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Eva Krupitsky

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An Important Year:
Competing Images of
Womanhood in the
Ladies' Home Journal,
1919

Eve Krupitsky

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Profs. Julie Kim and Oneka LaBennett

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Abstract

This thesis explores the two main images of womanhood found in the editorial and advertising contents of the *Ladies' Home Journal*, a popular mass-market magazine from the early 20th century. My specific focus is on the year 1919 because several important events that affected American women were prevalent during this time. I place my research about the two images of womanhood in the magazine within the context of WWI's end and the proximity of women to reaching voting rights. This is a transitional year during which both historical happenings can be discerned by looking "in between the lines" of the *Journal's* materials. On one hand, there was the traditional housewife and homemaker ideal which grounded women in domesticity; on the other, the independent "new woman" was emerging.

The bulk of my primary research was done in the New York Public Library archives, where I worked with Volume 36 of the *Ladies' Home Journal*. From both the editorial and advertising content, I selected, described and analyzed the examples I deemed representative of the two central feminine ideals. For historical context and information about the tradition of the early women's magazine, I used multiple secondary sources and scholarly works such as Patricia Okker's study of Sarah J. Hale's pioneering editorial career and Jennifer Scanlon's historical study of the *Ladies' Home Journal*. Additionally, I posit that the early women's magazine tradition allowed women readers to be active participants in the medium. In order to show that the two images of femininity persisted throughout the year, I have explored and mentioned examples from all months throughout 1919 in hopes of achieving a case study of sorts.

Why 1919?

For the women's magazine and the suffrage movement, the year 1919 has great significance. This was the year before the vote for women was finally granted, the year after WWI ended and the final stretch of the progressive era. By 1919 the subject of women's suffrage manifested itself "in between the lines" of the editorial and advertising of the *Ladies' Home Journal* with the emergence of two types of feminine identities. The vote and the war itself are not the main aspect of this research project; rather, the focus is on the overall images of womanhood during the period when the issue of women's suffrage was at its zenith. The vote, WWI and this historic year is the context in which the articles and advertisements within Volume 36 of *Ladies' Home Journal* make sense and have rich meaning.

As I have discovered throughout my research, the magazine form is a medium that allows for a forum of sorts. Ideas within editorial and advertising do not always go hand in hand; they even disagree at times, leaving it up to the reader to draw her own conclusions. Thus, while sifting through the archives of the *Ladies' Home Journal* at the New York Public Library, I noticed an interesting dichotomy between two main images of femininity. I argue that because this was the time period during which women were inching closer to lawfully becoming part of the public sphere as a result of the vote, within each monthly issue of this particular year, there was tension between the conservative image of a traditional housewife and the new self-sufficient, autonomous woman.

"The target audience for the *Journal* was white, native-born middle-class women, who lived with the uncertain legacies of the nineteenth-century women's rights movement and who tried to find a comfortable role in the rapidly changing world of the expanding middle class" (Scanlon 2). Therefore, in order to understand the significance of the editorial and advertising

within the *Ladies' Home Journal* of 1919, one must first have an understanding of several important factors. Firstly, the Progressive Era, Women's Suffrage Movement and women's roles during WWI should be analyzed and explained in historical terms. Secondly, the tradition behind the women's magazine must be examined. Finally, women readers must be seen as critical agents capable of deciphering magazines, thinking critically about the presented information, and shaping content within the medium.

Women in American History: Progressive Era, Suffrage and WWI

William Allen White once said that the Progressive Era was a "time when change was in the air" (Berkin 477). Essentially, Americans wanted greater government intervention to regulate and better control the political, economic and social problems that plagued society in the early 20th century. "Progressivism took shape through various decisions by voters and political leaders" (Berkin 477). Ironically, even though they did not have the vote, women were perhaps one of the most active groups to participate in reforming their surroundings. Since women could not vote for changes like their male counter-parts, they entered the public sphere through various social reforms and causes. For example, settlement houses (community centers where the poor were helped by social reformers) run by women emerged at the start of the 20th century because many upper or middle class women "found themselves with lots of education and nothing to do that felt 'real' or significant" (Evans 148). Also, there were women's colleges and clubs that came about in the Progressive Era and a "new ideal for women had emerged" (Berkin 480). "The New Woman stood for self-determination rather than unthinking acceptance of roles prescribed by the concepts of domesticity and separate spheres" (Berkin 480).

Through Progressivism women were able to imagine themselves as political entities. When women were working on social reforms, they realized that they had an anomalous role in the country because officially they had no political clout. Since women had a public role with various social reforms, they had a right to feel as if America was their country too. Progressivism and women's roles within this movement opened the door to the next step: the desire for the vote, a right through which women would gain democratic importance.

Since 1852, Women's Rights Conventions were held in many parts of the country, but the Civil War and the issue of race slowed down the movement (Maule 14). In 1869, two societies, National Women's Suffrage Association under Stanton and Anthony and American Women's Suffrage Association under Ward Beecher and Stone were formed; in 1890 the two united under one umbrella called National American Women's Suffrage Association (Maule 15). "The major task of the movement was to supplant the prevailing conception of woman as pious, submissive and domestic" (Steiner 66). By 1909 this movement had offices in New York City, published 3,000,000 pieces of literature a year, and the "headquarters served as a clearing house for all information on matters of all kinds connected with women's suffrage" (Maule 17). As the *Women's Suffrage Timeline* on Coax.Net points out, by 1910, the movement became more popular and many women started to embrace the cause. Berkin explains on page 482 of *Making America: a History of the United States* that even though its leaders were mostly white and middle class, women's suffrage became a very popular movement among women of all ages and socio-economic classes.

By 1912, "convinced that only a federal constitutional amendment would gain the vote for all women, NAWSA, led by Carrie Chapman Catt, developed a national organization geared to lobbying in Washington, D.C" (Berkin 481). This national organization, the Congressional

Committee of the National Association, was a “federation of suffrage organizations in 42 states” (Maule 17). In 1912, it began an active campaign to amend the constitution of the United States. This fight for the 19th amendment was a state-by-state, uphill battle because some southern states at the time were interested in blocking women from gaining the vote. It was not until 1919 that the Senate finally accepted political equality for women and not until August 26th 1920 that “the Nineteenth Amendment enfranchising women was finally ratified by Tennessee, the last state to do so” (Steiner 67).

It is important to note that at the same time that women were fighting for the vote, the First World War broke out. The war itself strengthened the reasons given by suffragists to gain the long-awaited goal of the vote. Men were out fighting a war which women had no part in creating or preventing because the female sex was officially absent from the political sphere, thereby having no real voice in regards to matters of state. Thus, by 1917, many women suggested that had they been granted the vote sooner, maybe their opposition to the conflict would have prevented U.S entry in to the war overseas and proven that women were better voters than men (Scanlon 128). Additionally, in chapter four of her book, The Girl on the Magazine Cover: The Origins of Visual Stereotypes in American Media, Carolyn Kitch talks about the way that WWI was used by suffragists to support the cause. “Patriotic rhetoric was consistently invoked in the editorial pages of the *Women Citizen* during World War I” and many articles showed the way that women contributed to the war effort despite their denial of “full citizenship” (Kitch 800). Some covers even showed women performing men’s jobs willingly and capably; others suggested it was shameful that women in the enemy countries had the vote, while American women still did not (Kitch 804, 809).

Women and War: A Historical Encyclopedia from Antiquity to the Present by Bernard A. Cook has a significant chapter detailing the social impact of WWI on European women. He explains that the war helped women achieve equality in countries like Great Britain and France because women's activities in the war effort brought about "significant improvement in their political status" and made them involved in many of the work activities traditionally reserved by men (Cook 295). However, such changes did not influence the United States to include women in the war effort. American soldiers entered the war at a much later stage and Lettie Gavin explains in the introduction of her book American women in World War I: They Also Served that "in spite of these examples in Europe, the United States did not seem prepared to utilize its womanpower upon entering the war in April 1917" (Gavin 2). Nevertheless, thousands of American women found ways to be involved in the war enlisting as phone operators, dietitians, nurses, and even female doctors. They went overseas of their own accord instead of under the auspices of the U.S government; some women went with volunteer groups like the YMCA or the Red Cross (Gavin 3). Such valiant efforts by women during the war in the face of their blatant exclusion from the situation by the U.S government "raised to prominence the issue of women's suffrage, long sought in the United States and abroad" (Gavin 3). Shortly after WWI, during the "final push for the ratification of the 19th Amendment, women's war service was frequently cited as a reason to deserve full citizenship" (Kitch 814).

Early Women's Magazines, Magazine Tradition, and Women as Active Participants

With a detailed historical background of the Progressive Era, Suffrage, and WWI, one can better understand that all three things reflect on the dynamics at play within mass-market magazines like the *Ladies' Home Journal*—what was happening in the world was not absent

from the magazine, especially the most popular mass market publication of the time. A suffrage joke appeared in the *Journal*, “entitled ‘Depends on How You Look At It.’ The joke named the terms of the debate as they were generally expressed in the magazine: votes and stoves were mutually exclusive” (Scanlon 109). Specifically, in 1919, two images of what it meant to be a woman were present in both the editorial and advertising fields of this publication: the capable and self-sufficient woman vs. the traditional housewife. “The magazine offered a clear and limited cultural definition of womanhood, but it also recognized and gave voice to women’s own concerns and in doing so the *Journal* helped sow the seeds for women’s later demand for autonomy and self-definition” (Scanlon 2). However, before examples of the two images can be examined in detail, it is vital to understand the women’s magazine as a form tailor-made for the multiplicity of content: many voices and messages co-exist within its glossy pages.

It is useful to consult Patricia Okker’s detailed research of the early women’s magazines in *Our sister Editors: Sarah J. Hale and the Tradition of Nineteenth-Century American Women Editors*. This scholar examines early periodicals written for and edited by women with a specific focus on Sarah J. Hale, “editress” of *Godey’s Ladies Book* because “although no single woman can represent the hundreds of nineteenth-century women who became editors, Sarah Josepha Hale’s career does reflect the conditions under which many women, especially those in the antebellum period, would establish their editing careers” (Okker 58). Okker suggests that the tradition can “tell us much about how women—mostly though not exclusively, white and middle class—used ideologies of gender to establish their place in the periodical marketplace” (Okker 6).

The early magazine form is one in which there were contrasting ideas and different discourses that did not line up perfectly (opinions and messages in editorial and advertising did

not always agree). There were different voices playing off each other, sometimes competing and sometimes collaborating. The early women's magazine was a primarily a white and middle class form. Nevertheless, it provided outlines for opposing discourse, was a meeting ground for multiple voices (contributions from regular ladies in the community and senior established ladies), and existed as a sight where American liberty was expressed and reproduced because women were voicing their opinions within the public sphere whenever they wrote in to the editor about a particular piece or even just read a magazine in which various content was being presented (Okker 37). For example, women's magazines gave women access to rebuke poor choices often made by men, such as drinking or womanizing. Thus, they took on an authority of speaker in public.

In early America, the public sphere and the press were linked together because the press was the medium through which the public functioned, free speech was practiced and opinions could be heard. Even in America's colonial period, women edited magazines and newspapers; after a husband or father died, they would maintain the publication (Okker 7). In the 1820's men started to hire women to have a feminine viewpoint in publications, but many women entered the field without help from men (Okker 9). Increasingly in the 1820's a wide range of women editors, writers and journalists started their own magazines to speak to women and larger society about women's issues. The language in early women's magazines allowed women to express themselves on a variety of topics, ranging from housework to societal improvement. Interestingly, the magazines often contained a paradox because the language conveyed the competing discourses of domesticity and suffrage; home based language was side by side with non-domestic content (Okker 37).

Sarah J. Hale was the editor most noted for making the tradition of the women's magazine one with multiple discourses. The editor in chief of *Godey's* from 1836-1877, Hale helped to establish women as readers and writers. She argued for a separate public space for women and used the "sisterly editorial voice," an informal style of writing which allowed women to speak to each other by writing in to the magazine and exchanging ideas like sisters or friends (Okker 23). "Regardless of the intentions of editors and publishers, magazines edited by women did, at least in some sense, serve explosive functions" (Okker 6). It is crucial to understand that, by our modern measure, the messages in this early women's magazine seem conservative and gendered. However, by the standards of the day, Hale was slowly chipping away at the idea that women were not allowed to speak in a public forum. Indeed, women's speech in public was a very political act of boundary crossing for women who lacked the right to appear in public in early America. Therefore, purely by giving woman a medium from which to speak and creating a market for "periodicals by and for women", Hale was challenging the notion of "separate spheres that was often interpreted as associating men with the public world of politics and commerce and women with private domestic space" (Okker 6).

Like other women of her time Sarah Hale started her own magazine in Boston in 1828 called the *Ladies magazine* because her husband died, leaving her with five children and no support (Okker 42). Even though she was a literate and educated woman, laws prevented her from many forms of work. Reading and writing was one that remained open to the female sex, so Hale promptly began publishing her work with a focus on "women's education, social reform, and American literature" (Okker 45). Since she had access to the community of elite women, an original voice and a specific idea of women's needs, in 1837 Louis Godey recruited Hale to edit *Godey's Ladies Book* and she molded it in to the kind of model that it became (Okker 45).

It is important to note exactly how Sarah Hale harnessed the ideas about gender and women's roles throughout the 19th century and was able to bring women in to the public sphere. Women were understood as mothers and housewives under the Victorian notion of gender which considered women fundamentally different from men (Okker 38). Hale and the readers and writers who worked together in the magazine took that private discourse and manipulated it in order to expand women's opportunities in to the public space (Okker 60). She exploited a private dialogue in a medium which she and her readers considered a particular space for women's use, different from those of men and located in a traditional understanding of gender. Nevertheless, this method broke down the very boundaries between home and the outside world because women constituted themselves as a visible community with a particular ability to express themselves.

Throughout her editorial career Hale tried to “combine Enlightenment and Victorian ideologies of gender. When explaining the Victorian belief in ‘mental difference’ between men and women, she refused to give up the principle of equality: the differences of ‘minds of the sexes,’ she insisted, ‘is not in the strength of intellect, but in the manner of awakening the reason and directing its power.’ Similarly, as much as she associated women with moral influence, Hale continued to assert the importance of education including the rational study of mathematics, philosophy, and rhetoric” (Okker 52). This mixture of women's intellectual equality and ethical distinction was powerful, serving as a loophole—women could exist in the public sphere precisely *because* they were equal to men on an intellectual level, but more moral than men because of their role as mother and housewife.

Some say that the feminine quality in the publication weakened the magazine's capacity to achieve masculine equality. Others see the magazine's masculine aims not being feminine

enough. I personally agree with Okker's general argument that the style Hale used was a "baby-steps" approach. It was an attempt at pushing women closer in to the public sphere without putting forth an overly extreme stance, which would frighten or avert many. She navigated a thin line skillfully and was able to lay a foundation for the more radical first-wave feminist magazines that came after her. Hale's contribution to early magazines is only one among many such contributions; there were hundreds of other female editors who followed the same pattern as she did, making the magazine in to a place where women could write in, discuss, contribute, absorb, decide, and choose the messages they saw. "The diversity that marks domestic publications also appears in other types of periodicals" (Okker 10). Hale's pioneering work is a good example of an early women's magazine because it demonstrates the tradition in which the readers are used to multi-faceted messages and competing topics.

Additionally, it is important to view the magazine as a financial enterprise which exists in and depends on a marketplace—in order to continue to publish, magazines need to generate revenue. In order to generate revenue, the needs of the readers must be taken in to account. A one-sided message would, logically, not survive for very long because readers would lose interest. Diversity of content, even in a relatively non-diverse reader-base of white and middle class women, was present in magazines like the *Ladies' Home Journal* because women readers were active participants. They could write in and discuss the information found within the magazine, request more written pieces on certain topics and contribute their own perspective. Some women wanted recipes, while others wanted to discuss careers. Some advertisements would publicize beauty products; some would be for outsourcing domestic work. The editor, therefore, had to heed the needs of all the readers if he or she was to continue selling issues every month. The messages the readers came in contact with were, therefore, certainly not

homogeneous. “The *Ladies’ Home Journal* both modeled and adapted to the expectations of its readers” (Scanlon 2).

In the study of magazines, the woman reader has been dissected in a number of ways. In her study of youth and youth culture, Angela McRobbie, examined a magazine from the late 20th century called *Jackie*, stating, “Within the world of Jackie what we find is a cloyingly claustrophobic environment where the dominant emotions are fear, insecurity, competitiveness, and even panic” (McRobbie 70). The female reader in this school of thought is perceived as somewhat confused and McRobbie suggests throughout her research on this particular publication that the information the female reader encounters may be harmful *if* she passively accepts the information (McRobbie 114). Other scholars, like Patricia Okker, definitively believe that girls and women actively interact with the information they encounter and are not simply a “transformed male reader” who lacks an “independent and positive existence” (Okker 112). What is responsible for the stark difference between these two opinions? Time. *Jackie* emerged in a different world than publications such as *Godey’s Ladies Book* and the *Ladies’ Home Journal*.

In early women’s magazines, female readers “lived within a culture that associated women with reading and that encouraged women to read texts written by women. The recent scholarly definitions of the woman reader cannot fully account for the representation of women’s reading in these periodicals precisely because they do not address variances of reading communities” (Okker 112). There was diversity within the magazine industry in the 18th and 19th century and there were many kinds of magazines with which women were involved. Women did not only work on domestic women’s magazines; they could also be involved in agricultural magazines, legal and social magazines, abolition magazines, suffrage publications, etc. This

reflects that there was a range of magazines women could read and write for. Additionally, within the women's magazines themselves, there was a range of issues side-by-side. All these competing ideas under one roof allowed for readers, writers, and editors of early magazines to participate in an egalitarian framework by creating and redefining ideas. In contrast, McRobbie writes about Magazines like *Jackie* as “framing the world for its readers” and “Romance problems, fashion, beauty and pop, all mark out the limits of the girl's feminine sphere” (McRobbie 68, 114). Unlike the sisterly editorial voice from early magazines which encouraged a kind of female bond, later publications for girls and women have been criticized as having no “female solidarity” (McRobbie 114).

It, therefore, becomes clear that the two competing images of womanhood and the varying content in the *Ladies' Home Journal* from 1919 fit perfectly within the magazine tradition of multiple discourses and multi-faceted imagery. One might even suggest that the *Journal* became as popular it was because it was able to skillfully give its readers various content from which to choose. After all, by reading and actively participating in shaping the content, women could decide who they wanted to be or how they wanted to act. With the vote on the horizon, forward thinkers could gravitate toward editorials about working women or advertisements for outsourcing housework, while the women who were fearful of change could feel comfortable reading articles about pie-baking or ads about serving healthy food to children.

Sarah Hale died in 1879, *Godey's* lost popularity and direction after her death and “In 1883, the *Ladies' Home Journal* would tap the same ‘woman's’ market and then expand the market to a degree unprecedented in the history of magazines” (Scanlon 3). Since suffrage was such a divisive issue in American society, it is quite logical that a powerhouse like the *Ladies' Home Journal* would have somewhat conflicting and during this time, despite the fact that it was

not explicitly part of the suffrage or feminist press like the *Lily* or *Una*: “by the 1890’s the movement also turned to general-circulation periodicals” (Steiner 91). Correspondingly, Jennifer Scanlon posits in her study of this magazine, Inarticulate Longings, The Ladies' Home Journal, Gender, And The Promises Of Consumer Culture, that “This magazine, the first to reach a circulation of one million, transformed the whole magazine industry by creatively addressing women’s household roles and opportunities outside of the home, their dependence on men, their interdependence among themselves, and their chances for independence” (Scanlon 1).

Edward Bok was the notoriously conservative editor of the *Ladies’ Home Journal* and he opposed political agency and the vote, while pumping up “glorifying materials” about the women’s place in the home (Scanlon 4). However, one voice cannot monopolize a form like the women’ magazine because its tradition is one of multiplicity: the stories, feelings, literature, and beliefs of many women appeared in the *Ladies’ Home Journal*, balancing out Bok’s notions and opinions. Additionally, with the rise of advertising, a new voice was added in to the fray and within advertising itself there were differing messages. Some products were marketed to the conservative housewife, while some promised freedom for the modern woman. Within advertising, therefore, there was an idea of selling the consumer a sense of self based on the products used—women could choose who they wanted to be based on what they purchased. Advertisers played off women’s “inarticulate longings,” desires for civic opportunities that women did not yet politically possess, and the unfulfilling home life women yearned to improve (Scanlon 225).

There are countless examples of the two main ideas of womanhood within the two volumes of the *Ladies’ Home Journal* in the New York Public Library. In order to best illustrate the two images that are prevalent during 1919, the strongest examples must be selected from

different months across the magazine. By selecting two articles from the advertising and two from editorials (four examples per each of the two images; eight in total), the kind of images that come to life in the pages of this *Ladies' Home Journal* can be grasped. Additionally, selecting articles and ads from various months demonstrates that these ideals of womanhood consistently persisted throughout the year.

My Findings from the Archives Part 1: Image of the Housewife and Mother

The first main image of femininity in the editorial and advertising was a rather familiar one. This image was grounded in ideas of gender that had existed since the very first women's magazines of the 18th century. Specifically, some of the editorial and advertising sections focused on women's beauty and the understanding of women as wives and mothers. This standard model of "woman" is not necessarily surprising; it would not be entirely negated by a new vision of womanhood because the suffrage movement was still a highly debated issue. Many men and even some women were not fully on the suffrage bandwagon, so traditional ways of thinking still pervaded throughout magazine. Additionally, women approaching the right to vote did not mean that they would completely give up some of their duties in the home; the magazine reflected this.

A magazine must adjust to the changes going on in society in order to fulfill the needs of the readers; when these changes occur on a grand scale, a magazine rooted in a particular ideology may find it hard to let go of certain content. Therefore, domestic imagery was quite visible even in this pivotal year. For example, there were still plenty of editorials and advertisements showing blushing brides talking about weddings, cheerful mother's playing with children in the living room (no father was present in such pictures), advertisements for beauty

products and dresses, and women exchanging tips on how to run the home and treat husbands with care.

A Quaker Oats advertisement on page 48 of the January issue is a perfect example of an advertisement aimed at the traditional woman. It also stereotypes established gender roles. On the top of the page sits a little boy playing with a toy weapon, shooting an oat out of his toy cannon. Above him in bold letters it says “We Tell Boys: That Puffed Grains Are Shot From Guns.” Beneath the boy is a picture of a little girl feeding her toy doll and it says “We Tell Girls: that these are bubble grains, airy, flaky, toasted, puffed to eight times their normal size and they taste like toasted nut meats. Then girls urge their mothers to try them, and meals find a new fascination.” At the very bottom sits a prim and proper young mother reading a magazine. The advertisement continues with its bossy tone, stating “We Tell Mothers: That the object of this process is to make whole grains wholly digestible. And mothers are glad that such healthful foods are also so enticing.” The advertisement then goes on to give instructions on how to serve this food to children in between meals.

This kind of advertisement speaks to the traditional gender roles by showing boys playing with guns and girls feeding their dolls to role-play a nurturing mother. Also, the language itself is gendered—the little girl and her doll are automatically associated with femininity and the little boy and his toy weapon with masculinity. The adult woman depicted is clearly the one responsible for feeding her children because the advertisement is directed at her; there is absolutely no mention of any father or any role he might contribute in the home. The woman is planted firmly in her historic place as the nurturer in the domestic sphere because it is her responsibility to stay home with the children and provide nourishment in between meals. Additionally the tone of the advertisement is very didactic. The advertiser *tells* boys, girls, and

women what their product does, seemingly leaving little room for the consumer to choose to use it as she sees fit. Women all over the country at this time were tired of being told what to do (they wanted to vote so that they could make important choices), yet this advertisement “tells” and, it seems, the woman in the picture, just like the children above her, listens.

A second advertisement on page 53 of the July issue is for Pompeian Beauty Powder. It states, “An instant’s beauty may mean lasting happiness” and depicts a woman sitting in the arms of an adoring husband or boyfriend. This kind of advertisement speaks to the typical image of womanhood because it asserts that her most important attribute is her appearance and the most valued goal is finding a husband. It says nothing of brains and wit, for example, but rather claims that “it takes an instant to capture love—an instant of flashing beauty.” This kind of advertisement is not progressive in any way. It simply goes along with the standard concept that women need to keep up a certain soft-skinned and youthful physical appearance in order to attract a man. It almost makes one feel that if one doesn’t buy such a product, one may regret it because it says that “the woman who knows this secret looks confidently into the future and sees only happiness.” The undertone is that a woman who does not purchase such a product may not find a husband and, therefore, will not find fulfillment. There is no mention of anything else that might satisfy her like a career or a hobby, for example. There are countless such advertisements throughout the magazine and most of them suggest that if a woman keeps up her appearance, she will find a boyfriend or a husband to live happily ever after with. In the articles I came across, the emphasis in these advertisements was almost always on the cream or perfume achieving some grander goal or life purpose—it was rarely just about the soft skin or pleasant smell.

A good first example of an editorial piece that keeps the image of woman in the domestic sphere is the article by Anna Barrows on page 107 of the February issue. It is titled, “The War

Bride's New York: He Will Be Proud of Her if She Can Make a Good Loaf." The article opens up by saying that when men come back from war, they will be changed by the experience and it will be the duty of the woman to "measure up, so far as you can, to the place where in the natural course of events you and he would have stood together in your household management after a year or eighteen months of married life." The way a woman must "measure up" is by "feeding him." Barrows states that men must be well fed—a larger amount than they received on the front lines. By feeding her husband in the correct way, the wife will keep him healthy, full, and "proud of her." Essentially, the article posits that the best way for a woman to gain her husband's approval is by preparing an adequate meal. This article describes in meticulous detail how to bake the bread, what kind of yeasts to use, and how to properly time the baking. It is concerned with how to feed the man when he comes home from war, while simultaneously relegating a woman's significance only to housework. None of the accomplishments of women from outside the home are noted as something to be proud of in this article. Additionally, the article suggests that it is solely the female's job to bring the home and marriage into equilibrium. Such an editorial contribution clearly keeps to the standard image of the domesticated woman. In the "How-To" articles like this one, the focus was usually on how to be the perfect housewife. As we can see, WWI is implicitly mentioned in this editorial piece. Its presence suggests that women must bring home-life back to normal instead of using their experience during the war as a catalyst for change or equal rights.

A final editorial piece that highlights the traditional image of woman as home-maker can be found in the December issue on page 67. December is the month of the Christmas holiday, so there were multiple articles for shopping or gifting in this chapter. One that stood out was titled "What Other Women Have Found Out About Christmas." It gave women tips in paragraphed

sections on how to most efficiently get through various activities associated with Christmas. Everything ranging from how to make little cakes to unfurling lettuce for salad was mentioned. Making cranberry sauce and picking out gifts for the children was covered as well. Women wrote suggestions to each other in this segment, taking on a type of “sisterly editorial voice” pioneered by Sarah Hale decades before. The fact that the content of this piece was concerned mostly with kitchen and home clearly shows that this editorial continued to maintain the image of a woman tied to various responsibilities. The basic idea is that holiday errands fall entirely upon the shoulders of the woman. She is the one cooking, cleaning, buying gifts, and getting the children ready. In articles like this one, women’s achievements during the war or the fact that certain states had already ratified the vote are still missing. The important focus is entirely on holiday duties for the wife and mother. The absence of a more progressive agenda in this article is quite telling because, with this conservative stance, the role of the woman is intentionally restricted to the domestic milieu.

My Findings from the Archives Part 2: Image of the New and Autonomous Woman

The second and totally opposite “umbrella” image of femininity found in the editorials and advertisements published in the 1919 *Ladies’ Home Journal* depicted the “New Woman.” This kind of female was smart, strong, capable, fearless, knowledgeable, and self-reliant. Keeping in mind the occurrences that were going on at the time, it is logical that such an image would emerge as a counterbalance to the more traditionalist message. After all, at this time women had been fighting for their rights and some had spent almost two years taking over the roles of their husbands who were away at war. Many editorials in volume 36 implied that a woman was much more than just a glorified domestic servant—she had a new world on the

horizon. Additionally, with the rise of the mass-market magazine, women became a powerful consumer group targeted by advertisers, many of whom appealed to woman's newfound sense of choice, freedom, and competence. Editorials and advertisers lionized an independent woman. Working-woman profiles, stories about women who won various honors or achievements, advertisements suggesting that women had the capacity to choose smartly, and several stories about women going to college were prevalent. There was even an editorial article on page 37 of the May issue that asked readers to write in about the idea of voting, noting the differences between women voters and male voters. Issues of the time were certainly seeping into the pages of the magazine and giving shape to a new image of womanhood.

The first page of the March issue of *Ladies' Home Journal* is an editorial titled "They Say Women Can Only Spend Money, But Here are a Few Women Who Know How to Make Money" and it profiles notable working women. This kind of article fits perfectly into the political context of the time because to gain the vote women needed to work together and look up to strong figures of their own gender. This editorial profiles six different women who broke in to the masculine corporate world on Wall Street. Each of these women is described as having an "important contribution to the industry." Certainly there is nothing domesticated about these women. They are profiled strictly through their jobs and contributions outside of the home and written about in a reverent manner. There is the sense that they did this on their own and went head to head with their male counterparts on the Street ("Moreover, they are good sports and stand 50-50 with men in holding up their head in a panicky market"). Independent women like these emerged out of the fight for women's rights and the vote. The magazine reflected this new working woman ideal, balancing out articles about housework.

Similarly on page 3 of the April issue, a second profile of women who have careers appears with a focus specific to this unique time period. It is titled “The After-the-War Woman in New Fields.” It covers seven women, each with high powered and important positions, who tempered problems in the workforce during and after WWI. The article states that Mrs. F.W Kessler travels the country and “introduces in a casual way new fabrics for a New York firm,” Mrs. W.B Marsh is a cooked-food-dispenser in New York City, Mrs. Leola King is a traffic cop, Miss Ada Chapelle is an expert meter reader for the Consolidated Gas Company of New York, Mrs. J. Cotton Smith is an official marketer for New York’s ‘400,’ Mrs. Hazel Fenton is a telegrapher of the news, and Miss Ada Lois Cardell is head of the Federal Income Tax Department for Oklahoma. Each woman’s profile explains that her job is somehow helping to expand the horizon for women, while simultaneously filling the positions left open by the men who went to fight a war. For example, “when her husband went off to war” the crossing guard became one of the first women to be appointed to the Washington police and, likewise, “while her husband was in France” the female marketer was able to set up a food delivery company “since the war has played such havoc with servants.” This profile, like the first one in the March issue, pushes the contributions of women during and after the war to the forefront. It uses the hostilities as a background for women’s’ contributions and shows how self-sufficient many were throughout this time period. Certainly these women do not have anything to do with the domesticated housewife ideal that exists in the neighboring pages of this *Ladies’ Home Journal*, further highlighting the idea that there were two differing female identities present within the magazine.

Many advertisements in this volume of *Ladies’ Home Journal* also appeal to a savvy woman with choice and a newfound sense of independence—a woman with a “new” way. In the

May issue, at the bottom of page 81, two women dressed as nurses sit at sewing machines above a caption that says, “I certainly never intend to use an old-fashioned machine again!” The machine is advertised as portable and can be “carried to work,” suggesting that women need not sit at home and sew. They can hold real jobs and can choose how to most efficiently work with this new device. This kind of advertisement speaks to the idea that the “new woman” has “new ways” of doing things. Additionally, despite the fact that sewing is still considered women’s work, the progress lies within the fact that the women are not sewing at home by hand; they have careers as nurses, in this case, and are not forced to do a household chore in an old fashioned way. A parallel job advertisement on page 92 of the September issue is given by the magazine itself for “more men and women to represent the *Ladies’ Home Journal*, the *Saturday Evening Post* and the *Country Gentleman*.” It shows a picture of a smiling woman who makes “three dollars an hour.” The advertisement suggests that a woman could “go to university” or “travel” by earning money working as a *Journal* representative. The tone and phrasing in the magazine is very personal and upbeat with an encouraging “YOU CAN DO IT” capitalized next to a list of activities that a working woman could partake with her own income. The message here is “rely on yourself” by affording your own expenses. The advertisement is marketed toward autonomy and goals such as education and career.

On page 43 of the June issue, we have an advertisement for the Franklin Sedan behind whose wheel sits a woman. She is fabulously dressed and as she gets out of her car, one glimpses a set golf clubs leaning against the wall. This kind of woman is one who has time to go places, to be physically free from her home. She can come and go as she pleases with this new automobile and she even plays a sport. This advertisement is marketed toward a wealthy upper class woman with time for leisure and it makes sure to explain that the product is of the finest quality. Its goal

is to have a certain kind of woman *choose* to buy this product. Though this advertisement is specific to a certain class of female, the notion of the new woman extended to all races and classes of women (perhaps someone of a different social status could not afford to purchase this automobile, but could express her sense of self by working outside of the home, for example). This woman behind the wheel of the car is the ideal of the new woman because she has time for relaxation, money to spend on the products of her choosing, and probably hired help to do housework for her. In sum, the idea is that multiple advertisements throughout this issue of *Ladies' Home Journal* aimed to minimize women's life at home, hoped to give women a chance to experience the outside world, and underscored the idea of a self-sufficient kind of female.

Conclusion

The magazine is the perfect forum for dichotomous images of women's roles in society to be mixed, matched and be resolved in both new and traditional ways. The year 1919 was one during which many political and social changes were on the horizon. By looking at *the Ladies' Home Journal* carefully, gendered tensions in society can be observed. Using a historical lens helps bring to light the two main images of womanhood that emerged in the magazine from this time period and gives an abundance of context. Suffragists had been fighting for the vote for decades, the movement was gaining more and more followers, and WWI gave women the opportunity to fill the positions left behind by their husbands despite the government's blatant exclusion of women from the conflict. This was the environment in which the *Ladies' Home Journal* existed during this transitional of year. For this reason, in 1919 the two ideals of femininity poignantly vacillate between convention and progress.

As a result of the tradition of active reading and assorted content within the magazine, women readers were able to choose which messages appealed most to them. The beauty of an early women's magazine with women as active participants was that the female audience could interpret and use the content in her own way. There were hundreds of editorial pieces and advertisements to choose from each month. She, the reader, could focus on what spoke to her most because the tradition of the magazine had always been one of multiple viewpoints, competing discourses and active readership. Women were dynamic participants in the forum itself, had an array of ideas and could construct their own narratives.

The *Ladies' Home Journal* from 1919 is a snapshot frozen in time. Women's history out of a textbook has always been a relevant topic of study, but it is fascinating to watch history play out within the pages of a primary source document. Reading the editorials and interpreting advertisements gave insight in to some of the feelings, hopes, concerns, and accomplishments of American women from that time period. Though many pages from the archives are tattered and destroyed, there is a rich source of information that could be valuable for future research. Scholars should be encouraged to include communications publications such as this one in historical research of the early 20th century. After all, the bare facts of a time period are given meaning by the voices of those who lived through it. As an article on page 55 of the December issue posits: "Did you ever stop to consider the mission of woman in life?"

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