



# **Lifebuoy Men, Lux Women: Commodification, Consumption, and Cleanliness in Modern Zimbabwe (Body, Commodity, Text)**

*Timothy Burke*

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How do people come to need products they never even knew they wanted? How, for example, did indigenous Zimbabweans of the 1940s begin to believe that they required Lifebuoy soap? Offering a glimpse into the intimate workings of modern colonialism and global capitalism, Timothy Burke takes up these questions in *Lifebuoy Men, Lux Women*, a study of post-World War II commodity culture in Zimbabwe. With particular attention to cosmetic products and the contrast between colonial and pre-colonial ideas of cleanliness, Burke examines the role played by commodity culture, changing patterns of consumption, and the spread of advertising in the making of modern Zimbabwe. His work combines history, anthropology, and political economy to show how the development of commodification in the region relates to the social history of hygiene. Within this framework, and drawing on a wide variety of historical sources, Burke explores dense interactions between commodity culture and embodied aspects of race, gender, sexuality, domesticity, health, and aesthetics in a colonial society. Rather than viewing the production of needs simply as an imposition from above, *Lifebuoy Men, Lux Women* shows what heterogeneous and complex processes, involving the aims and histories of both colonizers and colonized, produced these changes in Zimbabwean society.

Integrating political economy, cultural studies, and a wide range of the social sciences, *Lifebuoy Men, Lux Women* will find readers among scholars of colonialism, African history, and ethnography as well those for whom the problem of commodification is a significant theoretical issue.

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