalist modernism with bureaucratic rationality. By transforming a recognizable object into an abstract design the advertising artist elevated the commodity into a denatured realm of pure form.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Lears, 317.

The “realm of pure form” of which Lears speaks is “denatured” inasmuch as the products represented within it are decontextualized from their use value. Marchand offers another example of how, by the mid-to-late-1920s, the focus of advertisements had shifted further away from use value than ever before; namely, by noting how advertisers first observed American consumers’ infatuation with tabloid fare in popular publications, then borrowed techniques from the form to add to their own.

The tabloid/confessional form of advertising images effected a somewhat more confused sense of consumer self-identity because it featured in its representations of consumers a sense of high drama between them. For example, figure 9’s 1926 advertisement for Hubbard scrap books relied, like other advertisements from this era, on both the written word and accompanying visual image for its overall effect. As an example of the tabloid/confessional form, this advertisement offered by a combination of copy and visual imagery an almost voyeuristic peek into the secret life of its representation of a consumer. The copy of the advertisement describes the insight on the topic of the businessman’s success, as given by the illustration’s gossiping women: “then, overnight almost, his personality changed,” and “people began to notice him,” simply because, the advertisement implies, the consumer of that certain scrap book became somehow refined after using it. The striking thing about the tabloid/confessional form of advertising was that it struck a dramatic chord with its viewers as it confused the self-identity of the consumers viewing the advertisement, for they became engrossed in the relationship of the representation of another consumer with a given product, rather than forming a simpler, contextual understanding of it for themselves.

What once began as a genteel way to sell products to customers by clearly and textually conveying the merits of the use of the products had evolved into the nearly complete decontextualization of information. The increasingly image-based enterprise of advertising had gradually breeched longstanding cultural boundaries such as personal lives, confessional tabloids, and family space in order to evoke consumer participation, yet had seemingly run out of new space to invade. It was at this point that advertisers began to tackle one another's boundaries in an effort to keep a step ahead of other advertisers in the pursuit of consumer participation; according to Marchand, what resulted was a state of super-advertising:

At the height of the prosperity of the 1920s, a foreboding seized advertising leaders that overcame many of their inhibitions about an aggressive exploitation of radio. This anxiety also led them to experiment ever more boldly in print media with a variety of increasingly dramatic and emotional appeals. The name most frequently given to source of this apprehension was "saturation."

Ironically, the very success of advertising as a whole now loomed as a threat to the effectiveness of any given campaign. The public was becoming so saturated with advertisements that each advertiser had to overcome formidable competition just to gain a moment of the consumer's attention.<sup>18</sup>

Advertisers engaging in super-advertising often came up with ridiculous representations of products as they focused as much, if not more, on gaining financial traction in inter-advertising circles than they did on grooming and maintaining advertiser-consumer relationships so crucial to advertising since the rise of the visual image. One result of super-advertising was that it represented a stage of the greatest confusion of consumer self-identity by advertising to that point.

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<sup>18</sup> Marchand, 94.

Cigarette advertisements contained some of the more creative content during the period of super-advertising. To this end, Lucky Strike, abandoning the social norm of not having women involved in tobacco ads, used an international actress to pitch the merits of its brand.<sup>19</sup> Likewise, a rather absurd claim was made by Lucky Strike as it proclaimed its cigarettes to be “throat protection . . . against cough.”<sup>20</sup> The absurd nature of those advertisements for Lucky Strike, Chesterfield, and other cigarettes would continue into the mid-1930s (see figure 10) and beyond. The visual imagery of advertising had begun to construct a world obviously absurd when not accompanied by the decontextualizing effect of those images on information; how could consumers identify with a visual advertisement’s representation of themselves when such ludicrous claims accompanied the sales pitch?

Sometimes super-advertising took the form of blatant self-promotion, as is the case as early as 1925, when the *New York Times* lauded its role in adding to the saturation of advertising images that led to the need for super-advertising (see figure 14, very bottom right hand corner). Other forms of super-advertising included scare tactics aimed at consumers, as was the case with Scott Tissue Company’s campaign that essentially threatened rectal surgery for those unwise enough to buy inferior toilet tissue.<sup>21</sup> Sometimes such scare tactics referred to fates worse than rectal surgery; a 1926 advertisement for Colgate toothpaste (figure 11) matter-of-factly traced “rheumatism, heart disease, kidney trouble, even insanity and death, to bad teeth” that

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<sup>19</sup> Marchand, 96.

<sup>20</sup> Marchand, 101.

<sup>21</sup> Marchand, 103.

presumably riddled those consumers unwise enough to buy their toothpaste elsewhere. Similarly, advertisers began to visually mimic the format and layout styles of magazines by imitating within their advertisements the styles of editorial stories, the illustrations of short stories, and the like. All of these forms of super-advertising offered proof that the written word had become cast in the most minor roles--at best supporting much more prominent visual imagery—if it were present at all. Likewise, these advertisements had come to alienate consumers so that they could only vaguely identify with representations of themselves as they related to the products that advertisements pitched; the ludicrous content of super-advertising had almost completely detached consumers from the use value and “reason-why” contexts of products, which, in turn, may have left the viewers of such advertising images wondering what their roles as consumers were.

The saturation of imagery associated with super-advertising, particularly the effects it had on American culture, is referred to by Postman in terms of an “information/action ratio,” which reflects the effects of how one could make social, political, or intellectual sense of phenomena as is afforded by the dominant medium that controls public discourse.<sup>22</sup> This relationship between increasingly decontextualized representations of phenomena and the relative degree to which certain media allow for context of information, reflects how the “situation created by telegraphy, and then exacerbated by later technologies, made the relationship between information and action both abstract and remote [for . . .] people were faced with the problem of information glut, which means that simultaneously they were faced with

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<sup>22</sup> Postman, 68.

the problem of a diminished social and political potency.” Likewise, as was the case with telegraphy, the saturation of advertising images “brought into being a world of broken time and broken attention . . . [whose] principal strength was . . . to move information, not to collect it, explain, or analyze it.”<sup>23</sup> This world effected in various ways confusion of consumer self-identification; advertising moved away from informational context at the expense of public discourse, for what had once been a simple goal of advertisers—to win the participation of consumers with images—had become one wherein the image was created to battle other images. Furthermore, when images began to operate in relationship with one another in an effort to manipulate the self-identity of the consumer class, a context for these images could be traced; that context, inasmuch as it failed to incorporate the reality of everyday life of the consumers toward which the image-laden advertisements were aimed, effected decontextualization in public discourse and confusion of consumer self-identity that would only increase.

### **Artifice Trumps Phenomenon**

Near-total decontextualization of information in advertisements occurred only once the written word had become relegated to such a secondary position in advertising, for then advertisements, in a collective effort to confuse consumer self-identification, could cater to faculties other than reason. In fact, advertising, released from the constraints of the rational trappings of propositional claims, would set its

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<sup>23</sup> Postman, 69.

sights on targets ranging from consumer mood to the modern art it was so influenced by, eventually settling into patterns of images so instantly recognizable that they became visual clichés, for, as McLuhan noted, “any community that wants to expedite and maximize the exchange of goods and services has simply got to homogenize its social life.”<sup>24</sup> Where once there was the written word describing a product’s use value, there were, beginning in the 1920s, patterns of visual images that came to represent products in widely accepted, albeit decontextualized, ways.

Advertising’s path to the visual cliché was paved by artistic innovations as it effected consumer self-identification. The modern art used in advertisements had five main identifying characteristics that—due to its massive influence on the medium—helped advertising images to further disassociate themselves from the context of rational thought. The first characteristic was the heavy use of diagonal lines within the images; the second was the off-centered composition of the layout of images, which “paralleled the diagonal line in aura and psychological effect.”<sup>25</sup> These two characteristics help to skew a sense of space, furthering the evolution of what would become the visual cliché. Unresolved tension, the third characteristic, was sought to be represented by advertisements, as advertisers often employed “expressive distortion,” the fourth characteristic of modern art found in the embellishment or bending of certain ideas represented by images. The last characteristic borrowed from modern art by advertisers in the hope to capture the consumer eye was

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<sup>24</sup> McLuhan, 229.

<sup>25</sup> Marchand, 144.



simplicity, presumably since advertisements were not for in-depth rational reflection anymore.<sup>26</sup>

To see the influence of modern art on advertisements for furs, for example, compare figures 12 and 13 from 1939 with figure 14 from 1925. Figure 13 features diagonal design lines that figure 14 does not. Being newspaper advertisements, all of these figures are somewhat bound to being framed within certain spaces, but the earlier examples of these fur advertisements (figure 14) are utterly box-shaped and symmetrical in form. Likewise, the three earlier advertisements exhibit no sense of tension, much less the unresolved kind; conversely, the later-occurring advertisements (12,13) do exhibit a sense of motion, if not tension, in their more modern design. Lastly, while all of the aforementioned advertisements are simplistic in form, figures 12 and 13 illustrate how advertisements could be minimal in form, yet, insofar as they exhibited other characteristics of modern art, more eye-catching than earlier examples of advertisements that were more word-based.

One advertising image that incorporates the five characteristics of modern art is found in figure 15. Another example from the *New York Times*, this 1939 advertisement features a diagonal, off-center arrangement of the parts of its composition. There is a sense of unresolved tension exhibited by the character in the advertisement that proclaims in rather exaggerated fashion that she does not “want to be told what to think.” This advertisement is also simplistic in form, for it features written text not only as a reinforcement of the overall visual effect, but also, the literally forward-looking woman’s words are a part of the overall visual composition.

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<sup>26</sup> Marchand 144-6.

In this ad, representations of both a woman's face and her thoughts share a same, skewed, broken down sense of space. With the help of advertising, written words had become elements of visual art. Was the American typographic mind now dead?

Advertising would not admit to the rampant decontextualization within the American public discourse influenced so heavily by the ever-increasingly visual medium. Rather, great efforts were made by advertisers to convince consumers that advertisements were effectively reflecting the American society rather than influencing its public discourse. This relationship between phenomenon and artifice is known as “social tableaux,” describing “all advertisements in which persons are depicted in such a way as to suggest their relationships to each other or to a larger social structure.”<sup>27</sup> Social tableaux advertisements ultimately failed as representative samples of American life; rather, social tableaux advertisements could be seen as reflections of the aspirations of consumers, in effect describing their “social fantasy.”<sup>28</sup> This social fantasy, of course, effected an utter confusion of consumer self-identity, rendering the representations of consumers without, to various degrees, spatial or temporal contexts.

For example, one social fantasy revealed by advertising's attempt to capture American social tableaux was that of the high-class lady. An ideal for women and men alike then—and perhaps even now—the “woman of high fashion,” as Marchand calls her, took on the most peculiar bodily proportions in advertised images of her. Women of high fashion were rarely represented in photographic form because it

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<sup>27</sup> Marchand, 165.

<sup>28</sup> Marchand, 167.

forbade, unlike modernistic renderings of her, the “bodily proportions that suggested a height of at least eight feet.”<sup>29</sup> The woman of high fashion has been represented this way from the mid-1930s (see figures 16-20) until today. Because of the decontextualization of information brought about by the medium of the visual image, even the human image could be created and multiplied to the “proportions of mass-produced merchandise.”<sup>30</sup> As Americans’ social identities had become based in fantastic irrelevance, the eight-foot-tall woman of high fashion attested to a breaking down by visual cliché of traditional ideas of space.

Obviously, the representation of the woman of high fashion as an eight-footer who tips the scales at 80 pounds has become something of a visual cliché. Try as they might to reflect slices of American society, the best advertisers could expect was a visual image familiar to anyone at first glance. When compared to the written word it displaced as America’s main medium of public discourse, the effectiveness of the visual cliché can be measured thusly: “Arguments invited counterarguments, and assertions might provoke skepticism. But pictures deflected criticism; they inspired belief.”<sup>31</sup> Yet, when an image effectively caught the consumer eye, “the potential superiority of the ‘visual statement’ became evident in cases where the advertiser’s message would have sounded exaggerated or presumptuous if put into words, or if the

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<sup>29</sup> Marchand, 183.

<sup>30</sup> McLuhan, 189.

<sup>31</sup> Marchand, 236.

advertiser sought to play upon such ‘inappropriate’ emotions as religious awe or a thirst for power.”<sup>32</sup> Advertising images had become involved in consumer fantasy.

Certainly, the decontextualization of information brought about by the medium of the visual image caused intellectual incoherence; any widely-understood image that transcended the boundaries of cultural appropriateness, for example, could be convenient for advertisers to have at their disposal, for they could, in effect, short-circuit potential rational discussion about those boundaries. As one theorist concurred: “ads seem to work on the very advanced principle that a small pellet or pattern in a noisy, redundant barrage of repetition will gradually assert itself.”<sup>33</sup> Perhaps the most powerful and long-lasting visual clichés from the 1930s that performed just that act was that of the family circle.<sup>34</sup> The cliché of the once-off-limits family circle typically was represented in soft camera focus; this effect instilled in the family circle cliché a depth of emotion that had no real connection to its viewers. A disconnect from both space and time resulted from such fantastic images, as “the fantasy of the family circle was conveyed almost entirely through visual imagery.”<sup>35</sup>

Commenting on the early nineteenth century’s “new picture *gestalt* culture,”<sup>36</sup> McLuhan wrote specifically of the influence of the photograph, yet his analysis of the

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<sup>32</sup> Marchand, 236.

<sup>33</sup> McLuhan, 227.

<sup>34</sup> Marchand, 238.

<sup>35</sup> Marchand, 248.

<sup>36</sup> McLuhan, 197.

effects of these particular visual images apply, more generally, to the visual imagery of advertisements. For, as the photograph abolished a previous cultural sense of time like the newspaper did with its daily renewal of information, and as the photograph abolished a sense of space a sense in much the same way as had the telegraph,<sup>37</sup> so, too, did the advertising image—particularly the development of the visual cliché-- which followed the medium of the photograph have similar effects on cultural senses of both time and space. By looking at images that perpetuated this cliché, one could conclude that, indeed, the images did not necessarily mean anything at all, rationally speaking; they did, however, resemble one another in their composition and content.<sup>38</sup>

To understand how the visual cliché came to represent the complete decontextualization of space, time, and ultimately, an utter confusion of consumer self-identity, a brief history of the evolution of the family circle cliché will help. This particular visual cliché evolved from a simple, fantasy-based representation of family; from there, advertisers experimented with the spatial relationship between representations of the family circle in advertisements and the products those advertisements sought to sell. This manipulation of spatial contexts within these advertisements continued to develop, eventually leading to the manipulation of temporal contexts, and ultimately, manipulation and decontextualization of both space and time, by which point the visual cliché of the family circle that once

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<sup>37</sup> McLuhan, 196.

<sup>38</sup> Marchand, 249-51.

symbolized the fantasies of consumers had become utterly decontextualized from the consumers at whom they were once aimed.

For an example of the basic form of the family circle early in its evolution, figures 21, 22, and 23 from 1935-38 all fall under the category of this visual cliché; each image in this example involves a three-member, close-knit family of man, woman, and child. The composition is similar throughout these figures, with the family circle visual cliché occupying the upper two thirds of the space of the advertisement in figure 21, and more than one half of the composition of both figures 22 and 23. In each of these advertisements, both the background of the visual images mentioned above and the written text that accompany the visual cliché occupy the most minor of roles, save for decontextualizing the idea of the family itself from the reality of everyday life. Figure 21's family circle is cast against a white background; all viewer eyes are drawn to the stark image of a man with his family, using a phone symbolized by the Bell Telephone logo at the bottom right corner of the advertisement. Likewise, the background for figure 22's cliché is more artistically rendered than real in its representation of light that forms a silhouette of a child—her parents huddled beside her—before a Hammond organ. The tagline of the advertisement, fit into the overall visual composition with care yet still the most prominent written text of the composition, refers directly to the fantasy of the visual cliché below it: “your family will always remember the Christmas you gave them a Hammond organ!” Similarly, the family circle represented in figure 25, despite having their semicircle of backs to the lamp that the advertisement presumably was meant to sell, benefited from photographic lighting that far outshone the visual effect of the lamp behind them.

In each of the advertisements in figures 21-23, there is an example of the family circle associated with some product. Accompanying the cliché are, in order of relative visibility: (figure 21) a corporate logo and barely visible written copy; (figure 22) the product at the child's fingertips, large text formatted neatly to fit the cliché's dimensions, referring to family, and miniscule written text below imagery; and, (figure 23) General Electric name and logo and product line logo on a smaller image of product tag. This cross-comparison illustrates how advertisers had come to capture cliché images of consumer fantasies, then associate them with corporate logos, loose representations of products, or name brands, in effect, decontextualizing information so that consumers were left to make the most incoherent of decisions, should they be in the market for any of these, or other, vaguely-represented products.

Derivations of the family circle cliché evolved as advertisers experimented with how it spatially related to the products it was intended to sell. For example, two 1946 representations of the family circle, which previously entailed the presence of a mother, father and child, had been reduced (see figures 24 and 25) to only father and son; perhaps, advertisers sought to transcend generations with the representational fantasy of industrialization implied by these advertisements. In time, the family circle would better accomplish such a feat, particularly as advertisers experimented with the spatial relationship between images of the family circle and the images of products. For example, in Alcoa's 1950 advertisement for window frames (figure 26), the representation of the product literally frames the family circle within itself. From that same year, there appeared an advertisement (figure 27) for Carrier air conditioners in which the product is positioned within the frame of the advertisement so that it

assumes a position within the family circle—between father and mother—where a child typically had been cast within this visual cliché. A 1956 Goodrich tire advertisement (figure 28) further demonstrated the trend of family circle/product spatial experimentation; in this advertisement, a family sits suspended in an imaginary car of which the only parts visible are the white wall tires at all four corners that suggest the form of a car as they, as a collective product, frame and contain the floating family. Another advertisement from that year (figure 29) involves a similar family circle/product relationship, although in this example, it is the product, a Kitchen Aid automatic dishwasher, that dominates the forefront of the advertising image, leaving the family circle immediately “behind” the product, as if to suggest endorsement from this fantastic form of the family. The fantasy-based idea of the American family, along with representations of an endless supply of consumer products, had come to occupy and interact within a new, skewed sense of space.

Standard perceptions of time would fare no better as the visual cliché evolved to capture the American consumer eye; as was the case of the manipulation of space in certain family circle cliché advertisements, advertisers began to manipulate representations of time in their visual clichés to evoke certain effects. Two 1930 advertisements, one by machine equipment-maker Elliot Fisher (figure 30), another by Park Davis and Company (figure 31), illustrate examples of what Marchand categorized as the “future” visual cliché. This cliché featured characters that “stood gazing off into the distance with their backs turned directly or obliquely toward the reader,” figuratively turning away from the here and now toward either a horizon line



in the distance or a source of bright white light.<sup>39</sup> In figure 31, there are two businessmen with their backs to the consumer viewer, gazing at the horizon beyond the domain of industrialization over which the men preside. In figure 32, there are two characters more obliquely positioned between the viewer and a source of bright white light that denotes a future presumably featuring pharmaceuticals. Each of these examples demonstrates the way the visual advertising image, as it evolved into cliché forms, had begun to move away from earlier consumer participation-oriented tabloid fare, toward a form more temporally disconnected from its consumer viewers.

The manipulation of traditional ideas of time transcended Marchand's categorical boundaries of the visual cliché with not only the cliché of the future, but also that of the family circle, adopting a skewed sense of time in its renderings. A 1950 Mutual Benefit Life Insurance Company advertisement (figure 32) demonstrates how the temporal context in a visual cliché of the family circle, a la McLuhan's photograph, could be annihilated merely by placing the visual cliché before a plain, white background. Further, if a traditional sense of time could be annihilated, new forms of it could be created; in figure 33, for example, a 1952 advertisement for the Bituminous Coal Institute manipulates a sense of time as it assigns meaning to its representations of the family circle's morning, noon, and night; it is implied, for instance, that it is the product coal that powers the cooking of breakfast, the running of the air conditioner during midday, and the television which occupies a place within the circle that evening. The concept of time—once an afterthought in advertising

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<sup>39</sup> Marchand, 254.

images—had become another element of design for the advertising artist to decontextualize and manipulate for commercial ends.

As the family circle cliché evolved, simultaneous manipulation of both space and time became evident in its renderings; a result of this was the utter decontextualization of images of the family circle from consumer self-identity. Figure 34, for example, demonstrates how a 1956 advertisement for The Travelers insurance exhibits space and time-annihilating characteristics of McLuhan's photograph; this advertisement's image of the family circle before a plain white background reveals the temporal and spatial decontextualization of earlier examples from this cliché's evolution. As if this advertisement were admitting to McLuhan's aforementioned claim that "any community that wants to expedite and maximize the exchange of goods and services has simply got to homogenize its social life,"<sup>40</sup> a barely visible disclaimer that runs along top of the family circle image of this advertisement reads as follows: "This is the story of an actual family insured by The Travelers; to safeguard its privacy, different names and pictures have been used." This disclaimer puts to rest any semblance of spatial or temporal context any consumer could ever hope to derive from the advertisement, and reflects the way that the very concept of the family circle had become a sort of interchangeable currency, decontextualized in every way from consumers who observed the advertisement. Visual advertising had become a most decontextualized form of discourse.

Proof that cliché images of the family circle came to utterly confuse consumer self-identity can likewise be found in a 1956 Connecticut General advertisement

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<sup>40</sup> McLuhan, 229.

(figure 35). Featuring a plain white background that had become something of a cliché all its own by this point, this advertisement goes one step further by, as it represented the family circle in silhouette form, quite literally taking any sense of depth from the image and the concept of the family it represented. Similarly, a 1961 Ford advertisement (figure 36) took the family circle cliché, seemingly cut out of it the characters of parents and child, and arranged the pieces within the coach space of two automobiles whose safety features are being compared. Like the family circle in silhouette form, the decontextualization of the representation of these family circles in the Ford advertisement is facilitated by the annihilation of space and time; furthermore, with each character being cut out of its respective visual cliché form, there is a decontextualization from earlier representations of the family circle itself. At this point, the consumer who may have once vaguely related to a fantasy-based image of a cohesive family unit could no longer do so. Not only did representations of the family circle come to be decontextualized from standard perceptions of space and time, but also, inasmuch as traditional fantasy-based perceptions of the family were broken down in their representations, the consumers who participated in a kind of discourse by viewing them could not identify with them on any effective level of public discourse.

As visually-oriented advertisements evolved, individual consumers participated with the content of these advertisements in less contextualized ways. Early image-laden advertisements featured written text that involved description of use value; these advertisements were understood in context of why consumers needed certain products. Likewise, the “reason-why” tone of later advertisements still involved

consumer participation on some useful, contextual level, whether or not the reasons given in the copy of increasingly visual advertisements were grounded in rationality. Rationality, and thus consumer participation of any reasonable nature, became a secondary aim of advertisements of the tabloid era, as guilt and a sense of inferiority drove consumer behavior as much as common sense. With the evolution of the visual cliché came one way for consumers to participate in the discourse put forth by advertisers—namely, by somehow associating with the visual forms of consumer fantasy that clichés represented. In short, by the 1940s, consumers had in a few short decades come to relate with the products advertisements represented in decreasingly contextual ways, without a sense of use, or a real reason why. This was the precedent set forth by the medium shift of the visual image best exemplified by advertising of the 1920, 30s, and beyond: at least one form of public discourse without use or reason is somehow acceptable.

Although the evolution of advertising can be seen as a medium that influenced--if not dominated--public discourse, there is not an agenda guiding the scope of this essay to simply blame the ills of public discourse on advertising. Rather, if anything is to be taken from this study, it is this: anyone who raises questions regarding the seeming futility of modern public discourse in social, political, and intellectual spheres would do well to consider the media which influences the content that it transmits. Just as the ancient medium of smoke signals was unable to convey the finer nuances of philosophy, the modern day dominant medium of television, for

instance, may not be the most conducive form by which to understand one's social, political, and intellectual worlds.<sup>41</sup>

There may be many who challenge the assertion made first by McLuhan, then Postman, that the medium dictates the content and character of public discourse, and that anyone who questions the ways in which information is exchanged is nothing more than an alarmist. However, before one can dismiss such an argument, he or she would do well to take a challenge put forth by Postman; namely, to think about any given historically famous person. If one were to do this—say, to imagine Albert Einstein or George Washington—he or she would undoubtedly first conjure an *image*, rather than words, for “of words, almost nothing will come to mind. This is the difference between thinking in a word-centered culture and thinking in an image-centered culture.”<sup>42</sup> The visual images that emerged in the Golden Age of Advertising may very well be the soil from which the contemporary American, image-centered culture has sprung. As a form of public discourse, the visual image of American advertising—particularly the visual cliché—modeled the way that the information within public discourse could be decontextualized. Inasmuch as those visual forms of discourse became instantly recognizable, they became acceptable forms of discourse, regardless of their questionable content. If dominant media do indeed shape the character of discourse, then it follows that the contemporary American landscape so cluttered with commercial advertising images has become one lacking both context and, to some degree, meaning.

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<sup>41</sup> Postman, 7.

<sup>42</sup> Postman, 61.

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*Time*. January 1, 1925-May 16, 1961.

## Appendix of Visual Images

Display Ad 56 -- No Title  
New York Times, 1920, Current file, Jan. 1, 1920, TheQuest Historical Newspapers The New York Times (1851 - 2004)  
pg. 20

**REAL ELIXIR OF YOUTH.**

Healthful exercises taken under right supervision and with the precision that made real men fit for war service out of what seemed poor material, given at Arthur McGovern's Gymnasium, 3 West 88th Street. Special classes for women. Telephone Columbus 2928-9100. —Adv.

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Figure 1.  
Display Ad. *New York Times*, January 1, 1920, 20.

**JOHN FORSYTHE & SONS**  
THE WAIST HOUSE  
3 West 42d Street

**JANUARY SALE**  
**WASH WAISTS**

**\$2.85**

SALE BEGINS TOMORROW—FRIDAY!

Figure 2.  
Display Ad. *New York Times*, January 1, 1920, 32.



# ANDREW ALEXANDER

SIXTH AVENUE  
CORNER 19<sup>TH</sup> ST



548 FIFTH AVE.  
ABOVE 45<sup>TH</sup> ST

## Annual Winter Sale of Shoes

WE BELIEVE every pair of shoes in this sale could be sold at regular prices before Spring. But an Annual Winter Sale has been a traditional feature of the merchandising policy of this shoe business for 63 years. The policy reductions are restricted to the quality and quantity of the shoes and are not intended to reduce the quality of the shoes.

at Fifth Avenue Store:

Men's Shoes 9<sup>65</sup> to 13<sup>75</sup>

Women's Boots 7<sup>65</sup> to 12<sup>65</sup>

Women's Low Shoes 7<sup>65</sup> to 10<sup>65</sup>

at Sixth Avenue Store:

Men's Shoes 5<sup>45</sup> to 9<sup>45</sup>

Women's Shoes 4<sup>45</sup> to 9<sup>45</sup>

Women's Low Shoes 2<sup>75</sup> to 6<sup>95</sup>

See the display in the SETTING OF THE  
apartment on the 5th floor for the selection of shoes.

## ANNUAL SALE OF "PARFAIT" and "LA SUPREME" CORSETS

*Models Exclusive With Franklin Simon & Co.  
Reduced In Price The First Time This Season.*

NOT an end-of-the-season close out of odd sizes, but our regular stock in all sizes; models to suit all figures.

### "Parfait" Corsets

FOR SLENDER OR MEDIUM FIGURES, waistline model corset of pink broche with elastic half-way across the top; lightly but firmly boned; medium length skirt.

**6.00**

Heretofore 9.00 Tax 12

### "La Supreme" Corsets

FOR SLENDER OR MEDIUM FIGURES. One model of pink broche with low bust, medium skirt; the other pink coutil with low bust, long skirt and close boning.

**5.00**

Heretofore 8.50 Tax 12

### "Parfait" Corsets

FOR MEDIUM OR FULL FIGURES, low bust model corset of pink broche with elastic inserts in skirt.

**9.50**

Heretofore 14.50 Tax 12

### "La Supreme" Corsets

FOR MEDIUM FIGURES corset of pink hair striped coutil in straight line model with low bust and long skirt.

**7.00**

Heretofore 9.50 Tax 12

WOMEN'S CORSET SHOP Balcony Floor

## Franklin Simon & Co.

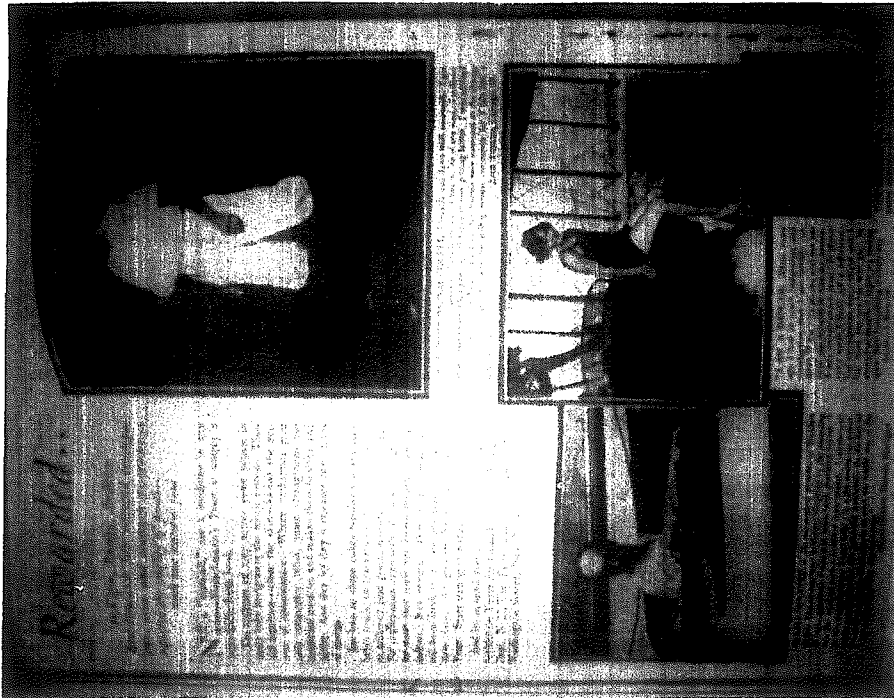
Fifth Avenue, 37th and 38th Streets

Figure 3.

Display Ad. *New York Times*, January 1, 1920, 8.

Figure 4.

Display Ad. *New York Times*, January 1, 1920, 8.

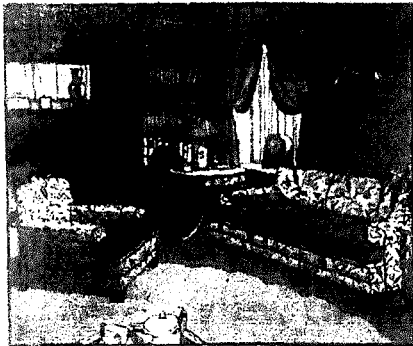


**Figure 5.**  
 [Fleischman's Yeast, "Rewarded," advertisement,  
*Time*, August 9, 1926, 21]



**Figure 6.**  
 [Fleischman's Yeast, "In Your Neighborhood, Too,"  
 advertisement, *Time*, September 6, 1926, 19]

# Flint & Horner Furniture



Many reductions have been made on upholstered furniture. This luxurious sofa and lounge chair, modeled on English lines but designed for modern homes, is made to your own style. It is hair filled and double covered, with reversible cushions filled with feather down. The sofa in denim or your own cover is reduced from \$375 to \$114, the lounge chair in denim from \$108 to \$72. See other styles of covers with only the cost of material.

**T**OMORROW our doors swing wide on the most important clearance that has ever been sponsored by this fine old firm of furniture specialists! In its range of choice alone it stands as the greatest Sale in our history. There is not a furniture lack or need that you cannot fulfill from its amazing values. And in the sharpness of its discounts it will rank as the outstanding furniture event of the year. 10% is its lowest reduction but there are hundreds and hundreds of groups and odd pieces at the featured discounts of 25%, 33 1/3% and 50%. On all counts it is a Sale you should attend at a furniture Sale you can hardly afford to miss.

Figure 7.  
Display Ad. *New York Times*, January 1, 1930, 27.

The Featured  
Discounts are...  
25% - 33 1/3%  
and 50%

### TYPICAL VALUES

Unusually handsome bookcase - an artistic reproduction of a piece from the early Empire period. It is of solid mahogany with an exquisite stretch mahogany veneer. \$4 Sale price is \$107.50, reduced from \$150.

Colonial corner cabinet of graceful design. Reduced from \$90 to \$57.

Bedroom suite of Louis XVI design in mahogany and maple burl veneers with brass corner posts touched with gilt, and gilded moldings. The 2 pieces include tall chest, bureau, dressing table, chiffonier, with bench, and two chairs. Reduced from \$78 to \$49.

Eighteenth century three-door wardrobe bookcase. Reduced from \$150 to \$120.

Dining suite of late 18th century featuring walnut and maple veneers, with solid greenwood. The 10 piece set includes table extending to 8 feet, sideboard 46 inches long, still cabinet, 2 chairs, one arm chair and five chairs. Reduced from \$445 to \$230.

Chinese Colonial corner secretary of maple. Reduced from \$150 to \$95.

Louis XVI Dining Room suite of rich carved decoration, of figured maple, beech and pine veneer, the delicate surface carving gilded. Set of 12 pieces includes sideboard for inches, table extending to 8 feet, 2 chairs, 2 chairs, four side and two arm chairs. Reduced from \$805 to \$350.

Reproduction of a fine Sheraton rushbed Dining Group, 10 pieces. Reduced from \$1,600 to \$800.

Exquisite bedroom suite in Louis XVI style, of diagonally striped and mahogany panels selected, surrounded with pinea veneer. Work of a master hand, solid, elegant and

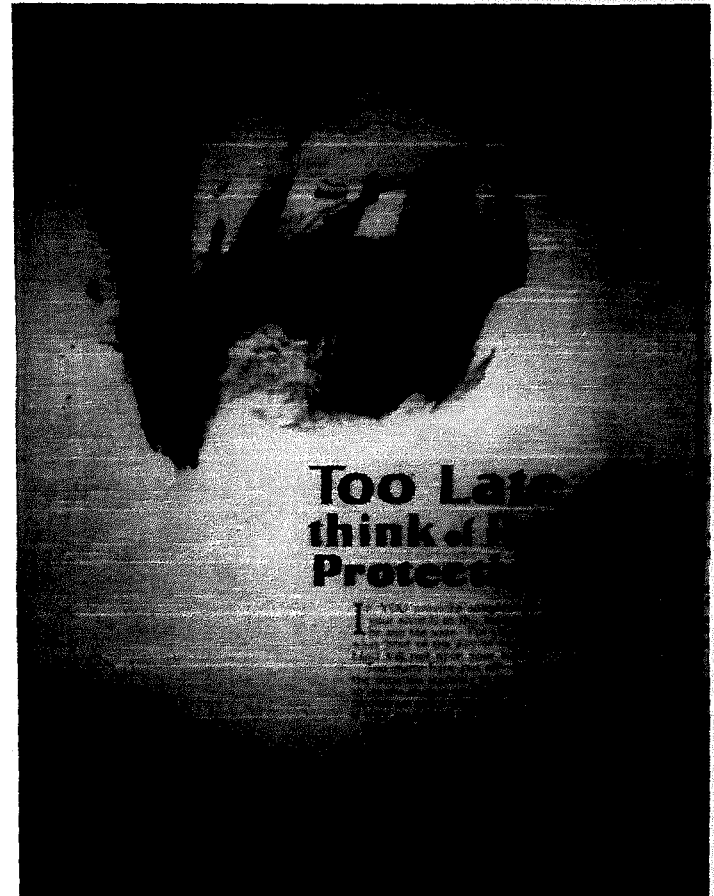


Figure 8.  
[Rand Cardex Service, "Too Late to Think of Record Protection," advertisement, *Time*, November 29, 1926, 42]



Figure 9.  
 [Wm. H. Wise & Co., "He's the Most Interesting  
 Man I Know," advertisement, *Time*,  
 August 30, 1926, 3]

Did you ever notice... in a roomful of people... the  
 difference between one cigarette and another... and  
 wonder why *Chesterfields* have such a pleasing aroma



...of a fine tobacco...  
 ...the quality...  
 ...the aroma...  
 ...the taste...  
 ...the satisfaction...  
 ...the pleasure...  
 ...the enjoyment...  
 ...the relaxation...  
 ...the peace...  
 ...the quiet...  
 ...the stillness...  
 ...the calm...  
 ...the serenity...  
 ...the harmony...  
 ...the balance...  
 ...the equilibrium...  
 ...the stability...  
 ...the security...  
 ...the confidence...  
 ...the faith...  
 ...the trust...  
 ...the love...  
 ...the compassion...  
 ...the kindness...  
 ...the generosity...  
 ...the humility...  
 ...the modesty...  
 ...the simplicity...  
 ...the purity...  
 ...the beauty...  
 ...the grace...  
 ...the elegance...  
 ...the refinement...  
 ...the sophistication...  
 ...the intelligence...  
 ...the wisdom...  
 ...the knowledge...  
 ...the understanding...  
 ...the insight...  
 ...the perception...  
 ...the awareness...  
 ...the mindfulness...  
 ...the presence...  
 ...the awareness...  
 ...the mindfulness...  
 ...the presence...

Figure 10.  
 Display Ad. *New York Times*, January 2, 1935, 26.

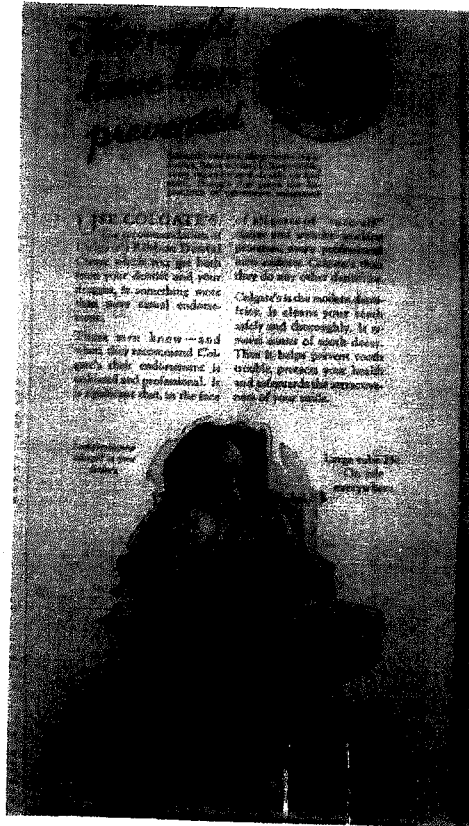


Figure 11.  
[Colgate and Co., "This, Might Have Been Prevented,"  
advertisement, *Time*, January 25, 1926, 29]



Figure 12.  
Display Ad, *New York Times*, December 31, 1939, 2.


**CLEARANCE**

**FURS**  
by  
*Harra*

S. HARRA FUR CO. • 15 WEST 57th Street

Figure 13.  
Display Ad. *New York Times*. December 31, 1939. 2.

*Lord & Taylor*




January Coat Sale  
for Women and Misses

\$97.50 to \$85

Figure 14.  
Display Ad. *New York Times*. January 2, 1925. 8.

F U R S



January Sale  
Mink Coats

Natural Mink Coats  
\$165

Natural Raccoon Coats  
\$275

Hudson Seal Coats  
\$275

*Lord & Taylor*



Figure 16.  
 Display Ad. *New York Times*. January 2, 1935, 4.



Figure 15.  
 Display Ad. *New York Times*. December 31, 1939, 67.

**Arnold Constable**  
535 AVENUE AT 42ND STREET



**EXCLUSIVE SHIRTS TO  
COMMIT HANDMADE  
NEER LANGERIE**

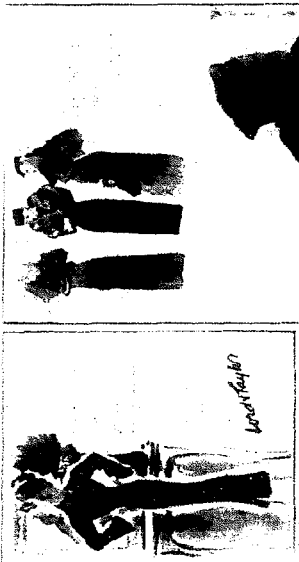
100
200
300
400
500
600
700
800
900
1000
1100
1200

**COATS... BLENDED... COLORED  
APPAREL... MIRRORS  
AND NEGLIGES**

to 19 to 34 00  
and include pictures in many cases



Miss Belden, Devere and Jernale  
Fashion Foundations & Garments  
**5.489**



*Wood Taylor*

# Semi-Annual  
**CLEARANCE**  
WOLING SHOES  
**5.85**

*Wood Taylor*



*Wood Taylor*

**Figure 17.**  
Display Ad. New York Times, January 2, 1935, 7.

**Arnold Constable**  
535 AVENUE AT 42ND STREET

**COATS... BLENDED... COLORED  
APPAREL... MIRRORS  
AND NEGLIGES**

to 19 to 34 00  
and include pictures in many cases


**5.489**

**Figure 18.**  
Display Ad. New York Times, January 1, 1935, 10.



**Wanamaker's**  
Salons

Presenting  
Spectacular and  
superb Collection of  
**46**  
Individual  
Fur Coats



Natural Eastern Mink

Eastern Mink Pelts

Hand-Sewn Black Caracul

Russian Ermine

One-of-a-Kind Furs

15 Fur Coat  
Fur Dress Mink

**Wanamaker's - NEW YORK**

Figure 19.  
Display Ad, *New York Times*, January 1, 1935, 19.

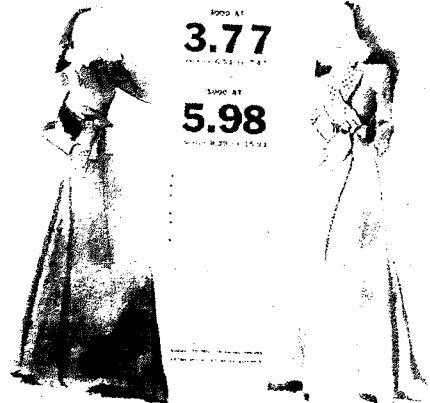
SEE US IN THE BARBER FINE WARD - IT'S JANUARY AT  
**Wanamaker's**

**Wanamaker's GREATEST SALE OF ROBES IN 2 YEARS**  
100,000 worth for 35,000!

**ALL WOOL ROBES AND HOUSECOATS**

1939 AT  
**3.77**  
1938 AT 5.00

1939 AT  
**5.98**  
1938 AT 7.50



**SALE!**  
**FIVE CORSETS**

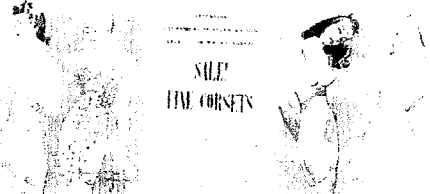
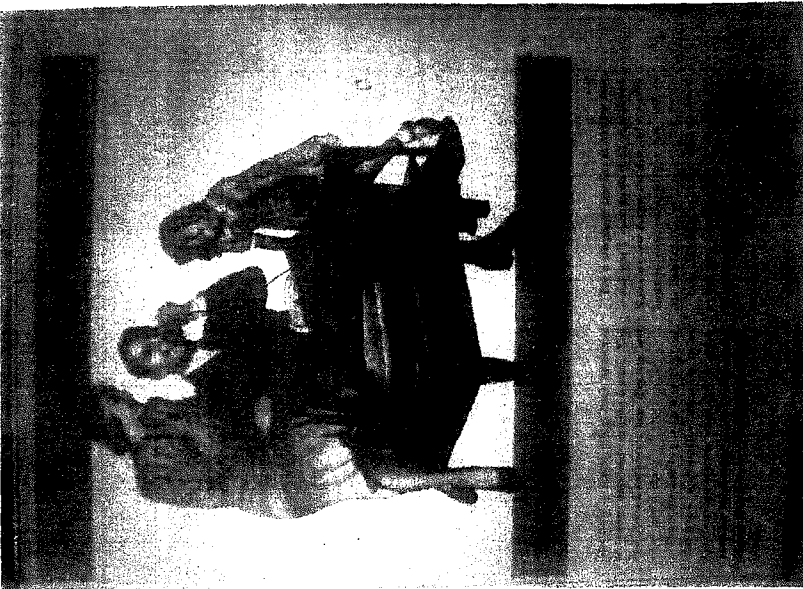


Figure 20.  
Display Ad, *New York Times*, December 31, 1939, 11.



**Figure 21.**  
[Bell Telephone, "Holiday Chats with Far Off Friends,"  
advertisement, *Time*, January 25, 1926, 29]



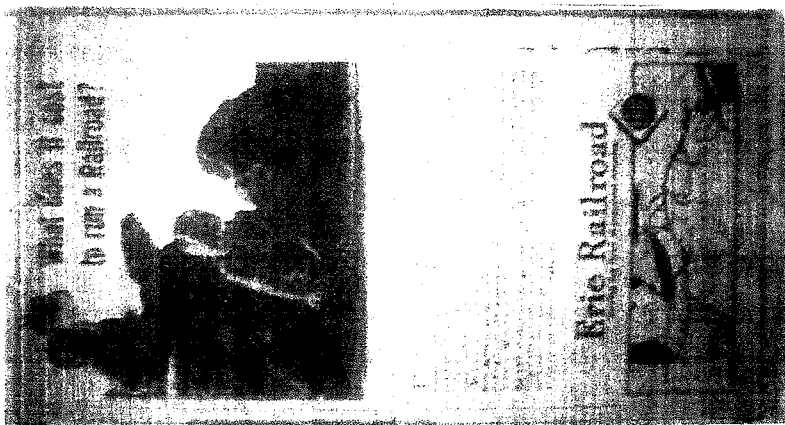
**Figure 22.**  
[Hammond Organ, "Our Family Will Always Remember,"  
advertisement, *Time*, December 12, 1938, 33]



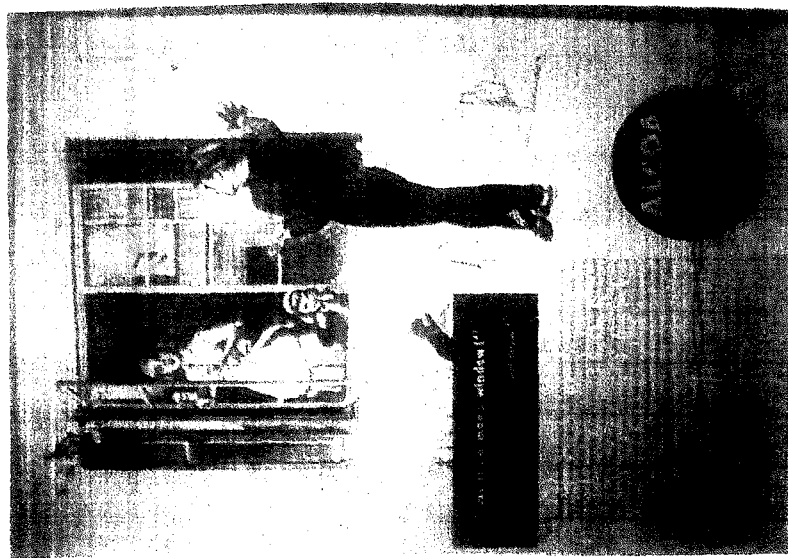
**Figure 23.**  
[General Electric. "Give them an IES Better Sight Lamp."  
advertisement. *Time*. December 9, 1935. 76]



**Figure 24.**  
[Cleaver-Brooks. "Imagination" advertisement.  
*Time*. February 18, 1946. 97]



**Figure 25.** [Erie Railroad. "What Does it Cost to Run a Railroad?," advertisement. *Time*, March 4, 1946, 55]



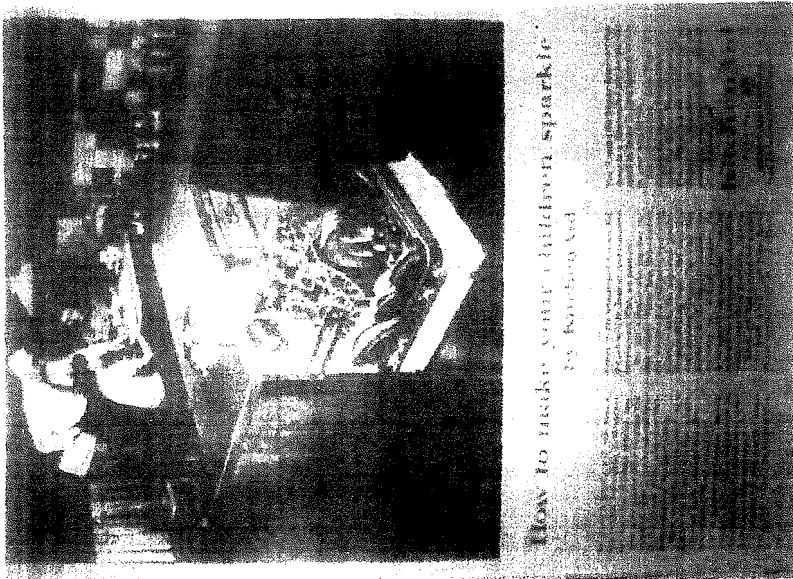
**Figure 26.** [Alcoa. "I Say it's a Man's Window," advertisement. *Time*, June 12, 1950, 61]



**Figure 27.**  
 [Carrier, "Cool Retreat from Sweltering Heat,"  
 advertisement, *Time*, June 26, 1950, 91]



**Figure 28.**  
 [BF Goodrich, "Because You're Only as Safe as Your  
 Tires," advertisement, *Time*, June 18, 1956, 1]



**Figure 29.**

[Kitchen Aids. "How to Make Your Children Sparkle," advertisement. *Time*, May 14, 1956, 15]



**Figure 30.**

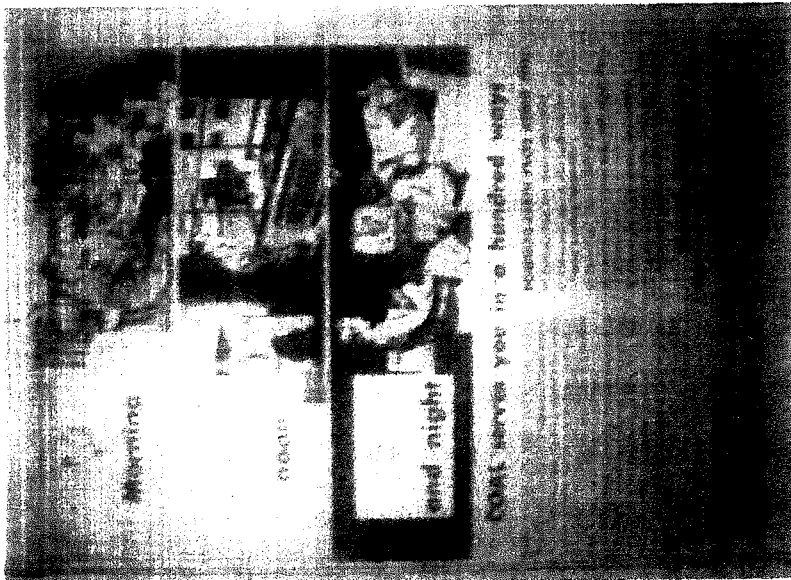
[Elliot-Fisher. "All Your Business at a Glance," advertisement. *Time*, April 28, 1950, 53]



**Figure 31.** [Park, Davis & Company, "For 1936: a New Outlook on Life," advertisement, *Time*, December 21, 1935, 18]



**Figure 32.** [The Mutual Benefit Life Insurance Company, "We're Building Security for Her," advertisement, *Time*, June 12, 1950, 95]



**Figure 33.**  
 [Bituminous Coal Institute. "Coal Serves You in a Hundred Ways." advertisement. *Time*, May 5, 1952, 123]

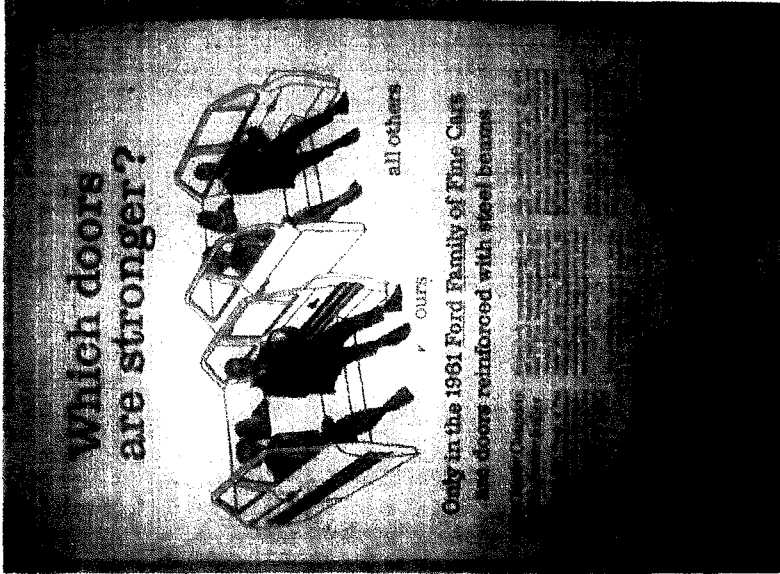


**Figure 34.**  
 [The Travelers. advertisement. *Time*, June 11, 1956, 19]





**Figure 35.**  
 [Connecticut General advertisement.  
*Time*, April 30, 1956, 57]



**Figure 36.**  
 [Ford, "Which Doors are Stronger?"  
 advertisement, *Time*, May 16, 1961, 55]

James Adkins was born in Lebanon, Pennsylvania in 1971. He graduated from Kutztown University in 1999 with a B.A. in Philosophy, then graduated from Lehigh University with a M.A. in American Studies in 2008. James has had more than seven years of experience in the special education field, specializing for nearly five years in working with individuals diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome. James hopes to use this experience, along with his academic concentration in media studies, to find a professional niche in the field of visual communications.

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TITLE**