

The Cigarette Embraces Its Feminine Side:
1930s Cigarette Advertising
by
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Introduction

By 1900, after roughly half a century of industrialization, American businesses began to exalt advertising as an essential part of selling their products. Incomes across America “steadily rose as industrialization expanded” which in turn stimulated the demand for “consumer goods.”¹ As Americans gained the money to buy products that they had formerly made, businesses shifted to producing consumer goods so as to capitalize on the new demand. Industries began mass-producing products that could be sold to a vast amount of people at lower prices. In order to reach these vast amounts of people, a “commitment to advertising” proved to be a crucial part of marketing strategy for manufacturers.² Manufacturers needed to inform the public about their products now that national markets became more important than local markets in the new industrial economy. In addition, manufacturers needed to convince consumers to actually buy their products. In this way, advertising proved to be revolutionary.

Manufacturers recognized “that advertising could do more than reduce overall production costs by increasing sales. It could also create desires – desires that could fuel a consumer economy.”³ Producers relied heavily on advertisers to create these new desires and, by extension, help shape American culture. Brand-name products as well as national ad campaigns emerged as strategies to assist businesses in delivering “their message” and promoting new desires to American consumers. Aided by the emerging advertising industry, businesses delivered their messages from “coast to coast” across

¹ Juliann Sivulka, *Soap, Sex and Cigarettes: A Cultural History of American Advertising* (Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1998), 92.

² Richard Ohmann, *Selling Culture: Magazines, Markets, and Class at the Turn of the Century* (London and New York: Verso, 1996), 85.

³ Sivulka, *Soap, Sex, and Cigarettes*, 46.

America and in the process created a “new culture of consumption” shared by all Americans.⁴

The tobacco industry and the sale of cigarettes easily revealed the new importance of advertising as well as how advertising functioned in the new industrial economy during the last two decades of the 1800s. James Buchanan Duke began mass-producing cigarettes in the 1880s when he obtained exclusive rights to a cigarette-making machine. Immediately, Duke procured the ability to produce more cigarettes “than all America smoked.”⁵ With a surplus of cigarettes, Duke relied on national advertising in order to turn his product “from a novelty to a necessity.”⁶ His advertising strategies “centered on premiums, coupons, and collecting cards, freely distributed with each pack” of cigarettes.⁷ All of these strategies were innovative during this time, particularly the distribution of collectable cards. (See Figures 1 and 2). These trading cards illustrated “themes of sports, adventure, Civil War generals, fashion, and beauty[.]”⁸ These themes were meant to be appealing to the public of the late nineteenth century and receiving a new card with each pack gave consumers an incentive to repeatedly buy Duke’s cigarettes. Promotional efforts such as trading cards proved successful and cigarette consumption in the United States increased tenfold within five years of Duke’s mass-production of cigarettes and his advertising strategies.⁹

Despite Duke’s success in the last two decades of the 1800s, years would pass before the cigarette became the “necessity” that Duke envisioned at the outset of mass-

⁴ Sivulka, *Soap, Sex, and Cigarettes*, 48.

⁵ Ohmann, *Selling Culture*, 71.

⁶ Ohmann, *Selling Culture*, 71.

⁷ Allan M. Brandt, *The Cigarette Century: The Rise, Fall, and Deadly Persistence of the Product That Defined America* (New York: Basic Books, 2007), 31.

⁸ Brandt, *The Cigarette Century*, 31.

⁹ Ohmann, *Selling Culture*, 86.

production. The cigarette reached the popularity that Duke anticipated during the 1930s when Americans regarded the cigarette as a “central symbol of attractiveness, beauty, and power.”¹⁰ This study looks into the process by which the cigarette received its glamorous image, beginning just before the United States’ entrance into World War I. At that time, American society considered cigarette smoking as an unrespectable habit. Advertisers and tobacco manufacturers spent the first two decades of the 1900s attempting to change public opinion about the cigarette, but to no avail. It was not until World War I that advertisers’ efforts paid off. American soldiers took up smoking during the conflict and the cigarette was linked to the American values of patriotism and “civic virtue.”¹¹ Advertisers capitalized on this connection with promotional efforts that further associated cigarettes with soldiers and “wartime morale.”¹² By becoming associated with the American soldier, the cigarette received a masculine image that allowed all American adult males to smoke with little public disapproval. The war only helped change the cigarette’s image for half the population, however, as the American public continued to deem cigarettes unfit for respectable women. The cultural taboo of cigarette smoking would endure for American women into the next decade.

This study continues examining the transformation of the cigarette’s image during the 1920s. This decade proved to be a period of outstanding social changes across American society, especially for women. Women received the right to vote in 1920 and their public role and presence grew throughout the decade. Along with this growth came a change in gender norms that challenged the traditional male and female spheres of the

¹⁰ Brandt, *The Cigarette Century*, 2.

¹¹ Cassandra Tate, *Cigarette Wars: The Triumph of “The Little White Slaver”* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 66.

¹² Brandt, *The Cigarette Century*, 53-54.

nineteenth century. Coming out of this change was the movement to allow women to smoke “as men’s equals.”¹³ This movement was primarily played out on college campuses across the country; both co-ed and women-only universities. As before, advertisers capitalized on this social change in order to break the cultural taboo of smoking for women and double the cigarette market. Their attempts included running ads that indirectly suggested women might like to smoke and organizing expensive publicity stunts that supported women smoking.¹⁴ By the end of the decade, the changing gender norms and the efforts of advertisers successfully broke the smoking taboo for American women. Now, advertisers were faced with a new task of creating a feminine image of the cigarette that would entice more women to take up smoking.

After discussing the cigarette’s masculine image and the breaking of the smoking taboo for women, this study examines the 1930s, when smokers and nonsmokers alike “associated cigarettes with glamour and sophistication.”¹⁵ Advertisements throughout the decade used images that firmly established the cigarette as glamorous and sophisticated. Furthermore, advertisers in the 1930s proved successful in creating a feminine image of the cigarette that fit into American culture and gender definitions at this time. Advertisers did this by linking the cigarette to three cultural ideals associated with women during the 1930s: domesticity, romance, and modernity. Invoking these ideals in advertisements not only reinforced the ideals themselves, but also reinforced the cigarette as a representation of these ideals. In addition, invoking these ideals in advertisements connected the cigarette to other products that were directly advertised to women.

¹³ John Burnham, *Bad Habits: Drinking, Smoking, Taking Drugs, Gambling, Sexual Misbehavior, and Swearing in American History* (New York: New York University Press, 1993), 97.

¹⁴ Sivulka, *Soap, Sex, and Cigarettes*, 167.

¹⁵ Tate, *Cigarette Wars*, 9.

Appeals to domesticity, romance, and modernity were common advertising strategies in the 1930s and were found in advertisements for a variety of products. Whether the advertisement was for Camel Cigarettes, Campbell's Tomato Soup, Lux for lingerie, or a Buick, at least one of these ideals was present as a strategy meant to entice women to purchase the product. These common strategies in advertisements for women's products further feminized the cigarette. Ultimately, advertising was able to create a feminine image of the cigarette that was supported by, and directly tied to, American culture and gender definitions of the 1930s.

This study primarily draws upon magazine advertisements found in *Ladies' Home Journal*, *Good Housekeeping*, and *Life* magazine. By limiting the bulk of this study's primary sources to these magazines' advertisements, the group of women that this study addresses is defined. To start with, advertisers and tobacco manufacturers decided that most of the women in their cigarette advertisements would be white. Therefore, this study solely addresses the feminine image of the cigarette associated with white women. Further, the mainstream women's magazines geared themselves towards a middle-class audience. For instance, *Ladies' Home Journal* "aligned itself with the new middle-class ten-cent magazines" that were established in the 1890s.¹⁶ From then on, the *Journal* saw its audience as "a genteel one."¹⁷ Thus, this study primarily focuses on white middle-class women. Importantly, however, the women depicted in this study's cigarette advertisements were undoubtedly upper-class. Advertisers used women from the upper-class in order to appeal to middle and lower-class women. The reason why advertisers did this is discussed in Chapter 5.

¹⁶ Ellen Gruber Garvey, *The Adman in the Parlor: Magazines and the Gendering of Consumer Culture, 1880s to 1910s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 9.

¹⁷ Garvey, *The Adman in the Parlor*, 9.

It must also be noted that the vast majority of copy-writers who created the advertisements were men. While female copy-writers existed, the general impression was that writing advertisements was a man's job and copy-writing was defined as "concise writing for the busy businessman."¹⁸ Women "were to be advertising readers and consumers, not writers."¹⁹ Magazines further supported this notion as "[m]iddle-class magazines like the *Ladies' Home Journal*...and *Good Housekeeping* took a special and...self-conscious role in the construction of the woman reader as consumer."²⁰ Due to the male dominance of the advertising industry and women's role as the "advertising reader," the advertisements analyzed in this study represent the strategies that men thought would be most convincing when persuading women to buy certain products

This study's argument, however, is not affected by who created these strategies because the cultural ideals that advertisers invoked within their advertisement were ideals that most 1930s Americans associated with women. Most Americans at the time agreed that women's domestic roles were as wife and mother. They also considered romance to be the dream of American women everywhere. Furthermore, American society expected women to appear modern and up-to-date about the trends of the contemporary time in which they lived. The existence within American culture of these ideals and the association of these ideals with women proved to be successful strategies for cigarette advertisers. By linking the cigarette to the cultural ideals of domesticity, romance, and modernity, advertisers created the cigarette's feminine image and increased the number of woman smokers in America.

¹⁸ Garvey, *The Adman in the Parlor*, 8.

¹⁹ Garvey, *The Adman in the Parlor*, 8.

²⁰ Garvey, *The Adman in the Parlor*, 150.

The Masculine Side of the Cigarette

“If they weren’t GOOD – They wouldn’t be good enough for the Boys ‘Over There.’”²¹

The above quote was a tagline for a Murad cigarette advertisement from 1918. The ad depicted four sailors loading a large crate of cigarettes into the cargo of their ship. (See Figure 3). The soldiers look strong and happy because of the abundance of cigarettes in their midst. Indeed, soldiers approved of Murad cigarettes and any cigarette that was “good enough” for a soldier was good enough for any other man.²² This advertisement exemplified the connection between the American soldier and the cigarette created by World War I. Advertisers drew upon this connection to create a respectable, masculine image of the cigarette that had not existed before the war.

Before World War I, American society detested the cigarette and held cigarette smokers in contempt. Prominent Americans such as Henry Ford even believed smokers to be unemployable. In his 1916 pamphlet entitled *The Case Against the Little White Slaver*, he blasted cigarette smokers as “loose in their morals” and “very apt to be untruthful[.]”²³ Ford further recruited Ty Cobb, a popular Detroit baseball player at the time, to his anti-cigarette campaign. Cobb condemned smoking as a habit that “stupefies the brain, saps vitality, undermines one’s health, and lessens the moral fiber of the man.” Cobb even warned children about the evils of cigarettes when he further claimed that

²¹ *Stars and Stripes*, Friday, October, 11, 1918.

²² *Stars and Stripes*, Friday, October, 11, 1918.

²³ Henry Ford, *The Case Against the Little White Slaver*, vols. I-IV (Detroit: Henry Ford, 1916), quoted in Allan Brandt, *The Cigarette Century* (New York: Basic Books, 2007), 47.

“[n]o boy who hopes to be successful in any line can afford to contract a habit that is so detrimental to his physical and moral development.”²⁴ Strong attitudes against cigarettes prevailed throughout society on the eve of World War I as those opposed to cigarettes characterized smoking “as a profound moral failing and a sign of other social and characterological flaws.”²⁵

Ford and Cobb were merely a part of a large and organized anti-cigarette movement whose ultimate goal was to prohibit the sale, manufacture, and importation of the “coffin nail.”²⁶ The anti-cigarette movement officially began with the establishment of the Anti-Cigarette League in 1899. The League boasted 300,000 members by 1901, 500,000 by 1910, and received a vast amount of support throughout the first two decades of the twentieth century.²⁷ The composition of these members and of the anti-cigarette movement at large consisted of “religious leaders, temperance workers, health reformers, businessmen, educators, eugenicists, club women, and even a few traditional tobacconists (who resented the competition).”²⁸ The Anti-Cigarette League and other organizations such as the Women’s Christian Temperance Union and the Young Men’s Christian Association led the charge in this crusade by petitioning federal and state legislatures to pass laws in order to outlaw cigarettes. In many instances, the movement was met with success. The New Hampshire legislature in 1901 passed a bill that “absolutely prohibit[ed] the manufacture and sale of cigarettes[.]”²⁹ The district courts in Iowa

²⁴ Henry Ford, *The Case Against the Little White Slaver*, quoted in Brandt, *The Cigarette Century*, 47-48.

²⁵ Brandt, *The Cigarette Century*, 48.

²⁶ Tate, *Cigarette Wars*, 13.

²⁷ “Anti-Cigarette League,” *New York Times*, July 12, 1901, 5. “Woman Without the Pale,” *New York Times*, June 17, 1910, 7.

²⁸ Tate, *Cigarette Wars*, 6.

²⁹ “An Anti-Cigarette Bill Passed,” *New York Times*, March 6, 1901, 1.

upheld an anti-cigarette law that put an extra tax on “cigarette dealers” and multiple anti-cigarette bills were introduced to the New York legislature in its 1900 session.³⁰

The organizations and reformers in the anti-cigarette movement fought against the cigarette for moral reasons. They repeatedly associated cigarettes with undesirable qualities, such as “wastefulness” and “indulgence,” and characterized smoking as a “poison harmful to self and others.”³¹ In their view, cigarettes represented an attack on the morality of society as a whole and an affront to the Victorian cultural values that emphasized work over pleasure.³² It is important to note that these Victorian cultural values were largely middle-class values. Due to this, the anti-cigarette movement was inherently class-based. The fact that at the turn of the century smoking was common only among “recent immigrants...the working class, single men; self-assertive youth; women of the demimonde; and members of the avant-garde, of both sexes” further exacerbated the class issues within the anti-cigarette movement. Smoking was a lower-class practice and middle-class Americans disapproved of the act. This disapproval kept smoking on the “fringes of society.”³³ Despite its place on the periphery of society, however, middle-class Americans remained threatened by the cigarette. They not only fought to stop its spread, but also to reform the lower classes. Consequently, critiques of the lower classes were prevalent in the movement against the “demon cigarette.”³⁴

The woman who bore the nickname “the enemy of the cigarette,” Miss Lucy Page Gaston, especially made clear these critiques in her efforts to stop the spread of

³⁰ “Anti-Cigarette Law Constitutional,” *New York Times*, June 9, 1901, 3. “Another Anti-Cigarette Bill,” *New York Times*, January 19, 1900, 3.

³¹ Brandt, *The Cigarette Century*, 45.

³² Brandt, *Cigarette Wars*, 50.

³³ Tate, *Cigarette Wars*, 6.

³⁴ “Miss Gaston Begins Anti-Cigarette War,” *New York Times*, September 12, 1907, 2.

smoking.³⁵ Gaston was a prominent member within the anti-cigarette movement and was in many ways the movement's leader due to her position as the "founder and Superintendent of the National Anti-Cigarette League[.]"³⁶ In the battle against smoking, Gaston consistently targeted two groups that she believed more prone to the cigarette's allure: young boys and women. A *New York Times* stated that Gaston "did not presume to say what men might do with propriety" and quoted her directly as saying "American womanhood and childhood must be rescued from the cigarette peril."³⁷ The emphasis on saving these two groups highlighted the class arguments of the anti-cigarette movement.

An article titled "Cigarette Fiend Won Race" illustrated the typical image of the smoking boy. As boys lined up for a race at the Cook County Anti-Cigarette League's field day, a "stunted street urchin, with a cigarette between his teeth" spontaneously decided to take part in the event. Ironically, the "little cigarette fiend" won the race against the non-smoking boys.³⁸ This was the image associated with the smoking boy. He was a lower-class runt that ran about the city under no supervision. He contended with such problems as "stunted growth, mental capacity, neglect of study, evil companionships, and youthful criminality[.]"³⁹ Within this stereotype, the critiques of the lower class are abundant. Lower class boys were the delinquents that skipped class and were prone to "criminality." These were the boys that Gaston's Anti-Cigarette League worked to save. By attempting to help these boys turn away from cigarettes, Gaston attempted to reform the lower classes. She firmly believed that by eliminating the

³⁵ "Miss Gaston Begins Anti-Cigarette War," *New York Times*, September 12, 1907, 2.

³⁶ "Woman Without the Pale," *New York Times*, June 17, 1910, 7.

³⁷ "Miss Gaston Begins Anti-Cigarette War," *New York Times*, September 12, 1907, 2.

³⁸ "Cigarette Fiend Won Race," *New York Times*, June 16, 1900, 11.

³⁹ "Fire in Theatre Lobbies," Lucy Page Gaston, *New York Times*, April 11, 1911, 10.

evil influence of the cigarette, these delinquent boys would develop the “thrift and character which make for good citizenship.”⁴⁰

Gaston and her Anti-Cigarette League further hoped to rescue women from the dangers of smoking. Gaston believed there “was not even hope” for “she who smok[ed] cigarettes.”⁴¹ A woman could not be a respectable member of society if she took to the habit of smoking. Therefore, only unrespectable women smoked; the “lightly clad women” with “fluttering skirts,” or the “chorus girl” who puffed cigarettes “in a spirit of bravado.”⁴² These women were the loose and vulgar women of society at the time and did not hold the same values as respectable middle-class America. The link between cigarettes and these immoral women was undeniable in Gaston’s mind and common in most Americans’ minds as well. The Anti-Cigarette League opened clinics to support women that wanted to quit smoking and infiltrated girls’ schools to inform the youth about the peril of the cigarette.⁴³ Gaston hoped this would prevent girls from ever “experiencing the first fatal fascination of the cigarette.”⁴⁴

Due to these smoking stereotypes and the hostile atmosphere towards cigarettes in general, efforts by advertisers to encourage smoking generated little success in the first two decades of the twentieth century. An image did not exist to make the cigarette desirable to the majority of Americans and the smoking habit continued to carry its negative social stigma. This all changed due to America’s participation in World War I. The United States joined the war in April of 1917; a year after Henry Ford published his

⁴⁰ “Fire in Theatre Lobbies,” Lucy Page Gaston, *New York Times*, April 11, 1911, 10.

⁴¹ “Woman Without Pale,” *New York Times*, June 17, 1910, 7.

⁴² “Fire in Theatre Lobbies,” Lucy Page Gaston, *New York Times*, April 11, 1911, 10. “Cures Women of Smoking,” *New York Times*, March 14, 1914, 1.

⁴³ “Fire in Theatre Lobbies,” Lucy Page Gaston, *New York Times*, April 11, 1911, 10. “Cures Women of Smoking,” *New York Times*, March 14, 1914, 1.

⁴⁴ “Woman Without Pale,” *New York Times*, June 17, 1910, 7.

anti-cigarette pamphlet. As American soldiers began to take up smoking overseas, the sentiments Ford expressed in that pamphlet grew increasingly dated. The anti-cigarette movement collapsed when its arguments and its Victorian cultural values that condemned the cigarette lost importance on the battlefield. As the soldiers faced the war's bloodshed, "the traditional notions that a prohibition on tobacco protected the troops from moral harm and health risks seemed frivolous. Ideas like deferred gratification and self-discipline were eviscerated by the violence of combat."⁴⁵ Protecting soldiers from the evils of cigarettes seemed pointless when considering the amount of violence the soldiers experienced daily. Soldiers who wanted to smoke a cigarette "could hardly be viewed as delinquent and degenerate for smoking."⁴⁶

Many reasons explain why American soldiers took up smoking in such large numbers during the war. First, cigarettes had many war-time "practical advantages" over other forms of tobacco in that "they fit easily into a uniform pocket; were more portable than pipes or cigars; could be smoked quickly; and required no special equipment to use, beyond a light."⁴⁷ In addition to the cigarette's practical advantages, troops took up smoking during World War I because they were encouraged to do so by their government. The United States entered the war "under the banner of moral reform." Due to this "banner of moral reform," the government attempted to have a "clean" army. This translated to an army "untainted by alcohol or prostitution."⁴⁸ The government viewed cigarettes as less of a threat to their soldiers' moral well-being and even encouraged the troops to smoke them by including cigarettes in the soldiers' rations. The

⁴⁵ Brandt, *The Cigarette Century*, 51.

⁴⁶ Brandt, *The Cigarette Century*, 51.

⁴⁷ Tate, *Cigarette Wars*, 66.

⁴⁸ Tate, *Cigarette Wars*, 7.

government supported the idea that smoking would serve as a distraction from the “more harmful diversions” of drinking and prostitutes.⁴⁹ This idea positioned the United States’ government as the “largest single purchaser of cigarettes in the world” during the war years.⁵⁰

The troops’ fellow Americans even supported the use of cigarettes on the battlefield. Volunteers across America organized “smoke funds to collect donations to assure that the troops had adequate supplies of cigarettes.”⁵¹ The Young Men’s Christian Association and other former organizations connected to the anti-cigarette movement abandoned their negative beliefs about smoking and “accepted” cigarettes “as allies in the battle over greater sins.” To fight against alcohol and prostitution, these organizations encouraged soldiers to smoke and established smoke funds to supply the soldiers with cigarettes.⁵²

As soldiers responded to this encouragement, the cigarette’s image underwent a transformation. The cigarette became a “jaunty emblem of freedom and democracy” wrapped in “the protective cloak of patriotism.”⁵³ The war linked the cigarette to the American soldier. In doing so, the war “masculinized” the cigarette.⁵⁴ Advertisers would utilize this new image to further make the act of smoking an acceptable habit in America.

In Chesterfield advertisement from 1919, a G.I. happily smoked as he exclaimed “Gee! I’m in Luck.” (See **Figure 4**). In this ad, advertisers supported the connection between the cigarette and the American soldier in order to create a respectable image of

⁴⁹ Tate, *Cigarette Wars*, 7.

⁵⁰ Tate, *Cigarette Wars*, 66.

⁵¹ Brandt, *The Cigarette Century*, 52.

⁵² Tate, *Cigarette Wars*, 7.

⁵³ Tate, *Cigarette Wars*, 65.

⁵⁴ Burnham, *Bad Habits*, 95.

the cigarette. The reader can see from the soldier's smile that the cigarette makes him feel calm and relaxed. A product that gave a soldier pleasure was a product that deserved exaltation. Advertisers were clever because Americans could not demonize this handsome young man for indulging in a cigarette as he served his country.⁵⁵

Many other advertisements further supported the connection between the cigarette and the American soldier and in a variety of ways. A Murad ad depicted two soldiers sitting on the top of a tank next to the tagline "Two 'hearts' with but a single wish – MURAD." (See Figure 5). Evidently, despite their difference, these soldiers agreed on one thing: their brand of cigarettes. This advertisement promoted camaraderie because it characterized the cigarette as something soldiers could bond over. The allusion to "hearts" in the copy is a notable point as well. Soldiers not only liked cigarettes, but loved them. The relationship between the cigarette and the soldiers reached a new level in this advertisement.⁵⁶

Even when directly advertising to soldiers, advertisers linked the cigarette to America and to patriotism. In a letter to "Our Boys Overseas[,]" an ad assured soldiers that they would "find an old friend" in Melachrino cigarettes. (See Figure 6). The ad went on to say that the soldiers "fellow countrymen traveling in foreign lands [had] for years found great comfort" in Melachrino cigarettes. According to this advertisement, these cigarettes had direct ties to the Americans. To homesick soldiers, the strategy of invoking America would have appealed. This ad made cigarettes the link between the soldier and America; between the fighting and home. The ad not only invoked America, however, but also connected the cigarette to a soldier's duty: "Let this mellow, fragrant

⁵⁵ *Adventure Magazine*, August 3, 1919, 1.

⁵⁶ *The Stars and Stripes: France*, Friday, May 3, 1918.

cigarette do its bit by solacing and comforting you in your strenuous duties.”

Melachrinos had a role to play in the army and that was to comfort soldiers. The tagline for the product even read “Melachrino – The Cigarette Elect of Allied Nations.” By making this claim, the ad made Melachrinos a symbol of the allied armies. By extension, the cigarette became a symbol of the soldier.⁵⁷

The image of the American soldier broke the link between the cigarette and the delinquent boy. Since that link was broken, all adult men could take up smoking with the support of American society. This all resulted in a strong, masculine image of the cigarette. No respectable image, however, had broken the link of the cigarette to the loose, vulgar woman. With no image to draw upon, advertisers did not have the opportunity to create a respectable feminine image of the cigarette. Fortunately for them, an abundance of social change regarding women and American gender definitions was about to take place during the decade after World War I. Cigarette advertisers would be able to take advantage of the opportunities that these changing gender definitions afforded them.

⁵⁷ *The Stars and Stripes*, Friday, October 18, 1918.

Breaking the Cigarette Taboo for Women

“The sight of a cigarette in the delicate fingers of one of her own sex was so repellent that she refused to enter any of the dining rooms of the hotel. The Smiths had their meals in their rooms.”⁵⁸

A 1922 article from *Ladies' Home Journal* entitled “Women Cigarette Fiends” demonstrated the cigarette taboo that remained for women after World War I. The article began with an anecdote. Mr. and Mrs. Smith traveled to New York City to visit their daughter at her “so-called fashionable finishing school a door or two off upper Fifth Avenue.” Having been a “smoker all his life,” Mr. Smith left his cigars and pipes at home and indulged in cigarettes on his visit to New York. This action was completely understandable for Mr. Smith; “many men of his kind” smoked cigarettes in the city. The change was merely a “transition of taste charged to the cosmopolitan life.”⁵⁹

Mrs. Smith tolerated her husband’s smoking, even though she was an “active member” of both the Y.W.C.A and the Anti-Tobacco League. She personally “abhorred cigarettes.” Mrs. Smith allowed her husband to smoke them, but she could not stand the sight of a cigarette in the hands of a woman. One can imagine her shock and disappointment when her daughter asked to light Mr. Smith’s cigarette at dinner the first evening. Mrs. Smith was “too much astonished to protest.” Her daughter lit the cigarette

⁵⁸ Harry Burke, “Women Cigarette Fiends,” *Ladies' Home Journal*, June, 1922, 19.

⁵⁹ Burke, “Women Cigarette Fiends,” *Ladies' Home Journal*, June, 1922, 19.

and blew a cloud of smoke into the air. When Mrs. Smith finally managed to speak, her daughter simply replied, "Oh, mother, that's nothing."⁶⁰

The Smiths' daughter might have thought it was nothing, but American society felt differently. Though the cigarette taboo effectively ended for men by the conclusion of World War I, the stigma remained for women smokers. American society continued to morally apprehend the "gentler sex" for this indulgence. Restrictions on public smoking illustrated the cigarette taboo on women. Women could not smoke everywhere that a man could. For example, railroad diners allowed men to smoke as they ate. Women were not afforded this gesture.⁶¹ In 1923, one girl was fined \$5 for smoking a cigarette on the Staten Island ferryboat in New York City.⁶² After witnessing a young woman "take a puff" of a cigarette at a movie theater, a representative in the Mississippi legislature introduced a bill that would fine all "female persons" caught smoking in public "\$25 for the first offense and \$100 for each succeeding offense."⁶³ Throughout the United States, women "who smoked in public attracted both attention and censure; they often ended up on the front pages of the newspapers, if not in jail."⁶⁴ Society did not appreciate women taking up a practice reserved for men.

Furthermore, society worried for the safety of American women becoming addicted to their new habit. Men, thus believed, had the ability to handle cigarettes and smoking was "not injurious to the average normal man." His "vitality, his outdoor life and the opportunity for exercise" all helped to "offset the injurious effect of the nicotine he inhale[d]." Additionally, cigarettes demonstrated their usefulness to men that were in

⁶⁰ Burke, "Women Cigarette Fiends," *Ladies' Home Journal*, June, 1922, 19.

⁶¹ Sivulka, *Soap, Sex, and Cigarettes*, 167.

⁶² "Girl Fined \$5 for Smoking a Cigarette on City Ferryboat," *New York Times*, October 24, 1923, 21.

⁶³ "Crime in Washington," *New York Times*, June 22, 1921, 10.

⁶⁴ Tate, *Cigarette Wars*, 101.

need of allaying their emotions or worries, such as “during the zero hour when the doughboys were waiting the signal to go over the top.” Cigarettes proved themselves in the war, and, due to the nature of a manly life, cigarettes further proved that they were no threat to the “average normal man.”⁶⁵

The threat of smoking for the average normal woman was an altogether different story. In the battle against cigarettes, women’s physical health as well as their morals hung in the balance. Whereas men were active enough to offset the physical harms of cigarettes, women who smoked were said to “usually sit around, ride about in their motors, attend teas, dinners or social affairs and get very little real exercise.”⁶⁶ Women’s inactive lifestyles exposed them to the injurious effects of smoking to which men were not prone. Regarding morality, a large amount of Americans still subscribed the Victorian cultural ideals that gave women a “superior righteousness” over men.⁶⁷ Society still believed that women “should set a good example for men.”⁶⁸ Unlike the stereotype of the boy smoker, the stereotype of the female smoker that existed before the war had yet to be saved by a more respectable feminine image. If women began aligning themselves with that stereotype, then society feared the morality of America would suffer.

Moreover, the reasons believed as to why women desired to smoke cigarettes like men illustrated the lasting cigarette taboo. The article “Women Cigarette Fiends” stated:

Women do not go over the top, nor do they smoke to allay restlessness or emotional inquietude; they begin to smoke in emulation of their so-called smarter sisters, and it is a debatable

⁶⁵ Burke, “Women Cigarette Fiends,” *Ladies’ Home Journal*, June, 1922, 19.

⁶⁶ Burke, “Women Cigarette Fiends,” *Ladies’ Home Journal*, June, 1922, 19.

⁶⁷ Carol Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America*, (New York: Knopf, 1985), 109.

⁶⁸ Tate, “Cigarette Wars,” 115.

question whether, once the habit is firmly fixed upon them and they reach the point of excess, they derive any pleasurable sensation from it. Inquiry among them would indicate that it is simply an adventure with the tang of a forbidden fruit.⁶⁹

Women did not smoke for the respectable reasons that men did. Additionally, they did not get the same pleasures from cigarettes that men did. Women smoked because they saw other women smoking. Women smoked for the “adventure” and because it was “forbidden.”⁷⁰ Those that remained against the cigarette saw women knowingly push society’s limits. They saw women knowingly break from the past. The cigarette came to symbolize the overall changes taking place regarding women’s cultural role in the 1920s. And a lot of changes were taking place.

World War I not only brought the death of soldiers, but also the “death” of the “Victorian concepts of manliness and womanliness.”⁷¹ A new generation of women was coming into adulthood after World War I. This generation brought with them new ideas about the roles of gender, “overturning the Victorian code of ‘purity.’”⁷² Young women in the 1920s increasingly pushed society’s limits throughout the decade. In doing so, they expanded the limited role that women held in Victorian America.

The cult of domesticity that existed in nineteenth-century America emphasized the ideas of “true womanhood.” A woman’s proper place was in the home. A woman ran the home and took care of her husband and family. Due to their moral superiority to men, women also safeguarded the morality of their families. It was the mother’s job to

⁶⁹ Burke, “Women Cigarette Fiends,” *Ladies’ Home Journal*, June, 1922, 19.

⁷⁰ Burke, “Women Cigarette Fiends,” *Ladies’ Home Journal*, June, 1922, 19.

⁷¹ Peter Filene, *Him/Her/Self: Gender Identities in Modern America* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1998), 123.

⁷² Filene, *Him/Her/Self*, 123.

make good citizens out of her children. Becoming a wife and mother was the ideal goal of a woman in Victorian America; and the home was her only “proper sphere.”⁷³

The younger generation of women in the 1920s rebelled against these restrictions placed on their gender. They did this not by continuing the feminist movement of the preceding decades, but by creating a new image for themselves that stood against the values of the past: they created the flapper.

The flapper demonstrated the new ideas that the younger generation of women put forth in the 1920s. According to historian Peter Filene: “Amid the raucous beat of the Jazz Age, the flapper danced and drank and smoked, talked bluntly about sex and often did something about it, demanded the right to a home *and* a career. In short, she was saying that she was as good (or as bad) as any man.”⁷⁴ The flapper stood directly against the Victorian restrictions placed on women. She was sexual; she indulged in the manly habits of drinking and smoking; and she demanded the opportunity to leave the home and have a career. The flapper even discarded the notion of the moral superiority of women by claiming she “was as good (*or as bad*) as any man.”⁷⁵

In these ways, the younger generation of women fought against the values of the past. They saw themselves as “liberators” and actively freed society from “older constraints, traditional prohibitions, and conventional assumptions.”⁷⁶ As the flapper gained popularity among the younger generation of women, the older generation grew indignant and skeptical of the youth’s rebellion. Some men, especially, were

⁷³ Barbara Harris, *Beyond Her Sphere: Women and the Professions in American History* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1978), 33.

⁷⁴ Filene, *Him/Her/Self*, 123.

⁷⁵ Filene, *Him/Her/Self*, 123.

⁷⁶ Paula Fass, *The Damned and the Beautiful: American Youth in the 1920s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 292.

discomforted by the new woman. Men “still understood their identity in old-fashioned manly terms, as patriarch of the breakfast table, as breadwinner in the market place, as roughrider on the range.” They felt threatened by the creation of these new gender norms. In addition, older women were dismayed by their daughter’s new attitude.⁷⁷ As younger women entered the workforce and gained more prominence in public life, American society responded with attempts to keep them in their place. The smoking taboo was one of these attempts. It was for this reason that the youth, both women and men, fought against the taboo with one group of younger women leading the charge - college girls.

Mrs. Smith realized that by lighting Mr. Smith’s cigarette, her daughter knew how to smoke. The Smiths learned the next day that this was not uncommon among the girls at their daughter’s school. The principal of the school assured the Smiths that their daughter’s classmates came from “the best families of America.” The administration there did not support them smoking, but the sheer number of girls that did made disciplining the act difficult. He told the Smiths that smoking cigarettes “is a modern idea we do not approve of, and we were reluctant to make any concession here, but the for sake of discipline it had to be done. We found that in spite of all our precautions some of the girls smoked in their rooms. We were powerless.” After it was clear that the girls would not stop smoking, the only option was to set aside one room on campus where the act was permitted. That way, the administration could prevent excesses and stop the spread of the act to the students that had not tried it yet. It was “the only way.”⁷⁸

⁷⁷ Filene, *Him/Her/Self*, 123.

⁷⁸ Burke, “Women Cigarette Fiends,” *Ladies’ Home Journal*, June, 1922, 19.

Like Miss Smith and her peers, college girls across the country took the cigarette from the masculine sphere in order to test their “elbow room.” Their “new sense of freedom and equality” from the changing gender norms of the 1920s influenced them to find a symbol of this new freedom. The cigarette “was perhaps the one most potent symbol.”⁷⁹ Female students engaging in the act of smoking was controversial on college campuses across the United States and, in most cases, concessions from the administration often took much longer than at the Smiths’ daughter’s finishing school.

The reasons for the controversy corresponded with the reasons for the anti-cigarette movement in general. Before women began smoking in larger numbers after World War I, the only women who flaunted their cigarettes in public were prostitutes and other bohemian types. Due to this connection between cigarettes and lower-class women in society, the act of smoking became very unladylike. In college, middle- and upper-class young women took up smoking. Needless to say, administrations across the country saw this and thought the girls were disgracing the image of their respective colleges. The students themselves thought the relationship between cigarettes and lower-class women in society proved irrelevant and senseless; and they “increasingly took advantage of the cigarette as a symbol of liberation and as a means of proclaiming their equal rights with men.” They thought cigarettes had nothing to do with morality and everything to do with their newfound identities. The habit became accepted and supported among their peers, both female and male alike.⁸⁰

College administrators’ view that smoking “undermined an ideal of proper female behavior and decency” led them to instate reprimands for any girl caught in the act.

⁷⁹ Fass, *The Damned and the Beautiful*, 292-293.

⁸⁰ Fass, *The Damned and the Beautiful*, 293.

Suspension and expulsion were among the favorite punishments.⁸¹ Despite these punishments, college girls kept smoking. Their desire to break away from the “traditional proscriptions” that governed their behavior proved strong and they insisted that women could smoke “if they chose to.”⁸² These college girls actively engaged in protesting the smoking bans on their campuses. An example of an outright protest by college women occurred at New York University. These women “claimed their rights by announcing that they would hold a smoker rather than a traditional tea.” Although the dean was “outraged and prohibited the event,” the smoker took place anyway. The women did not allow their administration to undermine or question their morality.⁸³ While outright protests took place, passive protests were more common. When Wellesley College banned smoking not just on campus, but in the surrounding cities of Wellesley and Natick, the girls “evaded the rules...by walking to the town line to smoke.” There, they perched themselves on walls and puffed “industriously.” The girls found a loophole instead of deliberately breaking the rules.⁸⁴

The most effective strategy of these college girls, however, was simply ignoring the rules. Under the threat of suspension and expulsion, young women on college campuses continued to smoke. Despite witnessing fellow students punished, they did not give up their habit. The number of female smokers on college campuses was just too large. At the all-female college of Vassar, more than “45 percent of students said that they smoked.” One-third of the girls at Ohio State University admitted to smoking “at

⁸¹ Fass, *The Damned and the Beautiful*, 293.

⁸² Fass, *The Damned and the Beautiful*, 297.

⁸³ Fass, *The Damned and the Beautiful*, 298.

⁸⁴ Brandt, *The Cigarette Century*, 64.

least occasionally.”⁸⁵ Moreover, a fraternity leader at Rhode Island State College claimed, “Practically all the girls smoke.”⁸⁶ Just like at the Smiths’ daughter’s finishing school, the overwhelmingly amount of girls that smoked on college campuses and their unwillingness to give up their habit made discipline too difficult to enforce. In 1925, the all-female Bryn Mawr College became the first prominent college to lift its smoking ban and throughout the rest of the decade, other colleges followed suit.⁸⁷

The college girls constituted an important part to breaking the cigarette taboo on women in the 1920s. Smoking was no longer a practice of prostitutes or bohemians, but was now endorsed by the “daughters of the upper and middle-classes.” By “adopting a habit once confined to women on the periphery of society, they helped diffuse it throughout the broader culture.”⁸⁸ College girls’ protests, however, was not to be the only force bent on the inclusion of the cigarette into mainstream American culture. Advertisers, too, actively engaged in breaking the cigarette taboo.

Logically, cigarette advertisers and tobacco manufacturers desired to appeal directly to women in their advertisements. They believed that women could potentially “double” the cigarette market.⁸⁹ Motivated by the prospect of increased profits, advertisers began to slowly advertise to women. Due to the cigarette taboo, however, advertisers were not able to appeal directly to women. They avoided the problem by creating advertisements that merely suggested women might like to smoke. A Chesterfield ad from 1926, for example, depicted a “romantic moonlit seaside scene.”

⁸⁵ Tate, *Cigarette Wars*, 116.

⁸⁶ *Duke Chronicle*, “College Collections,” December 17, 1924, quoted in Paula Fass, *The Damned and the Beautiful* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 297.

⁸⁷ Fass, *The Damned and the Beautiful*, 294.

⁸⁸ Tate, *Cigarette Wars*, 117.

⁸⁹ Sivulka, *Soap, Sex, and Cigarettes*, 167.

The man in the ad is lighting a cigarette while the woman playfully says “Blow some my way.”⁹⁰ The ad hinted that woman like to smoke. While this advertisement was controversial, it exemplifies how cigarette advertisers utilized the changing gender definitions of the 1920s in order to begin appealing to women.

In addition, advertisers concocted elaborate publicity stunts in order to break the cigarette taboo on women. Historian Cassandra Tate described one such publicity stunt as follows:

Edward Bernays, renowned public relations and advertising adviser to the American Tobacco Company, claimed to have single-handedly popularized smoking for women by convincing several prominent debutantes to hold cigarettes as “torches of freedom” in the 1929 Easter Day parade in New York City. As Bernays told it, this single stunt, reinforced with clever new advertising campaigns, induced women to smoke virtually overnight.⁹¹

Though Bernays assessment is a clear exaggeration, a group of respectable women smoking Lucky Strikes and walking down the streets of New York attracted attention. Stunts like this one further exemplified how advertising played a prominent role in changing American gender norms to allow for women to smoke.

By the end of the decade, advertisers grew increasingly bolder in their appeals to women. The “Reach for a Lucky” campaign of the late twenties presented a stream of ads that were directly aimed at women. One ad from this campaign ran the tagline “The Shock of Facing what your figure may become.” (See **Figure 7**). The shadow’s double chin likely struck fear into the women that saw this ad. The ad further argued that although there was no guarantee in Lucky Strike’s weight-loss capabilities, smoking them

⁹⁰ “Blow Some My Way” Chesterfield Cigarette Advertisement found in Juliann Sivulka, *Soap, Sex, and Cigarettes: A Cultural History of American Advertising* (Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1998), 167.

⁹¹ Tate, *Cigarette Wars*, 105.

would help women “avoid over-indulgence in things that cause excess weight and, by avoiding over-indulgence, maintain a modern, graceful form.”⁹² In this ad, cigarettes were connected to the modern times of the twenties; and particularly, the modern woman of the twenties and the new gender norms this modern woman represented. By linking cigarettes to the changing gender norms of the 1920s, advertisers reinforced those gender norms and, consequently, help to dismantle the cigarette taboo placed on women.

The image of the female smoker continued to carry a negative social stigma at the onset of the 1920s. Whereas the war masculinized the cigarette and allowed for the universal acceptance of the male smoker, the social taboo remained for women. Throughout the decade, however, the younger generation of women fought against the values of their parents. Women smoking became a battleground that primarily played out on college campuses across America. Cigarette advertisers took advantage of these changing gender definitions in order to tap into the women’s market and potentially double their profits. The combined efforts of the youth of the 1920s and advertisers succeeded in breaking the cigarette taboo for women. Furthermore, as they began to appeal to women, cigarette advertisers foreshadowed the eventual strategies that they would use to create the feminine image of the cigarette a decade later. The 1926 Chesterfield ad with the tagline “Blow Some My Way” invoked the cultural ideal of romance. The strategy of invoking romance would develop further during the 1930s. The “Reach for a Lucky” campaign of 1928-1929 likewise foreshadowed the modernity

⁹² “Reach for a Lucky” Lucky Strike Cigarette Advertisement found in Allan Brandt, *The Cigarette Century: The Rise, Fall, and Deadly Persistence of the Product that Defined America* (New York: Basic Books, 2007), 72.

strategy. Appealing to a women's domestic side would also become a prevalent strategy in cigarette advertising.

3

The Domestic Side of the Cigarette

“Making a cigarette is like making any dish – the choicer the ingredients the more delicious its flavor.”⁹³

Women's domestic role in the households of America was evident in tobacco advertisements of the 1930s. Advertisers used women's pride as the cooks of the home in order to convince them to buy cigarettes. A Camel ad touted, as cooks, women were “quick to discriminate between flavors.” This is what they were “trained” for. The ad further played on women's pride in the kitchen by stating that “[m]ost women can tell instantly whether a sauce has been made with cream or with milk, whether lemon or vinegar has been used in a salad dressing.” Knowing their way around a kitchen was a natural part of being a woman. Due to the expertise of women in regards to cooking and flavors, it was no surprise that women were also “sensitive to the difference in tobacco quality.” The “finer, more expensive” tobaccos used to make Camel cigarettes made them the obvious choice of women throughout America. The “inferior tobaccos” of other brands rendered anything other than Camels unsuitable for truly knowledgeable women.

⁹³ *Ladies' Home Journal*, July, 1933, 55.

A woman who knew how to cook would inherently know the supremacy of Camel cigarettes.⁹⁴

Another Camel ad furthered this argument by appealing to the perfect hostess. Under the tagline “A perfect dinner – And the perfect cigarette...Camels,” advertisers played on women’s responsibility for hospitality in order to cast Camels as the “perfect” addition to any dinner party. The copy began by stating that the “successful hostess plans her menu with great attention to flavors.” She knows what to serve before her “roast duckling,” certainly not “her mushroom soup.” A “simple bouillon” would work much better. The advertisement made clear that this attention to detail is what makes or breaks a dinner party. Running parallel to the meticulous choosing of flavors, the choice of what cigarette to serve during and after dinner also became important. Certainly, “after fine food only fine tobacco can be really enjoyed[.]” Such was the reason why women chose Camels. Any woman with “thoughtful hospitality” would realize that the “finer, More Expensive” tobacco used in Camels made them the necessary choice for a dinner party. This “perfect cigarette” created a “perfect dinner,” and by extension, a perfect hostess.⁹⁵

Women that endorsed cigarettes in advertisements further made evident the strategy of invoking domesticity. Mrs. Thomas M. Carnegie, Jr. claimed that she never tired of Camels’ flavor. She enjoyed the “smooth flavor” of Camels that calmed her nerves and allowed her to smoke many at a time. A caption beside a photograph of Carnegie gave the reader more detail about her life. She spent her winters on the Carnegie Island off the coast of Georgia. The island proved to be a “paradise” for her two small sons and allowed Carnegie to indulge in “one of her favorite sports, trap

⁹⁴ *Ladies' Home Journal*, July, 1933, 55.

⁹⁵ *Ladies' Home Journal*, September, 1933, 51.

shooting with her husband.” This advertisement defined Carnegie as a wife and mother. Furthermore, it touted her skills at being a “deft and delightful hostess[.]” Carnegie’s “shrimp Newburgh, southern style” was “excelled only by her Georgian wild turkey with wild rice.” This wealthy wife and mother was the “successful hostess” alluded to in the other Camel advertisements and she embodied the values of domesticity. Carnegie was an excellent example of a woman and she “always smoke[d] Camels.”⁹⁶

Mrs. Carnegie was not the only example that Camels flaunted in their advertisements. Mrs. Adrian Iselin, II “grew up in New Orleans and the warmth and graciousness of the South [was] a definite part of her charm.” This “delightful hostess” was a married woman and was “famous” for her Southern spoon bread.⁹⁷ Another woman, Mrs. Powell Cabot, was “as versatile as she [was] charming.” This Boston woman’s signature dish was wild duck due to “her husband being an excellent shot.”⁹⁸ Of course, the advertisements made it clear that Camel cigarettes went great with Southern spoon bread, wild duck, and anything else cooked by these shining examples of domesticity. Cabot said it best when she stated that flavor was “just as important in tobacco as in food[.]”⁹⁹ And, as seen before, “[w]omen do know flavors[.]”¹⁰⁰

The advertisements above utilized the cultural ideal of domesticity in order to appeal to female consumers in the United States. It is therefore necessary to place the cultural ideal of domesticity within the context of the 1930s. The relationship between domesticity and American women, however, was as old as the Republic itself.

Throughout American history, women’s traditional role had been homemakers. They

⁹⁶ *Ladies’ Home Journal*, February, 1934, 52.

⁹⁷ *Ladies’ Home Journal*, October, 1933, 58.

⁹⁸ *Ladies’ Home Journal*, November, 1933, 54.

⁹⁹ *Ladies’ Home Journal*, November, 1933, 54.

¹⁰⁰ *Ladies’ Home Journal*, June, 1933, 40.

were expected to become wives and mothers, and nothing more. The ladies of nineteenth century Victorian America, for example, “earned admiration by providing loyal support to [their] husband, rearing moral children, and superintending an orderly household.”¹⁰¹ Women’s cultural, social, and economic roles existed largely within their individual households. They served the nation by keeping the private lives of men comfortable and relaxed. On the eve of the twentieth century, this was a woman’s role. As historian Barbara Harris states, “[t]he cult of domesticity became such an integral part of American social ideology that its definition of women’s role long survived the passing of the nineteenth century.”¹⁰²

During the early decades of the twentieth century, a significant amount of women fought against their traditional gender role. An organized feminist movement fought for and secured the right to vote for women by 1920. From 1860-1920, a larger amount of women attended college and began careers afterwards.¹⁰³ As previously mentioned in this study, the 1920s saw the female youth of the decade overturning the social values of the past in regards to drinking, sexual relations, and smoking. The Great Depression of the 1930s, however, halted and reversed the progress women experienced during the first two decades of the twentieth century.

The Great Depression was “more severe and enduring” than any other economic crisis America had experience before the 1930s or even afterwards.¹⁰⁴ Due to the large amount of men out of work, the Depression served to intensify and reinforce the cultural ideal of domesticity and its relationship to women. The prevailing attitude throughout

¹⁰¹ Filene, *Him/Her/Self*, 7.

¹⁰² Harris, *Beyond Her Sphere*, 32.

¹⁰³ Harris, *Beyond Her Sphere*, 104.

¹⁰⁴ Morris Dickstein, *Dancing in the Dark: A Cultural History of the Great Depression* (New York: Norton, 2009), 16.

American society was that women should not enter the workforce and compete with men for jobs. This attitude was shared by men and women alike as there was “virtually unanimous opinion that women should not compete for scarce jobs with men who had families to support.”¹⁰⁵ The majority of women already in the workforce lost their jobs as “hostility to female employment reached new levels of intensity” and those women that kept their jobs encountered a large amount of public scrutiny.¹⁰⁶ Women were losing ground in the battle for equality.

As the Depression “pushed the battle between the sexes off stage,” Americans went about “relearning roles older than feminism.” The majority of men and women embraced the traditional gender roles of the past in terms of economics. Men “tried desperately to be breadwinners for their families” and women “served in whatever ways they could as helpmates.”¹⁰⁷ The problem in America was “poverty, not sexism.”¹⁰⁸ Women were again assigned to their cultural role as homemakers and Americans ignored the values that feminism of the preceding decades professed. A woman’s place during the 1930s was “at home.”¹⁰⁹

In this context, it was a logical strategy to play upon domesticity in order to entice women to buy certain products. To be considered talented in one’s domestic duties was one of the only outlets in 1930s American culture that women had that could make them feel accomplished. Historian Leslie Woodcock Tentler said it best:

Women, however, relearned at each period of unemployment the importance of home and family for women’s livelihood. Even when unemployed, women did not cease to be daughters or wives; unlike

¹⁰⁵ Harris, *Beyond Her Sphere*, 141.

¹⁰⁶ Harris, *Beyond Her Sphere*, 141.

¹⁰⁷ Filene, *Him/Her/Self*, 158

¹⁰⁸ Filene, *Him/Her/Self*, 160.

¹⁰⁹ Filene, *Him/Her/Self*, 161.

unemployed men, they retained in the home useful and respected functions. The two worlds of home and work were thus dramatically contrasted: home, whatever its poverty, offered at least subsistence and certain status; the job promised neither security nor a firm and lasting sense of self-esteem.¹¹⁰

Despite the restrictions placed upon women, the limited domestic role of homemaker at least offered women a “certain status” and provided a “lasting sense of self-esteem” that was not obtainable to the unemployed man.¹¹¹ Women had something in which to pride themselves. Arguably, they would want to be considered talented in the realm of domesticity. The cigarette advertisements that played upon women’s vanity in the kitchen and the desire to be considered the perfect hostess was not only logical, but ingenious. Advertisers linked the cigarette to the cultural ideal of domesticity and choosing the right brand of cigarettes to have around the home or at a dinner party became part of the domestic realm, which in turn served to feminize the cigarette.

The domestic realm, however, encompassed a lot more than merely choosing the right brand of cigarettes. Many advertisements for home products utilized the ideal of domesticity as a strategy to convince women to buy certain products. This strategy was common among advertisements for products that promised to lessen the burden of women’s domestic duties. For instance, Armstrong Linoleum promised an easy fix to the “old, foot-worn floors of wood” that evidently plagued homes across America. The advertisement instructed women to abandon the upkeep of their wooden floors; dirt would always cling “in the wide-open cracks” no matter how hard women tried to keep their floors spotless. Instead, women should do “what thousands of other women” were doing: replace their wooden floors with linoleum ones. Armstrong linoleum assured

¹¹⁰ Leslie Woodcock Tentler, *Wage-Earning Women: Industrial Work and Family Life in the United States, 1900-1930* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 37-38.

¹¹¹ Tentler, *Wage-Earning Women*, 37-38.

women that linoleum floors would be easier to clean. This argument would have resonated with housewives across America as they struggled through their domestic duties each day.¹¹² Chipso Quick Suds also promised to ease women's burden by simplifying their daily chores. In a testimonial for this laundry detergent, Mrs. A. L. Boegehold of Detroit claimed that Chipso freed her "from the washday worries [she heard] other mothers talk about." Besides the reductions in time and effort, this product kept the family's clothes fresh and new. The advertisement was not even afraid to show "unretouched photographs in natural color" of the clothes Mrs. Boegehold washed with Chipso.¹¹³

The domestic duties of cleaning and laundry placed a burden on women, but the products in the advertisements above would have lessened that burden. The advertisements of these products, therefore, promised to better the domestic talents of women. In this way, Armstrong Linoleum, Chipso Quick Suds, and Camel cigarettes used a similar strategy; and this similar strategy further feminized the cigarette by linking the cigarette to other products that invoked domesticity.

A Campbell's Tomato Soup advertisement further supported this connection. "Women everywhere" apparently shared the view that "Campbell's [was] the finest tomato soup in the world."¹¹⁴ This title was merited based on the quality of tomatoes that went into making the soup, just as the supremacy of Camels was due to the superior quality of the tobacco used to make the cigarettes. The tomatoes were "the ruddy, luscious tomatoes that [had] the most tempting color and flavor." They were the "perfect

¹¹² *Good Housekeeping*, July, 1925, 105.

¹¹³ *Good Housekeeping*, November, 1935, 94.

¹¹⁴ *Good Housekeeping*, November, 1935, 92.

kind” of tomato that any woman strived “to serve on [her] own table.”¹¹⁵ The strategy of emphasizing the prime ingredients that went into making both cigarettes and tomato soup linked these two products in the domestic realm. In addition, the majority of food advertisements at the time emphasized flavor as a means of selling the food product advertised - just as Camel advertisements emphasized the superior flavor of the tobacco in Camels. This consistent emphasis on the flavor and ingredients of cigarettes from Camel advertisements further feminized the cigarette because it strengthened the relationship between food and cigarettes in the marketplace. Since food advertisements were supposed to appeal to the domestic side of women, the domestic qualities of the cigarette were reinforced.

Invoking domesticity as a means of appealing to women in advertisements was inherent in cigarette advertising and advertising in general during the 1930s. Cigarette advertisements played on women’s vanity as cooks and homemakers in order to convince women to buy a certain brand. Cigarette advertisements also utilized women’s supposed desire to be considered a good hostess as a means of selling cigarettes and even gave women examples of impeccable hostesses that were talented in their domestic duties. In particular, Camel advertisements exemplified the strategy in cigarette advertising that connected the cigarette to the cultural ideal of domesticity and thereby helped to feminize the cigarette. This was a clever strategy for advertisers because of the Depression-Era culture that emphasized women’s role of wife, mother, and homemaker. Due to this cultural context, the cigarette came to represent domesticity during the 1930s.

Furthermore, since the strategy of invoking domesticity was common throughout

¹¹⁵ *Ladies' Home Journal*, January, 1934, 29.

advertisements in the 1930s, the cigarette was further feminized because of its link to other products that represented domesticity. Cigarettes not only became a significant part of women's domestic realm, however, they also became a significant part of other aspects of women's lives.

4

The Romantic Side of the Cigarette

“After a Man’s Heart...when smokers find out the good things that Chesterfields give them Nothing Else Will Do.”¹¹⁶

The above quote appeared in a Chesterfield advertisement from 1937. This ad exemplified the inclusion of cigarettes into women's romantic lives and the strategy of invoking romance as a means of convincing women to buy cigarettes. The copy itself demonstrated this strategy. There was no question about it, women were certainly “[a]fter a [m]an’s [h]eart” and a man’s love was evidently one of the “good things” that Chesterfields gave its smokers. The depiction of the woman in the advertisement also incorporated the strategy of invoking romance. (See **Figure 8**) Many details about this woman’s depiction served the ad’s romantic strategy. The look of desire on her face relayed the honesty of the tagline: she wants to find love. Her attire is also notable because it is an evening dress. This woman is definitely not going home, but is getting

¹¹⁶ *Life*, May 17, 1937.

ready for a night out. She holds the package of Chesterfield's in her hands and is contemplating whether or not to bring the cigarettes out with her. It is almost as if she is further contemplating the power of the Chesterfields. She holds a love potion in her hands and, like the flower in her hair, love could bloom from the second she lights her first cigarette.¹¹⁷

Advertisements like the one above argued that cigarettes would help women find romance. Invoking romance in advertisements was an especially clever strategy in the 1930s for two reasons. First, the 1920s birthed new ideas about dating and sexual norms that encouraged romance. These new norms continued into the 1930s. Second, the Great Depression promoted a popular culture of escapism. In other words, Americans looked for ways to forget about their economic struggles. Romance depicted in films and other areas of pop culture helped Americans escape from their daily lives and their Depression-related fears. Both of these reasons allowed romance to become an effective advertising strategy in the 1930s.

The youth of the 1920s revolutionized romantic relationships in America. For example, the young at this time invented dating as society defines it today. "The pairing of a young man and woman who are romantically interested in each other but who are not necessarily or even likely to marry" did not exist before the 1920s. In Victorian America, for instance, young people "paired off only when courting with an eye to marriage."¹¹⁸ 1920s youth not only abandoned Victorian ideas regarding romantic interactions between men and women, they also "invested a kind of religious devotion" to meeting and dating

¹¹⁷ *Life*, May 17, 1937.

¹¹⁸ Filene, *Him/Her/Self*, 141.

members of the opposite sex.¹¹⁹ Young men and women were interacting more outside the watchful eyes of their parents and they were moreover fashioning new ideas about romance for themselves. New rules and practices regarding sexuality were foremost among these new ideas.

The youth of the 1920s established new norms for sexual practices. In particular, co-ed college campuses played a large role in the establishment of these new norms as fraternities, sororities, and other social groups encouraged the interactions between young men and women.¹²⁰ A part of these interactions were new sexual practices such as petting. Historian Paula Fass defined petting as “a broad range of potentially erotic physical contacts, from a casual kiss to more intimate caresses and physical fondling.”¹²¹ Since Victorian America disapproved of any sexual behavior before marriage, this new practice is an example of how the younger generation of the 1920s broke away from the value constraints of the older generation. While these new ideas of sexuality did not result in a large rise in premarital sex (except in respect to engaged couples), the youth’s break with the past, nonetheless, resulted in a “sexual revolution” that grew out of “new patterns of sexual play.”¹²² Furthermore, as a result of this “sexual revolution,” the youth recognized and accepted female sexuality. Women “cast[ed] off” the sexual role they possessed in Victorian America that promoted purity and began “expressing passion and expecting gratification” in regards to sexual relationships.¹²³

These new romantic and sexual norms created during the 1920s remained largely intact during the 1930s. This was logical since the generation that created them had just

¹¹⁹ Fass, *The Damned and the Beautiful*, 45

¹²⁰ Fass, *The Beautiful and the Damned*, 262.

¹²¹ Fass, *The Beautiful and the Damned*, 264.

¹²² Fass, *The Beautiful and the Damned*, 262.

¹²³ Filene, *Him/Her/Self*, 154-155.

come of age. Most importantly to this study of advertising, however, is the way that these new sexual norms fused sexuality with romance. In other words, a romantic relationship between a man and a woman after the 1920s incorporated sexual activity as an aspect of that relationship. Sexual activity was recreational, romantic, and mutually enjoyed by the couple. Advertisers capitalized on the opportunity to use the new sexual aspect of a romantic relationship in advertisements directed towards women. Therefore, advertisements that invoked romance had consistent and obvious sexual characteristics as well. This was evident in cigarette advertisements of the time.

A Chesterfield ad from 1937 ran the tagline “Your cigarette line reads...They Satisfy.” (See **Figure 9**) While the advertisement invokes romance in this scene, the allusions to sexuality are notable. The body language within this ad is very sexual. The important observation is that the couple is touching, but still looking directly into each other’s eyes. This makes the romance and sexuality much more intense. It is also significant that this pair is separated from the rest of the party going on in the background. They have made a space for themselves where they could be alone. In order to truly highlight the sexuality within this ad, however, it is essential to combine the scene with the copy. The tagline “They Satisfy” is an obvious innuendo. The advertisement is claiming that Chesterfields produce and enhance satisfaction, and not only with the act of smoking. The bottom of the ad reads: “And there’s a wealth of good taste in store for you.” While the “good taste” undoubtedly referred to the Chesterfields, it also established another innuendo within the copy. Furthermore, the combination of the copy and the fortune teller scene makes the idea of the future a central part of this advertisement. The readers ask themselves what will happen between the man and the

woman. Maybe a kiss will transpire. They are already touching; the ad tantalizes the reader. The romance and sexuality of this scene drips off the page.¹²⁴

Another Chesterfield ad depicted a man and a woman at a New Year's masquerade party. (See **Figure 10**) From the tagline, it seemed as if "one of the first pleasures of 1937" was going to be enjoying a Chesterfield. Or maybe it was going to be meeting someone special; the tagline is ambiguous. The bottom of the ad reads "Enjoy Chesterfield – for the good things smoking can give you." The ambiguity remains: do the "good things" refer to the pleasure one gets from smoking or the opportunity to meet someone of the opposite sex by enjoying a cigarette? Either way, the woman in the ad is happily accepting the cigarette that the man is offering her. The ad makes it clear that the offer of a Chesterfield sparked this romance and the scene combined with the copy adds a sexual connotation. If smoking a cigarette was only "one of the first pleasures of 1937," the reader could imagine what other pleasures to which the ad alluded. This man and woman are certainly going to have a good time together. 1937 is starting off brilliantly for the pair of them.¹²⁵ Another pair having a good time was depicted in a Chesterfield ad riding in a motorboat. (See **Figure 11**) They are speeding out to sea; the man is looking ahead and the woman is looking at him. They are both smoking Chesterfields. The tagline promises "refreshing mildness" and "better taste...all the way," and the scene promises a romantic rendezvous out at sea. The innuendo from the copy sexualizes this advertisement since the reader can define the Chesterfield's "better taste" as something altogether different; a kiss, perhaps.¹²⁶

¹²⁴ *Life*, June 14, 1937.

¹²⁵ *Good Housekeeping*, February, 1937, 155.

¹²⁶ *Life*, July 12, 1937, back cover.

The advertisements above demonstrate how the sexual aspect of romance based on the 1920s' new romantic and sexual norms was inherent in advertisements during the 1930s. Emphasizing the sexual aspect made invoking romance within cigarette advertising a good strategy. Invoking romance within cigarette advertisements was also a good strategy because of the escapist popular culture encouraged by the Depression. Historian Morris Dickstein noted how "despite the economic crisis, the popular art of the 1930s was striking for its lightheartedness and frivolity." Dickstein went on to categorize this as "one of the paradoxes of the decade."¹²⁷ Americans looked to popular culture as a means of escaping their economic woes. Logically, they did not want to be reminded of their troubles as they watched a film, read a book, or listened to music. While the Depression inspired artistic works that referenced the great economic catastrophe, most everyday Americans "turned out to be romantic dreamers[.]" Americans yearned for the day after the Depression when they could "live happily ever after as Mr. and Mrs. Prince Charming."¹²⁸

The idea of the romantic couple was one way that Americans attempted to escape. Dickstein demonstrated this point well in his analysis of a scene for a 1936 movie *Follow the Fleet*:

There may be trouble ahead, said Irving Berlin in a song for *Follow the Fleet*, but 'let's face the music and dance.' And when they do dance, an astonishing transformation takes place. Feelings they could never articulate are acted out in a movement. Like all genuine couples, together they are something they could never have been separately, not simply romantic, not simply a vision of swank and elegance inherited from the nightclub era of the 1920s, but a dream of motion that appealed to people whose lives felt pinched, anxious, graceless, and static.¹²⁹

¹²⁷ Dickstein, *Dancing in the Dark*, 358.

¹²⁸ Filene, *Him/Her/Self*, 168-169.

¹²⁹ Dickstein, *Dancing in the Dark*, 360.

The romantic couple inspired and “appealed” to Americans who were grateful for an escape through this romance. Understandably, they would want that escape in their everyday lives. For this reason, invoking romance became a prevalent strategy in advertisements of the 1930s. Just like films, products that promised romance also appealed to “people whose lives felt pinched, anxious, graceless, and static.”¹³⁰ Since cigarettes advertisements invoked romance, cigarettes promised this escape as well.

Moreover, this escape would have been particularly appealing to women at this time. Since the majority of women lacked the opportunity for a career, they were often defined by their relationships. Historian Paula Fass noted that on college campuses in the 1920s, “[s]uccess with the opposite sex...enhanced an individual’s standing” among peers.¹³¹ During the 1930s, this notion was applicable to American society on the whole. The level of romance within a woman’s relationship corresponded with the level of success her peers afforded her. Therefore, it was a logical strategy to invoke romance within cigarette advertisements because with longed for the peer recognition that a successful romantic relationship would give them.

Invoking romance as an advertising strategy was not solely a tactic among cigarette advertisements, however. Other products entered themselves into women’s romantic realms. This strategy started appearing in the 1920s as the new romantic norms were evolving and continued throughout the 1930s. Cigarettes would therefore not only become feminized because of their link to romance, but also because of their link to other products that represented romance. And many other products asserted themselves as emblems of romance.

¹³⁰ Dickstein, *Dancing in the Dark*, 360.

¹³¹ Fass, *The Beautiful and the Damned*, 202.

A 1926 ad insisted that “[t]he way to his heart” was by installing a Servel Electric Cold refrigerator. That way, he could raid the refrigerator whenever he wanted and always find fresh food. A woman would supposedly have nothing to worry about in regards to her man’s love for her as long as he had a full stomach.¹³² In another 1926 ad for the “New Orthophonic Victrola,” advertisers played on the ideal of romance in order to entice potential buyers. The tagline read “Everything that could be desired” above a starry-eyed depiction of two couples dancing underneath the moonlight. The copy went on: “A summer night in full of the moon. The right partner. Music as mellow as moonlight itself...” Readers would not be able to resist the enchanting possibilities that a new Victrola could bring them. The “[m]arvelous music by a marvelous instrument” could capture the heart of any potential lover.¹³³

Women would also be able to find romance by keeping themselves beautiful. An ad for Colgate’s Ribbon Dental Cream attempted to convince women that good teeth led to good romance. The tagline read “He Said My Teeth Were Diamonds in the Moonlight.” One woman was telling another about a date she just had. The man had complemented her on having “the most joyful” smile ever. She could have added “Thanks to Colgate’s,” but “why give away one’s beauty secret.” By taking care of her teeth with the advertised product, this woman found romance. Other women could find a lover if only they used Colgate’s Ribbon Dental Cream.¹³⁴ An Odorono ad from 1925 warned of the pitfalls of less than perfect grooming. The copy insisted: “When a handsome man meets a beautiful woman, the magnet of mutual attraction just naturally begins to draw.” The woman in the advertisement met a handsome man recently, but “all

¹³² *Good Housekeeping*, February, 1926.

¹³³ *Ladies’ Home Journal*, July, 1926, 1.

¹³⁴ *Ladies’ Home Journal*, July, 1926, 42.

he remembered was – unloveliness.” Though the magnet of mutual attraction undoubtedly began to draw, the woman had not kept her body odor in check. The man went away due to this unpleasantness and the woman lost her shot at romance.¹³⁵ Body odor had the potential to hold women back. An ad for Lux for lingerie agreed. (See **Figure 12**) The copy began: “Isn’t it natural for every girl to want popularity, romance, a devoted husband?” Assuming that no readers could argue with this question, the ad continued: “What a pity, then, to see lovely girls like those above losing out because they are careless about perspiration odor in underthings.” The advertisement displayed three pictures of girls, all of whom looked stressed and unhappy. Twenty-seven-year-old Hildegard was “strikingly beautiful,” but also “lonely.” She was becoming “self-conscious about meeting people, men especially.” Beth had trouble keeping friends. She had a “natural charm” that helped her “win instant response” from those she met. However, “acquaintance rarely ripen[ed] into friendship.” Apparently, “[o]nly a few childhood friends” are able to forgive the “one unpleasant fault” of not washing your underthings thoroughly. The third girl, Dorothy, still lived at home. She dressed well, talked well, and danced well, but was rarely asked out; and “never a second time.” She blamed others “when really her own carelessness was to blame.” The top of the ad read: “Wanted – Husbands for these Girls.” But unless they bought Lux for underthings and began taking proper care of themselves, it did not look like romance was anywhere in their future.¹³⁶

¹³⁵ *Ladies' Home Journal*, July, 1925, 198.

¹³⁶ *Good Housekeeping*, November, 1935, 153.

Advertisements that invoked romance were common throughout 1930s cigarette advertising. The reasons for this prevalence lay in the romantic culture of the time. The youth of the 1920s created new romantic and sexual norms that remained a significant part of American culture in the decades afterwards. It must be noted that these new romantic and sexual norms corresponded to heterosexual couples only. There were no norms directing homosexual patterns of romance. Romance as defined in the new norms of the 1920s was for a man and a woman. Advertisers used these new norms to sell cigarettes. In addition, romance was intensified by the Great Depression. Americans looked to popular culture in order to escape their Depression-related fears regarding jobs and money. Since Americans were looking to popular culture to escape, it was clever of advertisers to play upon their dreams. Romance was one of those dreams and because of romance's direct connection to women, cigarette advertisements that invoked romance served to feminize the cigarette. The cigarette was further feminized due to its link to other products that invoked romance in their advertisements. Chesterfields, Victrolas, Colgate's Ribbon Dental Cream, and Lux for lingerie are all connected through the use of romance in their advertisements. Due to this, dancing, personal grooming, and smoking all became acts that would help women attract a man, which in turn strengthened the feminine image of the cigarette.

The Modern Side of the Cigarette

“In the variety of her active interests she is typical of the modern American woman...She loves to dance, goes constantly to balls and parties, and always smokes Camel cigarettes.”¹³⁷

A 1934 advertisement for Camel cigarettes described Mrs. Henry Field as “typical of the modern American woman.” (See **Figure 13**) In analyzing this advertisement, a definition of what it was to be a modern woman in the 1930s is brought to light. A caption describing Field went as follows:

Before her marriage to the grandnephew of Marshall Field, the founder of the family, Mrs. Henry Field went to school in Washington, in Switzerland, and in England. In the variety of her active interests she is typical of the modern American woman – she collects French and American paintings, she writes, she plays, she is keenly interested in the theatre, and she prefers traveling by air. She loves animals and her charming home in Chicago houses, amicably, blue parakeets and white Java sparrows, a white Persian cat, and the toy terrier, Xantippe. She loves to dance, goes constantly to balls and parties, and always smokes Camel cigarettes.¹³⁸

This caption highlighted many aspects of the modern woman. To begin with, Field gave off an air of cosmopolitanism. She “went to school in Washington, in Switzerland, and in England” and she collected “French and American contemporary paintings[.]” Field was not merely American, but enjoyed a sense of worldliness. To be cosmopolitan was an important aspect of being modern. Another aspect of the modern woman inherent in this description of Field was the abundance of energy that was essential to the modern

¹³⁷ *Ladies' Home Journal*, October 1934, 60.

¹³⁸ *Ladies' Home Journal*, October 1934, 60.

lifestyle of the 1930s. Field held many “active interests[:]” she wrote, played, went to the theatre, traveled, took care of a quite an assortment of pets, and “lov[ed] to dance, [went] constantly to balls and parties, and always smok[ed] Camel cigarettes.” This variety of interests is what made her an example of the modern woman. She did not just stay home and she was certainly not boring. She was a socialite and led an active lifestyle. The ad went on to say that Camel cigarettes gave Field the energy to lead this lifestyle: “Camel smokers have noticed for a long time that they do get an increase in their flow of energy from Camels.” Smoking was a practice that aided women to become modern; it was a “pleasure” that helped women to be their “animated, attractive self.”¹³⁹

The photograph of Field from the advertisement highlighted the importance of style and beauty within the world of the modern woman. Her hair was coiffed, she was skinny, and her flawless face was free of blemish and wrinkle. She appeared youthful despite what her actual age might have been. Being knowledgeable about the trends in beauty and fashion was essential to being a modern woman, for the modern woman was glamorous. This aspect of the modern woman also applied to home décor. The advertisement asserted that Field kept a “charming home” in Chicago. Home décor was important in that it testified to a woman’s modernity. A glamorous woman would certainly keep a glamorous home.

The description of Field from this Camel advertisement emphasized cosmopolitanism, the energy needed to keep up with the modern way of living, and the knowledge of trends that was essential to being a modern woman. It must be noted, however, that this advertisement represented only the ideal modern life. As historian Roland Marchand has noted, advertisements distort reality in that they do not depict

¹³⁹ *Ladies' Home Journal*, October 1934, 60.

actual lives, but simply reflect the perceived aspirations of consumers.¹⁴⁰ The ideal modern woman that Field represented was what all women at the time presumably aspired to be. Modern women were cosmopolitan socialites that kept themselves knowledgeable about contemporary trends.

Other historians have also asserted that this was the image of the ideal 1930s modern woman. Marchand defined the modern woman as socially and intellectually “stimulating[;]” she “preserv[ed] her youth” and kept pace with their husbands “during evenings of dancing and theater.”¹⁴¹ Morris Dickstein further claimed that “barbed wit and social energy” were characteristic of the modern woman.¹⁴² All of these qualities helped women fit into the “increasingly urbanized” and fast-paced American society.¹⁴³ Images such as Mrs. Field offered women the guidance to help them live modernly. The cigarette became a tool in this effort and advertising wove cigarettes into the modern woman’s lifestyle.

Furthermore, Mrs. Field was a part of a renowned group among smoking advertisements in the 1930s: the “distinguished women” of Camel cigarettes. These advertisements featured numerous examples of respectable women in order to prove the cigarette’s prominence in the modern woman’s lifestyle. Under the headline “A Charming Philadelphian Speaks Her Mind,” Mrs. Anthony J. Drexel 3rd claimed that Camels were superior to all other brands of cigarettes. (See **Figure 14**) The advertisement featured a photo of Drexel smoking Camels aboard the “grand dining salon of the S.S. Normandie.” The fact that she is on board a ship emphasized the worldliness

¹⁴⁰ Roland Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream: Making the Way for Modernity, 1920-1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), xv-xvii.

¹⁴¹ Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream*, 175.

¹⁴² Dickstein, *Dancing in the Dark*, 396.

¹⁴³ Filene, *Him/Her/Self*, 124.

of this woman and, by extension, the worldliness of Camel cigarettes. This was similar to the cosmopolitanism that was prevalent in Mrs. Field's ad. The Normandie was even described as Drexel's "favorite liner." The fact that she had a favorite liner means that she often sailed on many different liners to many different locales. This worldly woman was truly modern.¹⁴⁴

A 1936 Camel ad headlined with the statement "The fast pace of Modern Living puts an extra strain on the Digestion." (See Figure 15) One must be active to be considered modern and this vigorous way of living evidently interfered with healthy digestion. As the title indicated, this advertisement claimed that smoking Camel cigarettes would help to "stimulate and promote digestion" throughout meals and therefore assisted people in their efforts to live modernly. The elegant Mrs. Ernest du Pont, Jr. of Wilmington, Delaware attested to the advertisement's argument. Du Pont was a dynamic woman. She was "enthusiastic about yachting" and entertained guests so often that she and her husband became "famous for their hospitality." Although she lived in Delaware, the photograph of her in the ad was taken at the "luxurious Rainbow Room, Rockefeller Center, 65 stories above the streets of New York." Traveling was just another aspect of her busy lifestyle. Du Pont got the energy to live this way from Camel cigarettes; she "always enjoy[ed] Camels – all through the day – and during meals especially." She supported the advertisement's argument that Camels simply made her meals "so much pleasanter" and helped with her digestion. Smoking Camels at mealtimes undoubtedly gave her the energy to make it back to Delaware after a busy day in New York City.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁴ *Good Housekeeping*, February, 1937, 104.

¹⁴⁵ *Good Housekeeping*, May, 1936, 137.

Mrs. James Russell Lowell was one “distinguished women” of Camel cigarettes that represented the peak of trendy and modern. (See **Figure 16**) The advertisement began by describing Lowell as “essentially modern in her manifold interests.” This woman had a “flair” for fashion and kept herself styled properly with her wardrobe of “interesting and individual” clothes. She also had a “talent for decorating.” The ad insisted that Lowell’s “Park Avenue home” had “great distinction” and she did all the decorating herself. The woman kept up with the times in her fashions and home decorations. Of course, she preferred Camel cigarettes to other brands and found that “most people agree[d] with [her] in preferring Camels” as well. No one could disagree with such a stylish and talented woman.¹⁴⁶

The advertisements that featured the “distinguished women” of Camel cigarettes also attempted to appeal to younger women. In an advertisement headlined “Discriminating women are talking...About camel’s costlier tobaccos,” a depiction of four young women run along the top of the page. (See **Figure 17**) All four of these women radiate the confidence of youth. Miss Mary de Mumm, Miss Vivian Dixon and Miss Mimi Richardson urged their generation to smoke Camels. The fourth woman, Mrs. Langdon Post, also urged the youth of America to smoke the brand that showcased women’s style and gave them the energy to keep up with the modern times in which they lived. Post is the only woman in the advertisement without the title “miss,” but she attempted to convince the reader of the superiority of Camels by exalting the youthful women of America. In the ad, Post said, “Enthusiasm is very contagious. Look at the way the smart younger set are all smoking Camels. I think I know why. Camels never affect your nerves.” Once a woman is free from her nerves, she is able to be enthusiastic

¹⁴⁶ *Good Housekeeping*, February, 1937, 104.

about life, charming, and appear well-put-together at all times. All four of these women would agree, Camels were an essential part of the modern woman's lifestyle. These four young women reiterate what all the other "distinguish women" of Camel cigarettes represented. It is significant that cigarette advertisers did not change their strategy when appealing to the younger generation of women. Apparently, age did not matter in regards to the modernity; all women had an inherent desire to be modern and society expected it out of them.¹⁴⁷

The strategy of invoking modernity in cigarette advertisements for women was an especially shrewd strategy in the context of the 1930s. Much like in the case for the cultural ideals of domesticity and romance, the ideal of modernity was intensified due to the Depression. The economic situations of most Americans prevented them from truly keeping up with the times. Due to this, the theme of modernity and social mobility became significant aspects of popular culture of the time. Like romance, modernity became part of the escapist culture of Depression-era America. This escapist culture emphasized "movement" and not the literal meaning of movement, but the social mobility that "suggest[ed] genuine freedom."¹⁴⁸ Freedom such as this would have resonated with Americans that were struggling economically.

Furthermore, it was because of this desire for freedom that Americans glorified the world of the rich throughout popular culture and defined this world as modern. Morris Dickstein noted how the theme of modernity in terms of upper class lifestyles was particularly prevalent within 1930s Hollywood. He stated that it was no "accident that so many screwball comedies, stage musicals, and the Astaire-Rogers films [were] set in the

¹⁴⁷ *Good Housekeeping*, March, 1936, 102.

¹⁴⁸ Dickstein, *Dancing in the Dark*, 360.

world of the very rich, for that world had not only the money but the mobility that was denied to most Americans during the Depression.”¹⁴⁹ Americans wished to escape through movies and they did not want to be reminded of their hardships on the screen. Movies were depicted in “the world of the very rich” because that was the only part of society that was not significantly affected by the Depression. Americans were able to escape into this world.

The idea that Americans did not desire to see themselves depicted in movies translated into cigarette advertising. Cigarette ads would capitalize on the escapist aspect of popular culture and use the stars of Hollywood in advertisements. Joan Crawford played “the part [of] Mrs. Santa Claus” in a Christmas-time Lucky Strike ad to inform shoppers that Lucky Strikes had “always stay[ed] on good terms with [her] throat.”¹⁵⁰ (See Figure 18). The star of *Woman Chases Man*, Miriam Hopkins, informed readers that “Luckies” had been her “favorite cigarette for about 5 years.”¹⁵¹ (See Figure 19). Americans that responded to movies set in the world of the rich would have also responded to these advertisements; and women especially would have responded to the glamour of these Hollywood actresses. They were additional examples of the ideal modern woman placed into the escapist culture of the 1930s.

Roland Marchand further articulated why Americans responded to upper-class images in advertisements when he stated:

[A]d creators tried to reflect public aspirations rather than contemporary circumstances, to mirror popular fantasies rather than social realities. Advertisers recognized that consumers would rather identify with scenes of higher status than ponder reflections of their actual lives. In response,

¹⁴⁹ Dickstein, *Dancing in the Dark*, 359.

¹⁵⁰ *Life*, December 13, 1937, 98.

¹⁵¹ *Life*, May 31, 1936.

they often sought to give products a 'class image' by placing them in what recent advertising jargon would call 'upscale' settings.¹⁵²

The stars of Hollywood and even the "distinguished women" of Camel cigarettes were perfect examples of the "class image" of which Marchand described. All of those women led the extravagant, dreamlike lifestyles that advertisers believed appealed to the lower class. A woman that attempted to be modern would have to emulate these "distinguished women." Moreover, the strategy of invoking modernity with a class image was very shrewd because it set the lower class up for failure. No middle or lower-class woman struggling through the Depression could have kept up with a Hollywood actress or any "distinguished women" of Camel cigarettes. The lower classes did not have access to this lifestyle because of their economic restrictions. The lower classes could, however, do one thing that allowed them to be modern: they could buy cigarettes. Cigarette advertising made it clear that, although the majority of women could not have led the ideal modern lifestyle, they could at least claim their modernity by smoking a cigarette.

Becoming connected to the image of the ideal modern woman established the cigarette as a representation of modernity. The cigarette's connection to modernity was made even stronger, however, because this advertising strategy also connected the cigarette to other products that represented the modern woman. For example, the cosmopolitan aspect of the modernity was prevalent in beauty products. Yardley's Lavender Soap and Complexion Cream promised to reveal the "secret of English Beauty." It was possible for American women to attain the "fair, untouched complexions" of their English counterparts with these products. Americans would also attain a certain degree of worldliness by adopting the beauty secrets of women from

¹⁵² Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream*, xvii.

across the pond.¹⁵³ Another advertisement posed the question “Are Frenchwomen more attractive than American women?” The answer was no, but Frenchwomen were more clever because they “prefer[ed] cold cream for cleansing” their skin. Such is the reason that American women needed to incorporate Pond’s Cold Cream into their beauty regiments; it reconciled “French chic with a New England conscience.” Modern American women had the opportunity to keep their youthful appearance and become more exotic all in one product.¹⁵⁴

Car advertisers utilized the ideals of modernity in order to entice women, as well. A 1930 Buick advertisement claimed that “discriminating women” of the time preferred Buicks to any other car. “Successful women” wanted their own cars and knew of the “true beauty and luxury – plus the social distinction” of the 1930 Buick.¹⁵⁵ A car ad for the Unisteel Turret Top Body by Fisher proclaimed that “the modern lady rides even more proudly secure” than her sisters of the past. The “automotive star of 1937” bolstered a strong steel top that made the new General Motive cars larger and stronger; “[g]one was the tendency toward tininess.” This advertisement asserted that modern women would have to drive this “beauty in armor!”¹⁵⁶ Advertisers argued that women would buy cars for their beauty and for the social benefits that a rich-looking vehicle provides them. To drive an expensive car was to be modern.

It was also common to find the strategy of invoking modernity in advertisement for new home technologies. An ad headlined “*Mrs. Modern Goes Shopping*” goes through the thinking of a woman buying a Magic Chef gas range. (See **Figure 20**) This

¹⁵³ *Good Housekeeping*, November, 1935, 148.

¹⁵⁴ *Ladies' Home Journal*, February, 1932, 28.

¹⁵⁵ *Ladies' Home Journal*, January, 1930, 61.

¹⁵⁶ *Good Housekeeping*, June, 1937, 141.

stove had “many advanced” technological features, but the main theme of the advertisement was the product’s “modern style and beauty.” *Mrs. Modern* hated her “old-fashioned range” because of its “out-of-date unattractiveness.” In order to have a “really modern kitchen[,]” this woman needed to “replace her old range with a Magic Chef.” As cigarette advertisements made clear, keeping a modern home was of the up most importance to modern women.

The strategy of invoking modernity was a significant aspect of cigarette advertising in the 1930s. Cigarettes came to be known as a tool of modernity and were endorsed by the stylish examples of elite woman and Hollywood stars of the decade. This strategy was especially shrewd in the context of the Great Depression because advertisers gave lower class women and opportunity to overcome their economic struggles. Cigarettes became a way for women to showcase their modernity, regardless of class. It must be noted that there were other aspects of the modern woman. Historian Morris Dickstein has claimed that modern women “asserted her professional equality” with men.¹⁵⁷ Although this professional woman did exist in 1930s American culture, her image was not prominent in cigarette advertising of the time. This study therefore only addressed certain aspects of the modern woman; the cosmopolitan, the energetic socialite, and the fashionable woman. These were the aspects of the modern woman that were prevalent in 1930s cigarette advertising and served to feminize the cigarette. The image of the American female smoker was created by the utilization of these aspects. Apart from cigarettes, the idea of modernity and keeping up with the trends of society was a prevalent selling point throughout advertising in general during the 1930s. The

¹⁵⁷ Dickstein, *Dancing in the Dark*, 396.

consistent utilization of the ideal of modernity throughout advertising further allowed the cigarette to become of symbol of beauty, style, and modernity itself.

Conclusion

The new consumer culture birthed by industrialization became a prominent aspect of American society as the twentieth century progressed. During the 1930s, the cigarette became this consumer culture's "central icon."¹⁵⁸ Americans were addicted to the images of the cigarette that advertisers created; both the masculine image and the feminine. For both genders, smoking became an act "associated with sexual attractiveness, physical beauty and leisure." In regards to men, the masculine image birthed by World War I remained strong in the 1930s. A man smoking "connot[ed] virility, strength, and mental acuity." The cigarette represented a man's masculinity. For women, the cigarette represented something different. Due to women's own efforts to gain the right to smoke alongside men in the 1920s, the cigarette symbolized "social and political equality." During the 1930s, advertisers further made the cigarette into a representation of "feminine beauty."¹⁵⁹ The cigarette came to emphasize a woman's femininity.

In order to make the cigarette into a representation of femininity, cigarette advertisers invoked within their advertisements prominent cultural ideals associated with women during the 1930s. At this time, women were wives and mothers; forced out of the labor force because of the Great Depression. They were also romantics that dreamed of love and a man to share their life with. Lastly, they were worldly, energetic, and knowledgeable about the contemporary trends of the times; or were at least expected to

¹⁵⁸ Brandt, *The Cigarette Century*, 100.

¹⁵⁹ Brandt, *The Cigarette Century*, 98.

be. Advertisers utilized these ideals to create a feminine image of the cigarette that would encompass all aspects of a woman. The female smoker was wife and mother; she was romantic and charming; and she was modern and glamorous.

This image was strengthened because of the connections advertisers made between cigarettes and other products that represented these ideals. For example, the ideal hostess knew that Camel cigarettes and Campbell's Tomato Soup were essentials at dinner parties. Women searching for love could improve their chances at finding a man by smoking Chesterfields and washing their lingerie with Lux Soap. Furthermore, any modern and fashionable woman smoked Camels and drove a car that was fitted with a Unisteel Turret Top Body by Fisher. The cigarette's connection to these products within the world of advertising further supported its feminine image.

In addition, the feminine image of the cigarette created by 1930s advertising proved to be successful. This can be seen in the rise of woman smokers throughout the first few decades of the twentieth century. During these years, there were three periods of outstanding growth in the number of woman smokers: 1912-1913, 1917-1919, and 1922-1932. The largest period of growth was the last and the longest, from 1922 to 1932, and the number of woman smokers would continue to rise throughout the rest of the 1930s.¹⁶⁰ In 1935, 18 percent of women identified as cigarette smokers; by the next decade 33 percent of women would smoke.¹⁶¹ The new feminine image of the cigarette had to have positively appealed to American women. Moreover, there is another reason that supports the success of cigarette advertising during the 1930s: the fact that there was an amazing amount of consistency within cigarette advertisements that appealed to

¹⁶⁰ Kerry Segrave, *Women and Smoking in America, 1880-1950* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2005), 163.

¹⁶¹ Segrave, *Women and Smoking in America*, 164-165.

women throughout the decade. What is meant by this is that cigarette advertisers continued to use the same strategies to entice women and tobacco manufacturers allowed them continue these strategies. On some level, everyone agreed that the advertisements were working.

The consistency among cigarette advertisements during the 1930s proved that the advertising strategies of linking the cigarette to cultural ideals associated with women were successful, and no strategy was more consistent than the strategy of invoking modernity. The modern woman was the staple piece of 1930s cigarette advertising exemplified by the “distinguished women” of Camel cigarettes and the endorsements of Hollywood actresses. Modernity encompassed everything expected from a woman at this time: the modern woman retained former attributes of “housewife, doting mother, and vision of loveliness” from before the decade began and also took up new talents as “clubwoman, hostess, sophisticate, and home decorator.”¹⁶² Cigarette advertisements illustrated all of these aspects of the modern woman, both old and new. This study deems the strategy of invoking modernity as cigarette advertising’s most important strategy because of its sheer prevalence among cigarette advertisements of the 1930s.

As the 1930s drew to a close and America became engaged in another world war, it becomes important to study how cigarette advertising changed: World War II would disrupt American society, including American gender definitions. An “unprecedented” number of women entered the labor force during the war, demolishing for at least a while the domesticity of the Depression-Era.¹⁶³ Logically, women entering the workforce would also change ideas about romance and the modern woman. Since 1930s cigarette

¹⁶² Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream*, 188.

¹⁶³ Harris, *Beyond Her Sphere*, 152.

advertising was so closely related to gender definitions of the time, it would be interesting to study whether or not cigarette advertisers tied the cigarette into new cultural ideals relating to women during and after World War II. All that is known for sure is that American women continued to smoke and that cigarette advertisers always found a strategy to appeal to them “generation after generation.”¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁴ Daniel Delis Hill, *Advertising to the American Woman, 1900-1999* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2002), 224.

Appendix



Figure 1 - "Actresses," *Emergence of Advertising in America, 1850-1920*, accessed 1/29/2012. These are examples of Duke collectable trading cards that were given away with cigarette packages. These four cards come from the same set that featured actresses from the period.



Figure 2 - "50 Scenes of Perilous Occupations – Image 9," *Emergence of Advertising in America, 1850-1920*, accessed 1/29/2012. The set of cards is a bit more creative than the actress set. These four cards are part of a set of 50 that depicted "perilous occupation." One can only imagine what other occupations joined circus performer or horse tamer to make up this set.



Figure 3 - "If they weren't GOOD," *Stars and Stripes*, Friday, October, 11, 1918.



LIFE 1919

Figure 4 - "Gee! I'm in luck," *Adventure Magazine*, August 3, 1919, 1.

Two "hearts"
with but a
single wish,
—MURAD.

MURAD
THE TURKISH CIGARETTE

Figure 5 – "Two 'hearts' with but a single wish – MURAD," *The Stars and Stripes: France*, Friday, May 3, 1918.

PACKAGED BY CASES 1000 NEW YORK, U.S.A. REGISTERED TRADE MARK

M. MELACHRINO & CO.
THE LARGEST MANUFACTURERS OF THE BEST
EGYPTIAN CIGARETTES
NEW YORK

To Our Boys Overseas:-

Wherever you go, you'll find an old friend
in most tobacco shops and every canteen-
MELACHRINO Cigarettes.

Let this mellow, fragrant cigarette do its
bit by solacing and comforting you in your
strenuous duties.

Your countrymen traveling in foreign lands
have for years found great comfort in the
fact that MELACHRINOS were on sale where
they went.

We will do our best to see that you are sup-
plied with MELACHRINOS wherever duty calls
you.

Faithfully yours
M. Melachrino & Co.

Melachrino
The Cigarette Elect of Allied Nations

Figure 6 – "To Our Boys Overseas," *The Stars and Stripes*, Friday, October 18, 1918.

THE SHOCK OF FACING
what your figure may become

YOUR FUTURE FIGURE MAY BE YOUR SHADOW'S MIRROR

AVOID THAT FUTURE SHADOW

By refraining from over-indulgences, if you would maintain the slender figure of desire.

We do not regret that smoking **Lucky Strike** Cigarettes will bring modern figures to state the reduction of bulk. We do desire that when tempted to do so, instead of reaching for a "lucky" instead, you will also avoid over-indulgences in things that cause excess weight and, by smoking **Lucky Strike** Cigarettes, you will reach a slender, graceful form.

When Tempted
Reach for a LUCKY
instead
"It's toasted"

LUCKY STRIKE
CIGARETTES

Your Throat Protection...against irritation...against cough.

Figure 7 - "Reach for a Lucky" Lucky Strike Cigarette Advertisement found in Allan Brandt, *The Cigarette Century: The Rise, Fall, and Deadly Persistence of the Product that Defined America* (New York: Basic Books, 2007), 72.

After a man's heart...

...when smokers find out the good thing
Chesterfields give them

Figure 8 - "After a man's heart," *Life*, May 17, 1937, back cover.



Figure 9 – “Your cigarette line reads...They Satisfy,” *Life*, June 14, 1937, back cover.

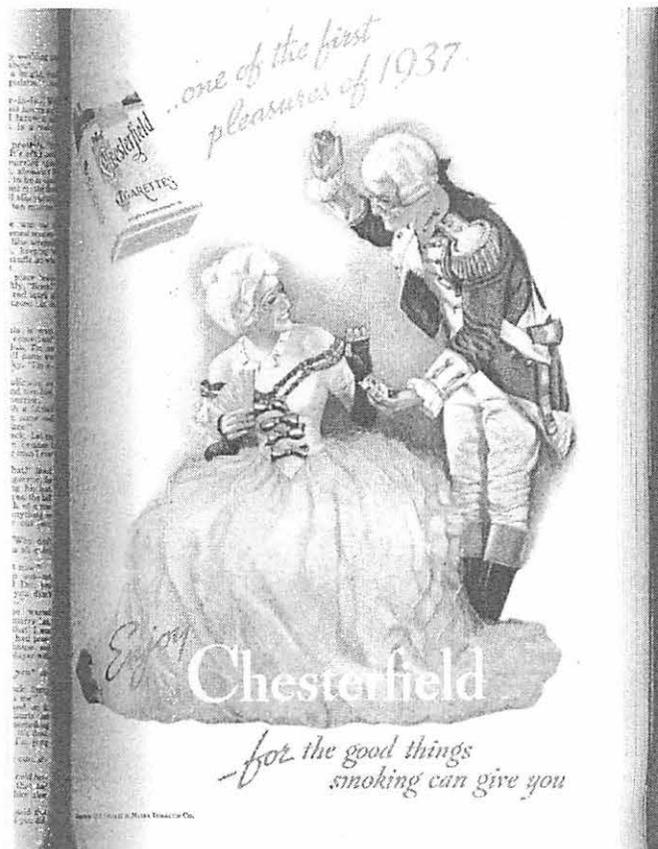


Figure 10 – “One of the first pleasures of 1937,” *Good Housekeeping*, February, 1937, 155.

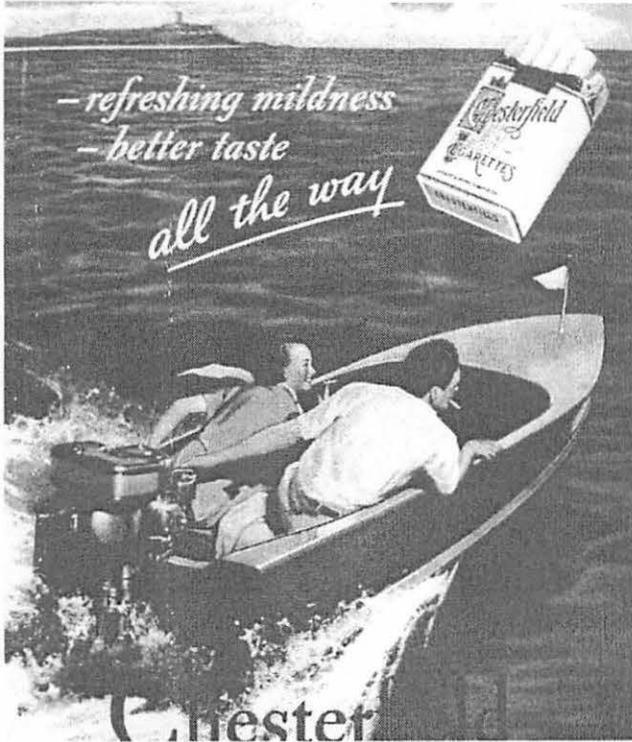


Figure 11 – “All the way,” *Life*, July 12, 1937, back cover.

Wanted—

HUSBANDS FOR THESE GIRLS

Miss Bessie, 22. Her hair is like a soft, downy cloud. Her eyes are like two pools of blue. She is a sweet, gentle girl who would make a perfect wife for any man who is looking for a home.

Miss Betty, 23. Her natural charm and loveliness is a thing to behold. She is a sweet, gentle girl who would make a perfect wife for any man who is looking for a home.

Miss Margaret, 27. Her beauty is a thing to behold. She is a sweet, gentle girl who would make a perfect wife for any man who is looking for a home.

LUX's secret for every girl is what you get when you use Lux soap. It's the secret that makes every girl like these three long not because they are careless about perspiration odor or underthings. They know their clothes are so clean, with no odor suspecting they are good!

That's why you'll find these three girls who are so clean, that's why you'll find we do ourselves. Wash your perspiration-removing clothes each morning.

Avoid Odors— Physiological change in underthings—perspiration—makes it so. Make it a rule to use underthings after each washing. There's no need for the latest fad of spraying linen, preparation and so on.

Keep on kind to under and linens, don't wash them and wash them in lukewarm soapy water with beautiful all-day odor-free Lux for successful results. Anything else is water alone to wash on Lux!

LUX for underthings removes perspiration odor...Saves Colors

LUX!

EVERY product advertised at additional cost per 5

Figure 12 – “Wanted – Husbands for These Girls,” *Good Housekeeping*, November, 1935, 153.

The fast pace of Modern Living puts an extra strain on Digestion

Natural Digestive Action Notably Increased by Smoking Camels

Though every one of the so-called "fast" life effects on digestion and kidney action, in this connection, it is an interesting fact that millions of people during our lifetime make little or no attempt to stimulate and promote digestion. Large family activities, the feeling of well-being furnished by Camel's marvelous blend of choice tobaccos, Camels will give you the same feeling as the fast life.



Using the many distinguished women who prefer Camel's smoother tobaccos

COSTLIER
SMOOTHER

Camels are made from the finest tobacco and are the most delicious of all tobaccos.

For Digestion's sake smoke Camels

Figure 15 – “The fast pace of Modern Living,” *Good Housekeeping*, May, 1936, 137.

"I NEVER TIRE OF THE FLAVOR OF CAMELS"

MRS. JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL

MAR 1937 p. 59 LHS

...the smooth, creamy taste of the...
...and mild without being flat or overcast...
...they never get on my nerves... while I can...
...of my friends in the home, too, as you see...
...I should want them, but I don't want people...
...to talk me in preferring Camels."

"I LIKE SMOOTH AND MILD"

...of Camel cigarettes is always delicious...
...and mild without being flat or overcast...
...they never get on my nerves... while I can...
...of my friends in the home, too, as you see...
...I should want them, but I don't want people...
...to talk me in preferring Camels."

CAMELS ARE MADE FROM THE FINEST
PURE ESTIMATED TOBACCOS THAN ANY
OTHER POPULAR BRAND

*Camels
costlier tobaccos
are Milder*



FOR DIGESTION'S SAKE — SMOKE CAMELS

Figure 16 – “I Never Tire of the Flavor of Camels,” *Good Housekeeping*, February, 1937, 104.

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