

Time Capsule 1:
Turn-of-the-century magazines
EN 389 Gender in American Literature 1890-1910
Spring 2004 / Cole

The assignment: Each of you will be assigned an issue of an American magazine published between 1890-1910. We will spend all of class on Wed., Jan. 14, looking through the magazines; if you need more time, make an appointment with me (I'll be keeping the magazines in my office). Then, in an essay of 3-5 pages, you will 1) describe your magazine; 2) discuss how it represents gender; and 3) how it supports or complicates the view of gender relations presented in Barbara Welter's "The Cult of True Womanhood" and Lois Rudnick's "The New Woman" (handouts). It should follow this format:

- **At the top:** your name and a complete bibliographical citation of the primary source (no citation needed for secondary source readings) in MLA format.
- **Description of source:** This description should describe the entire magazine or book in a concise paragraph. What kind of magazine/book is it? Who, would you say, is its target audience? How is it organized, and what are its notable features (e.g., illustrations, advertisements, etc.)? What can you say about the author(s) (try Googling it/them, or looking it/them up in a historical or literary database)?
- **Analysis:** Discuss how the primary source addresses the ideas presented in the secondary source reading(s). Your report should not simply summarize the secondary reading, but should remain focused on the primary source. Since the sources you will be assigned are quite long (an entire issue of a magazine, in the first assignment, and an entire book, in the second), you should focus your analysis on a specific idea or a small, representative section of the text. For example, in the first assignment on magazines, you might focus on one or two illustrations, a single article or story, or several advertisements; or you might choose several stories/illustrations that have to do with a specific idea addressed in the secondary reading. When referring to either the primary or secondary source, **please** use parenthetical page citations (following MLA format)—this will mean taking careful notes as you peruse the primary sources in particular.

Your report will be graded on the quality, depth, and originality of the analysis. It is due on **Wednesday, Jan. 21**. Bring a hard copy to class, and e-mail me a copy beforehand. We will devote the class period to discussing your collective findings.

Tips on "reading" your magazine:

- **Important:** before you do anything else, take note of the title, date, and volume/issue info of the magazine (much or all of this info is on the label on the mylar folder)

Then, get a sense of the whole before you begin reading:

- where was the magazine published? Does it appear to have had a local or nation-wide readership?
- what is the basic organization of the magazine? what proportion of the content is fiction, poetry, non-fiction, news, advice columns, games/puzzles, ads, etc.?

- make note of the authors and titles of works to look up later (in Google, the Literature Resource Center, LION, or the American Periodical Series [in the databases section of the library website])

Things to think about as you actually read:

- how are men and women depicted in the various pieces? in the illustrations? in ads? Are the depictions consistent or do they contradict each other?
- what kinds of qualities and characteristics are valued as being “masculine” or “feminine”?
- how are relations between men and women, men and men, and women and women depicted?
- how are relations between parents and children depicted? (does the respective gender of parent and/or child seem significant?)
- to what extent do the values of “true womanhood” enumerated by Welter prevail in your magazine? what evidence of “new womanhood” are present in your magazine?
- do the articles adequately represent gender relations as you see them in your magazine? If not, why not?