



The Adman in the Parlor: Magazines and the Gendering of Consumer Culture, 1880s to 1910s

Ellen Gruber Garvey

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How did advertising come to seem natural and ordinary to magazine readers by the end of the nineteenth century? *The Adman in the Parlor* explores readers' interactions with advertising during a period when not only consumption but advertising itself became established as a pleasure. Garvey argues that readers' participation in advertising, rather than top-down dictation by advertisers, made advertising a central part of American culture. Garvey's analysis interweaves such texts and artifacts as advertising trade journals, magazines addressed to elite, middle class, and poorer readerships, scrapbooks, medical articles, paper dolls, chromolithographed trade cards, and contest rules. She tracks new forms of fictional realism that contained brand name references, courtship stories, and other fictional forms.

As magazines became dependant on advertising rather than sales for their revenues, women's magazines led the way in making consumers of readers through the interplay of fiction, editorials, and advertising. General magazines, too, saw little conflict between these different interests. Instead, advertising and fiction came to act on one another in complex, unexpected ways. Magazine stories illustrated the multiple desires and social meanings embodied in the purchase of a product. Garvey takes the bicycle as a case study, and tracks how magazines mediated among competing medical, commercial, and feminist discourses to produce an alluring and unthreatening model of women bicycling in their stories.

Advertising formed the national vocabulary. At once invisible, familiar, and intrusive, advertising both shaped fiction of the period and was shaped by it. *The Adman in the Parlor* unearths the lively conversations among writers and advertisers about the new prevalence of advertising for mass-produced, nationally distributed products.

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