LEFT
Actor Clara Bow, Hollywood's quintessential flapper and the original "it-girl."

TOP RIGHT
Model wearing a swimsuit by Lanvin, a French fashion house that pioneered new silhouettes that freed women's bodies (*Vogue*, 1928).

BOTTOM RIGHT
1920s German poster for French cosmetics company Bourjois. The number of cosmetics brands soared during this decade as women began to express their individuality through makeup.

Lipstick, meanwhile, became the marker of women's liberation. In 1912, at a women's rights march in New York, suffragists campaigned for the right to vote, defiantly painting their mouths bright red. The look caught the attention of Elizabeth Arden, a self-made beauty pioneer who had already opened her Salon d'Oro in New York City, the first of many salons in her "red door" empire, all marked with ruby-toned front entrances. Arden played her role in the movement by supplying the suffragists with crimson lipstick from her cosmetic line. Fashion designer Gabrielle Chanel was similarly obsessed with red lipstick, and had hers custom-made, powdering over it for a longer-lasting hold. In 1924, 14 years after the launch of her fashion house, Chanel introduced her first line of makeup with this shade of lipstick, which came in an ivory case trimmed with black, and featured a copper sliding mechanism, writes Eldridge.

Art-deco-era women also painted their nails with "polish pastes," made with a base of beeswax or tin oxide, which were buffed on nails with a chamois cloth for a result that produced "a nice luster but would at best yield only a slight pink shade," comments technology writer Teresa Riordan in *Inventing Beauty*. In 1924, Cutex started offering a rosebud enamel but for bolder options. Meanwhile, fashionable society flocked to Michelle Ménard, a French makeup artist who doled out opaque shades at her salon on the Saint-Honoré—a fashion hotspot. "One of the first things that the knowing American woman does upon her arrival in Paris is to make an appointment for a manicure at Madame Mille's," wrote *Vogue*'s beauty editor in 1928. Later, Charles Revson would import the opaque lacquer craze to America with the founding of Revlon and long-lasting polishes in the 1930s.

Culturally the period was dominated by African American artists, writers, and musicians—Langston Hughes, Nella Larsen, Duke Ellington, Bessie Smith—who defined the heyday of the Harlem Renaissance. But, disappointingly, the mainstream beauty ideal remained overwhelmingly white. Products for women of color were not widely available, which prompted haircare maven C. J. Walker to take matters into her own hands. Born on a cotton plantation near Delta, Louisiana, in 1867, Walker lived a turbulent youth (at age seven her parents died, leaving her an orphan). In the 1890s, Walker developed a scalp disorder that caused her to lose much of her hair, and began experimenting with a mix of homemade and store-bought remedies. In 1905, at age 38, Walker moved to Denver, where she worked as a cook for a pharmacist and learned the basic chemistry to perfect a healing scalp ointment and other hair-rejuvenating treatments. In 1906, she launched the "Walker Method," which involved combs and scalp preparations. She dubbed herself Madam C. J. Walker and traveled throughout the South demonstrating her technique, which caught on quickly.

Just over a decade later, Walker had 25,000 sales beauticians in her employ, providing an avenue to financial success and independence for African American women at a time when few other opportunities existed. By her death in 1919, Walker herself had become America's first female self-made millionaire, and donated generously to educational and social organizations.

The Impact

Despite a thriving undercurrent of multicultural forces, mainstream fashion magazines, advertisements, and media continued to portray long, slender, elegantly dressed bodies that fit into the white, Western culture's cult of physical beauty. Fashion photography showed how to present the body, how to adorn it, how to care for it, all in keeping with the norms of beauty of the moment, says Herschdorfer. It would take more than a few decades, and photographs, to change this mindset.