Preface

Some years ago, I sat in my aunt's kitchen, explaining to her my plan to spend the day at the Max Factor Museum of Beauty in Hollywood, not as a tourist, but as a researcher. A vital woman in her sixties who had sold cosmetics for a Los Angeles wholesale house, she was intrigued by my project, although perplexed that a scholar would find in beauty products a subject of any significance. Then the conversation turned. Scrutinizing my face, she said, "You know, a little blusher, a little eye shadow, they make you look and feel good. Don't you think cosmetics would make you look better?" I replied, "I think they would make me look different." "Different how," she persisted, "different good or different bad?" I smiled. "Just different."

This was, of course, an evasion. For women of my generation, born during the baby boom and coming of age in the 1960s, judgments about manufactured beauty changed with lightning speed. The counterculture and feminism came along just in time to turn my ineptitude with cake eyeliner and thick mascara into the natural look. At the same time, being a failed user has not exempted me from frequenting makeup counters, examining cosmetics ads, reading women's maga-

zines, or looking in mirrors. Indeed, the idea for this book originated in a New Jersey outlet mall, during a running conversation with my shopping mate. Obviously, I live within the very culture of beauty whose history I have endeavored to write.

Still, my reply to my aunt's question declared the stance I have tried to take in this study. I write about cosmetics out of an interest in the world of appearances, in the ways women have fashioned their looks to express their own sense of selfhood and social role. I have wanted to understand women's intentions as they began to use these mass-produced items, as well as the social and cultural forces that influenced their use. To do so, I have tried to be open to the different values, meanings, and purposes women have attached to beauty preparations. How could such throw-away feminine objects be the stuff of serious investigation, my aunt wondered. This book is my answer.

I am grateful to many institutions and individuals who have sustained me as I worked on this project over the years. The American Council of Learned Societies, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Smithsonian Institution, and the Rutgers Center for Historical Analysis generously funded my work, and the University of Massachusetts granted several research leaves. Many libraries and archives provided the source materials for a study that sometimes seemed boundless. I thank the National Museum of American History; Library of Congress; National Archives; New York Public Library; Indiana Historical Society; Procter and Gamble Company; Baker Library, Harvard University; Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe College; Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College; State Historical Society of Wisconsin; Chicago Historical Society; New-York Historical Society; American Medical Association Archives; Hagley Museum and Library; and the special collections libraries at Duke University, Cornell University, Rutgers University, University of Iowa, and Vassar College. I owe a special debt to archivists Vanessa Broussard-Simmons, Wilma Gibbs, Ellen Gartrell, Marian Hirsch, Russell Koonts, Amy Fischer, and the tireless refer-

ence and interlibrary loan staff at the University of Massachusetts Library. I am also grateful to A'Lelia Bundles, who kindly permitted me access to the Madam C. J. Walker Papers.

Many individuals sent me clippings, directed me to sources, or shared their work with me, including Joseph Arnold, Natalie Beausoleil, Patricia Brady, Margo Culley, Dana Frank, Kathryn Fuller, Paul Gaffney, Larry Goldsmith, Martin Greenfield, James Grossman, Michael Harris, Susan Johnson, Roland Marchand, Ellen Marlatt, Maureen Montgomery, Charles McGovern, Dorothy Moses Schultz, Susan Smulyan, and Ellen Todd. Others gave insightful comments on chapters and presentations, among them Anne Boylan, David Glassberg, Jennifer Jones, Bruce Laurie, Philip Scranton, and Christine Stansell. I have had invaluable research assistance from Marc Ferris, Kathleen Goudie, Kim Gunning, Pamela Haag, Laura Helper, Madeline Hunter, Margaret Lowe, Linda Shih, Susanna Yurick, and especially Judy Ruttenberg. Beth Duryea expertly managed photograph permissions. I am very grateful to Riva Hocherman for her helpful reading and careful attention to the manuscript, to Mark Aronson, and to the talented staff at Metropolitan books.

There are a handful of friends and colleagues to whom I owe special thanks. Susan Porter Benson, Daniel Horowitz, Roy Rosenzweig, and Susan Strasser all read an earlier version of the entire manuscript and generously gave me their criticism and advice. Steve Fraser also offered early support and a careful reading. I came to a better understanding of my work in lively conversations with Victoria de Grazia, spirited dinners with Barbara Clark Smith, Daniel Bluestone, and Hattie Smith, and an ongoing friendship with Judith Gerson. Thanks also to Larry and Maggie Malley, who took good care of me during research trips to Duke.

Two individuals gave an extraordinary amount of time and effort to helping me write the book I wanted to write. My editor, Sara Bershtel, is remarkable: Her close reading of the manuscript has challenged me as a writer, even as her enthusiasm has kept me going. I was dubious when she said we were going to have fun, but she was right.

My husband, Peter Agree, probably knows more about cosmetics than any man outside the beauty industry. Throughout he has been cornerman and wordsmith, adviser and soul mate. Every page of this book bears some trace of his commitment and involvement; these few words of acknowledgment cannot express the intensity of my gratitude to him.

Greenfield, Massachusetts
September 1997

HOPE IN A JAR