

*James Rorty*

# OUR MASTER'S VOICE

*ADVERTISING*

A MEDIASTUDIES.PRESS PUBLIC DOMAIN EDITION

*Our Master's Voice: Advertising*, originally published in 1934 by the JOHN DAY COMPANY, is in the public domain

Published by MEDIASTUDIES.PRESS in the PUBLIC DOMAIN series

mediastudies.press | 414 W. Broad St., Bethlehem, PA 18018, USA

New materials are licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial 4.0 (CC BY-NC 4.0)

COVER DESIGN: Mark McGillivray

CREDIT FOR SCAN: Internet Archive, contributor Prelinger Library, 2006 upload

CREDIT FOR LATEX TEMPLATE: Book design inspired by Edward Tufte, by The Tufte-LaTeX Developers

ISBN 978-1-951399-00-9 (print) | ISBN 978-1-951399-01-6 (ebook)

DOI [10.21428/3f8575cb.dbba9917](https://doi.org/10.21428/3f8575cb.dbba9917)

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CONTROL NUMBER 202094177

*Edition 1 published in September 2020*

# 6 THE MAGAZINES

## I. THE COMMAND TO BUY

"FORWARD America"; "I have shared"; "We do our part."

[doi](#) | [original pdf](#)

The depression slogans of both the Hoover and the Roosevelt administrations seem to imply a national unity, a culture. The people are to be "sold" on this culture as a part of the task of rehabilitating it. It is therefore proper to examine the content of this culture, slightly down at the heels, as it is, in this fifth year of the depression.

For this purpose the evidence provided by the editorial, article, fictional and advertising contents of the contemporary mass and class magazines is extraordinarily revealing. We have seen that the press, including the magazine press, is used as an instrument of rule. The rulers are the manufacturers, advertisers, distributors, financiers, etc., who use not merely the magazine advertisements but the total apparatus of this periodical press to enforce "the command to buy." This rule is exercised both by direct injunction to buy and by the promotion and stimulus of emulative and snob motivations, which in our society must be largely satisfied through the purchase and display of things.

With the motivations and technique of this rule clearly in mind, we should expect to find a treatment of sex, economics, morals, philosophy, science, etc.—designed to nourish and stimulate the buying motif. We find all of this and more. We find what amounts to a conspiracy of silence regarding all those aspects of the individual and social life that do not contribute to the objective of the advertiser, which is practically identical with that of the magazine itself. That objective is to promote sales and to extend, complicate and consolidate sheer emulative materialism as a way of life. We venture to say that no one who has not attentively examined these magazines inch by inch can conceive the astounding, sterile vacuity of these enormously expensive and enormously read "culture-bearers."

The question that immediately arises is: do these magazines accurately reflect the culture or are they merely trying to inflict a pseu-

doculture on their readers? In a curious way both things are true. It would seem that both the culture as lived and the culture as reflected by the magazines are pseudocultures. Neither in life nor even in the make-believe of the magazine fictioneer does this pseudoculture satisfy anybody. It does not even satisfy the wealthy, who can afford to live according to the snob, acquisitive, emulative pattern. The *reductio ad absurdum* of the theory of a self-sufficient acquisitive culture is found in *Arts & Decoration* which bullies and cajoles the rich into the discharge of their function as the ideal human representatives of a culture which has no content or meaning outside of acquisition and display. In arguing for this way of life a writer in *Arts & Decoration* is reduced to the following remarkable bit of philosophic yea-saying: "Chromium is more expensive than no chromium."

These magazines are designed and edited with a view to making the readers content with this acquisitive culture, but even a commercial fictioneer has to put up a human "front." He has to use models. He has to exhibit, however superficially and shabbily the kind of people who work in American offices and factories and on farms, and who walk the streets of American cities and towns. In so doing he inadvertently and inevitably gives the whole show away. He proves that these robots galvanized by pure emulation are fragile puppets of glass. Mostly the characters are faked. When they are at all convincing they are definitely dissatisfied and unhappy.

This pseudoculture which is both reflected and promoted by the magazines is evidently in a process of conflict and change. In fact it may be said that there are two cultures: the older, more organic American culture, and the new, hard, arid culture of acquisitive emulation pure and simple. These cultures are in perpetual conflict. The emulative culture is what the magazine lives by; the older more human culture is what the reader wistfully desires. However, the magazines can afford to give the reader only a modicum of these warm humanities.

The problem of the editor is essentially similar to that of the advertising copy writer. The purpose of the advertisement is to produce consumers by suitable devices of cajolement and psychological manipulation, in which truth is used only in so far as it is profitable to use truth. But the advertisement must be plausible. It must not destroy the reader-confidence which the copy writer is exploiting.

In the same way the magazine editor may be thought of as producing, in the total editorial and fiction content of the magazine, a kind of advertisement. In this view the advertisement—say in issue of *The Woman's Home Companion*—must have some human plausibility; it must contain some truth, some reality, otherwise the magazine would lose circulation, i.e., reader-confidence. But the editor must

never forget that the serious business of the magazine is the production of customers just as the writer of the individual advertisement must not use either more or less truth and decency than will produce a maximum of sales for his client.

We examined single issues of thirteen representative and large circulation magazines in an attempt to determine the following facts:

1. Does the magazine promote buying, not only in the advertisements, but in the editorial, article, feature and fiction section of the magazine?
2. To what extent do the magazines permit criticism of the acquisitive culture?
3. Since literature, even popular literature, is supposed to reflect a culture, what kind of a culture, judged by the contents of these thirteen magazines, have we got?

The thirteen magazines were chosen with the idea of having as many different types of magazines represented as possible. The attempt was also made to select magazines going to readers who belong to different income classes. Eight of the magazines analyzed have over one million circulation, and constitute over a third of the twenty-one magazines in the United States having circulations of this size. The list of magazines studied is as follows:

#### MAGAZINE STUDY<sup>1</sup>

<i>Name of Magazine</i>	<i>Circulation</i>	<i>Income Level</i>	<i>Type</i>
American Weekly	5,581,000	Low	Illustrated Hearst Sunday supplement.
True Story	1,597,000	Low	Confession magazine.
Household	1,664,000	Low	Woman's magazine; rural type.
Liberty	1,378,000	Medium	White-collar class.
Photoplay	518,000	Medium	Largest circulation movie magazine.
American Magazine	2,162,000	Medium	Small town, small-city magazine.
Woman's Home Companion	2,235,000	Medium	Woman's magazine: urban type.
Cosmopolitan	1,636,000	Medium	Urban magazine: much sex fiction.

<sup>1</sup> American Weekly, issue of Jan. 7, 1934; True Story, Dec. 1933; Household, Nov. 1933; Liberty, Dec. 23, 1933; Photoplay, Jan. 1934; American Magazine, Dec. 1933; Woman's Home Companion, Jan. 1934; Cosmopolitan, Dec. 1933; Saturday Evening Post, Dec. 16, 1933; Harper's Bazaar, Dec. 1933; Harper's Magazine, Jan. 1934; Nation's Business, Nov. 1933; Arts & Decoration, Nov. 1933. Publisher's estimate

<i>Name of Magazine</i>	<i>Circulation</i>	<i>Income Level</i>	<i>Type</i>
Saturday Evening Post	2,295,000	Medium	Greatest advertising medium in the world.
Harper's Bazaar	100,000	High	High style fashions.
Harper's Magazine	111,000	High	High-brow and sophisticated.
Nation's Business	214,000	High	Organ of the Chamber of Commerce of the U.S.
Arts & Decoration	23,000	High	Interior decoration for the rich.

#### FINDINGS:

Our analysis shows that buying is promoted not only in the advertisements but in the fiction, articles, features, and editorials. A *Woman's Home Companion* story mentions a Rolls-Royce eighteen times. *Harper's Bazaar* gives free publicity in its article section to 532 stores and products. The snob appeal, essentially a buying appeal, since successful snobbism depends in the main on the possession of things, appears in 68 per cent of the subject matter of one magazine. To summarize: We find when the percentages for the thirteen magazines are averaged, that 30 per cent of the total space of the magazines is devoted to advertisements, and 13 per cent is devoted to editorial promotion of buying. Hence 43 per cent of the space in these magazines is devoted to commercial advertisements, and what may be called editorial advertisements, combined. We find also that snobbism is a major or minor appeal in 22 per cent of the subject matter of the magazines.

There is a very striking correlation between the amount of space devoted to promoting buying and the amount of space devoted to criticism of the acquisitive culture. The more space a magazine devotes to promoting buying the less space it devotes to instruction, comment or criticism concerning economic and political affairs. Four of the thirteen magazines do not mention depression or recovery at all. Only two magazines, *True Story* and *Liberty*, question the desirability of the capitalist economy. Only two magazines, the *American* and *Nation's Business*, question whether it can be permanently maintained. In summary we find that: (1) No criticism of business appears in any editorial. (2) Some criticism of the acquisitive culture appears in the fiction. (3) Most of the criticism of existing conditions appears in articles and readers' letters. (4) The thirteen magazines devote, on the average, 24 per cent of their editorial and article space to sup-

plying the reader with information about economics, politics, and international affairs. (5) The women's magazines, which rank highest among the thirteen magazines in respect to the editorial promotion of buying, rank very low in regard to comment on economics, politics, and international affairs. They devote, on the average, 27 per cent of their space to editorial promotion of buying, and only 5 per cent of their space to comment on affairs.

The following conclusions about the culture reflected in these magazines may be drawn:

(1) This culture displays a surplus of snobbism, and a deficiency of interest in sex, economics, politics, religion, art, and science.

(2) The United States does not have one homogeneous culture; it has class cultures. Summarizing the findings of this study in relation to class cultures, one may say that the culture of the poor shows a strong bias in the direction of fear and sex, that the culture of the middle-class displays less sense of reality than the culture of the poor or the rich, and a higher degree of sexual frigidity, and that the culture of the rich tends to be emulative and mercenary.

An analysis of 58 fiction heroines in 45 sex fiction stories in the ten magazines containing fiction shows the following differences between the heroines who appear in the magazines of the poor, the middle class, and the rich. In the magazines of the rich, 5 per cent of the heroines are mercenary. In the magazines of the middle class, 56 per cent of the heroines are unawakened or unresponsive women. In the magazines of the poor, 45 per cent of the women can be classified as being sexually responsive. The number of babies appertaining to these fiction heroines also throws interesting light on our class cultures. In magazine fiction as in life the poor women have the largest number of babies. While the 41 fiction heroines of the middle-class magazines produce only three children, the eleven fiction heroines of the magazines of the poor produce nine.

Further distinctions between the classes appear in the statistics on emulation. Emulation is the dominant appeal in the ads of six magazines which go to readers on the upper income levels. In the remaining seven magazines—the magazines of the lower income levels—fear is the dominant appeal. Emulation is also much stronger in the fiction and subject matter of the magazines of the upper income levels; it is, in fact, almost twice as strong as in the magazines of the poor. In the lower income group magazines, 17 per cent of the subject matter has emulation as a major or minor appeal; in the upper income magazines, 31 per cent of the subject matter features emulation.

(3) The acquisitive culture, that is the culture which emphasizes things and snobbism, battles, in the pages of these magazines, with

an older tradition and culture, in which sex, economics, politics, and sentiment play major rÃ¢les. The acquisitive culture is dominant in five magazines, the older culture in four magazines, while in the remaining four magazines, the two cultures co-exist side by side. One may say, in summary, that the acquisitive culture cannot stand on its own feet. It does not satisfy. Except in the fashion magazines, and in some of the women's magazines, it has to be offered to the reader with a considerable admixture of the older traditional humanities.

(4) Correlating our various statistical findings, we note that the acquisitive culture is not accessible to the majority of Americans; also that it is not popular with the majority of Americans. The American population apparently has a sturdy realism which the magazine editors are forced to recognize. They do not want to spend their time reading fairy tales about the lives of the rich. What they prefer, is to read about heroes and heroines who are exactly one rung above them on the economic and social ladder, a rung of the ladder to which they themselves, by dint of luck, accident, or hard work, may hope to climb to.

It would appear that the acquisitive culture reflected in these magazines is a luxury product designed for women and the rich. The focus upon women is because of their position as buyers for the family. The success of the emulative sales promoting technique as applied to middle-class women would appear to rest upon the fact that these women are restless, that they suffer from unsatisfied romanticism, and that, in many cases, they probably suffer also from unhappiness in their marital relations. This is perhaps the most significant finding of the study and we believe the reader will find it amply supported by the detailed evidence adduced in the succeeding chapters.

## II. CHROMIUM IS MORE EXPENSIVE

Culture is, by definition, the sum total of the human environment to which any individual is exposed and the test of a culture, or civilization, in terms of values is what kind of a life it affords, not for a few but for all of its citizens.

The term culture, as used by anthropologists, ethnologists, and social scientists generally, does not, of course, coincide with the use of the word among the American working-classes, for whom it constitutes a description of the middle-class culture to which they so devoutly aspire. *True Story Magazine*, the favorite magazine of the proletariat, circulation 1,597,000, has a story about a poor boy, who marries a banker's daughter and makes good. On first being introduced into the banker's house he says: "It was my first experience in a home, where *culture*, ease and breeding were a part of everyday

life." *Household Magazine*, circulation 2,006,000, which is read by farm and small town women, has a page of advice to girls, conducted by Gladys Carroll Hastings, author of *As the Earth Turns*. Miss Hastings describes how a daughter of the rich is forced because of the depression to live on a farm and to do her own work. Miss Hastings says: "I choose not to stress how tired she was each night ... how she longed for the ease and *culture* of other associations, how little her few neighbors satisfied her."

### CLASS CULTURES

The popular and proletarian use of the word "culture" points to a significant fact; the fact that, contrary to popular pre-war conceptions, we do have classes in the United States, and that any examination of our present American culture will, of necessity, break up into an examination of a number of class cultures.

Two problems face the would-be examiner of contemporary American culture. The first is to ascertain how many classes there are and the second is to find a measuring stick for the culture of each of these different classes. Both are nice problems.

It is noteworthy that there are no names, used in ordinary speech to characterize social classes, unless "racketeer" and "sucker" can be considered to be in this category. In which case we have not the Marxian antithesis of the workers *versus* the bosses, but the strictly American antithesis of suckers *versus* racketeers, complicated by the fact that most Americans are racketeers and suckers at one and the same time. Workers refer to themselves as "the working-class of people," executives discuss the white-collar class, ad-men refer to mass and class publications, fashion analysts study the high, medium, popular, and low style woman. Common speech is of little help in differentiating such social classes as we have, nor are the professional social scientists very useful. With the exception of Veblen's books and of the magnificent study *Middletown* made by the Lynds in 1927, which describes minutely the culture of the working and business classes of a typical American city, the social scientists have added very little of any importance to what we know about the stratification of the American population and about American culture.<sup>2</sup>

The most valuable sources of information we have about the economic and cultural levels of the American population are such government statistics as the Army intelligence tests and income-tax returns, and the unpublished studies of consumer behavior on file in magazine offices and in advertising agencies. One of the best of these studies is the work of Daniel Starch. This study divides American families into income groups, computed in multiples of one-thousand

<sup>2</sup> [Robert S. Lynd and Helen Merrell Lynd, *Middletown: A Study in Contemporary American Culture* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1929).]

dollars. Since this chapter expects to lean somewhat on Mr. Starch's researches, it will for the sake of brevity divide Americans into three economic classes, each of which proves on examination to have a fairly distinct cultural pattern. Without bothering about exact names for these classes, since no idiomatic or exact names exist, we may refer to them briefly as the rich, the middle class and the poor.

The poor, those having incomes of less than \$2,000 a year, constituted in 1925, seventy-seven per cent of the population. Most of them live below the minimum comfort level. The richest members of this class can afford a minimum health and decency standard of living; the poorer members of this class cannot. During our most prosperous years, from 1922 to 1929, the majority of Americans were living on less than 70 per cent of the minimum health and decency budgets worked out by the United States Government bureaus. Lifelong economic security is rare. This class is not of much interest to advertisers or editors. The Daniel Starch studies show that only 34 per cent of the circulation of twenty women's magazines goes to this group.

The middle class, those having incomes between \$2,000 and \$5,000 a year can afford comforts. Severe ill-health or prolonged depression periods, to mention only two of the most important causes, can ruin the economic security of middle-class families. Nevertheless, it may be said that lifelong economic security is within the grasp of some of the more fortunate and thrifty members of this class.

The rich, those having incomes of over \$5,000 a year, are the class that pays income taxes. Even the poorest enjoy comforts and a few luxuries. With the richer members of this class, economic security becomes a possibility, and is, in a considerable percentage of cases, attained.

There remains the problem of finding a measuring stick with which to measure the culture of these three classes; the poor, the middle class, and the rich. Culture has many aspects; it is necessary within the space of this book to select one of these aspects. Clark Wissler, the well-known anthropologist, says in his book *Man and Culture*: "The study of culture has come to be regarded more and more, in recent decades, as the study of modes of thought, and of tradition, as well as of modes of action or customs."<sup>3</sup> It is the modes of thought that concern us in this chapter. It is more difficult to find out what people are thinking than to discover what they are doing, but it is also more fascinating.

<sup>3</sup> [Clark Wissler, *Man and Culture* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1923), chap. 1.]

#### THE MAGAZINE MEASURING-STICK

The public's response to an art offers, perhaps, the best clue as to what is going on in people's minds. There are, as it happens, three

popular arts in the United States, which are enjoyed to some extent by all classes; they are the press, the talkies and the radio. The talkies probably have most influence, but the press is for obvious reasons easier to examine and measure; it is a better statistical foil. Moreover, in our magazine-press, in which each magazine is to some extent aimed at a particular class of readers, our class culture is more accurately reflected than in either the talkies or in radio programs.

The only serious drawback to using the magazine-press as a measuring stick for the culture of our three arbitrarily selected classes is that a considerable section of the wage-earning class, who constitute over 75 per cent of the population, do not read magazines very much because they cannot afford them. Mr. Starch's studies show that the most popular magazine of the rich, *The Saturday Evening Post*, is read by 67 per cent of all the families having over \$5,000 a year, while *True Story*, the most popular magazine among the proletariat, is read by only 14 per cent of all the families having under \$2,000 a year. Of the 14 per cent who read *True Story*, over two-thirds have incomes of \$1,000 to \$2,000 a year, while approximately one-third have incomes of \$1,000 a year, or less.

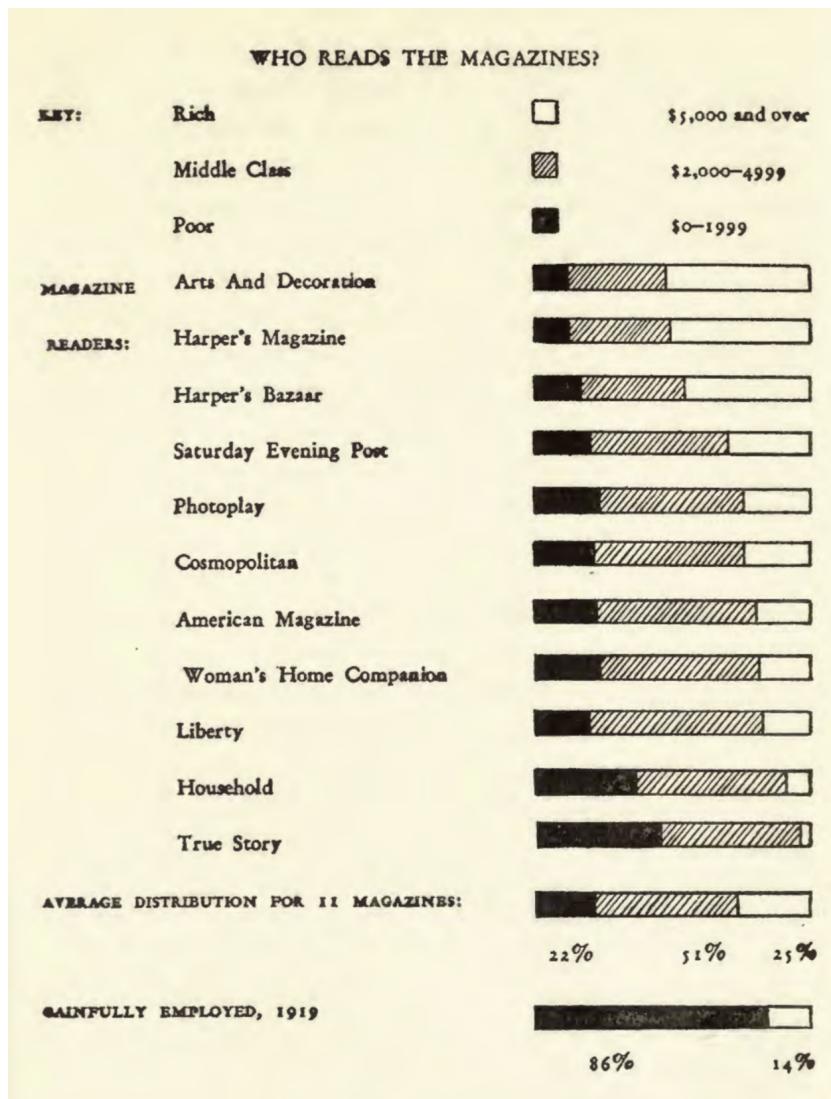
The extent to which the magazines do and do not reflect the culture of any specific economic class is shown in the following chart, based on Mr. Starch's figures. The reader will observe that all of the magazines cited have circulations in all three economic classes, and that most of the circulation lies in the middle-class group. To find magazines which represent the rich as *versus* the middle class, it is necessary to seek examples among the so-called class magazines. On this chart, three magazines; *Harper's Bazaar*, *Harper's Magazine*, and *Arts & Decoration*, belong to the class magazine group. Each of these magazines has over 45 per cent of its circulation among the rich. In order to strengthen our sample of magazines catering to the rich, another class magazine, *Nation's Business*, has been added to the list of magazines to be studied.

#### WHO READS THE MAGAZINES?

The number of magazines which might be said to appeal in the main to the poor, and which also have large circulations, is disappointingly small. Only two magazines, *True Story*, which is proletarian in flavor, and *Household*, which is not, have over one-third of their readers among the poor. In seeking to fortify the number of magazines which might be expected to reflect the culture of the poor, two magazines were added to the list; *The American Weekly*, the illustrated Hearst Sunday supplement, which has one of the largest circulations of any periodical in the country, and *Photoplay*, the largest circulation movie

magazine. Examination proved however that *Photoplay* is probably to be considered as a middle-class magazine.

It might be noted in passing that, in the main, the poor have no press. We have discovered no large circulation magazine which has over 45 per cent of its circulation among the poor. One suspects that magazines like *True Story* cater to the one-tenth of the working-class consisting of organized and skilled workers who can afford some comforts. One suspects further that the other nine-tenths of the wage as *versus* salary earners, although they may read the magazines, have, strictly speaking, no large circulation press at all.



### THE EDITOR-READER RELATION

The advertising business has frequently been defined in this book as consisting of the newspaper and magazine press, the radio, the advertising agencies, and a considerable section of the talkie, paper, and printing industries. To the magazine editor and the ad-man a magazine consists of two parts: advertisements and filler. The filler is designed to carry the advertisements. With rare exceptions, no way has so far been discovered of getting the public to pay for advertisements presented without filler. Hence the filler.

This strictly commercial point of view of the magazine editor, the circulation manager, and the ad-man is not the reader's point of view. The reader thinks of a magazine in terms of fiction, articles, features, editorials, and advertisements. While he seldom buys the magazine for the ads, he may enjoy certain ads even more than he enjoys the contents of the periodical. In addition to hunting out the particular things in the magazine which appeal to him as an individual, or which he hopes to find tolerably palatable, he is more or (less aware of the personality of the magazine. Its slant on things is as well known to him as the slant of a family friend, and although he may not agree with the slant, he enjoys savoring of it. From the reader's point of view, therefore, one can add at least one more category to the commercial categories of the editor and ad-man. One can say that the magazine consists not only of advertisements and filler, but that it also has an editorial element, that there is in fact, in most cases, a certain editor-reader relation, which the reader is quite cognizant of.

That the editor-reader relation, just referred to, exists not only in the mind of the reader, but in the mind of the editor as well, is shown by the following statement made by Gertrude B. Lane, assistant editor of *Woman's Home Companion*. In a memorandum stating her objections to the Tugwell Bill, Miss Lane says:

"I admit quite frankly that my selfish interests are involved. I have spent thirty years of my life building up a magazine which I have tried to make of *real service to the women of America*, and I have invested all my savings in the company which publishes this magazine. The magazine business and the newspapers, rightly or wrongly, have been made possible through national advertising. Great industries have been developed and millions of people employed."

Miss Lane's angle is interesting. Is advertising perhaps the culture, the swamp-muck, if you will, that exists to nourish this lily of service? If Miss Lane is correct, the question that will interest the magazine reader is not how thick is the muck, but how tall and fragrant is the lily? An examination of the January, 1934, issue of *Woman's Home Companion* will perhaps answer this question.

### SERVICE VERSUS SELLING

In looking for the service-angle suggested by Miss Lane, the writers felt that a correct estimate of the amount of service rendered the reader could perhaps best be found in editorials and articles, rather than in the fiction. Fiction was also considered in relation to service, and the results will be referred to later in this chapter. The concentration on editorials and articles proved, however, to offer the most useful index of service. The issue of the *Woman's Home Companion* examined contained in its editorials and articles three items which could be listed under this head.

Item I. Article "What Mothers Want To Know" (5.5 inches). The writer, a physician, starts out by saying: "I wonder if we city doctors write about the things that mothers want to know. At least sixty per cent of the mothers' letters received by *Woman's Home Companion* come from small cities, towns, or rural communities, which have practically no modern facilities, no hospitals or clinics for babies, well or sick, no pediatricians. Many of the letters are pathetic."

Item II. Editorial "The Mighty Effort" (8 inches). This editorial urges Americans to support President Roosevelt's program. The dangers of this program can, in the opinion of the editors be avoided, "if the true American spirit prevails." The true American spirit consists in moderation. Owen D. Young is quoted as saying: "We must watch them that threaten us, both from inaction and over-action, not that we may punish them, but that we may prevent them from ruining us and themselves as well. It is unnecessary for producers to unite into a trust ... it is unnecessary for labor to unite in unions ... it is unnecessary for consumers to unite in such a way as to threaten savings and labor employed in production."

Item III. Letter. Signed, C. R. J., Oregon, entitled by the editors, "Sensible Protest Against Frills" (8.5 inches). Criticizes the home economics classes attended by country and small town children, in which the pupils are taught: "How to give orders to a maid and butler ... to put fancy frills on a chop bone, and to cook steaks." The writer notes that most of the parents of these children afford steaks and chops very rarely, and makes sensible suggestions as to what a home economics course for country children should contain.

Of the 1,404 inches devoted to editorials and articles, 22 inches, or about two-thirds of a page, is devoted to service. But the lily of service which raises its pure head in a naughty world should not be measured in inches or percentages alone. What does the two-thirds of a page devoted to service in the *Woman's Home Companion* net the reader? A reader makes a sensible statement, so sensible that one concludes that it might be an excellent thing for editors to turn over their editorial space to their shrewder readers. As far as the editors are concerned they have only two things to say to the reader.

First: In a general editorial about recovery, they point out to their readers, who are consumers, that "it is unnecessary for consumers to unite in such a way as to threaten savings and labor employed in production." In suggesting that its readers do not become politically active as consumers, the *Companion* would seem to be serving its own interests rather than those of its readers. Second: They promise in the future to help the women living in small towns with their maternity problems. Excellent as this is, a promise of service does not constitute a service. If the *Woman's Home Companion* fulfills its promise, this fulfillment will constitute a genuine service to the reader.

Examination of the other twelve magazines selected for study is somewhat more reassuring than examination of the *Woman's Home Companion*. The service element of the other magazines as measured by the editorials and articles ranges as high as 88 or 79 per cent in contrast with the *Woman's Home Companion*'s 1.5 per cent. The complete list of space devoted to service is as follows: *Saturday Evening Post*, 88 per cent; *Nation's Business*, 79 per cent; *American Magazine*, 41 per cent; *Harper's Magazine*, 37 per cent; *Cosmopolitan*, 28 per cent; *Liberty*, 24 per cent; *True Story*, 16 per cent; *Household Magazine*, 11 per cent; *Harper's Bazaar*, 2 per cent; *Woman's Home Companion*, 1.5 per cent; *American Weekly*, .7 per cent; *Photoplay*, 0; *Arts & Decoration*, 0.

#### SERVICE AS SOPHISTICATION

To make sure that we are doing justice to the *Woman's Home Companion*, it might be well to state at this point what items the writers have considered to have a service angle. An examination of the thirteen selected magazines caused the writers to re-define service as sophistication, and specifically sophistication about economic and political affairs. Four kinds of items were included under Sophistication:

1. Any reference to recovery or depression was considered to constitute sophistication, since it may be considered an index of interest in reality as opposed to fantasy.
2. Any recognition that an economic or political situation was complex rather than simple was also considered to constitute sophistication. A mention of three or four factors in a situation rather than one or two was considered to be complex as opposed to simple.
3. Any facts which did not bear directly on the financial or emulative interest of the specific class of readers to whom the magazine is addressed, were considered to constitute sophistication. Note: Only two or three examples were found.
4. Any criticism or satire of our contemporary culture and society which might be considered to apply not to a specific institution

but to the society as a whole.

The standards set up as sophistication are not high. Any truly sophisticated presentation of an economic or political situation would usually have to cover more than three or four factors in the situation. Many of the articles in the *Saturday Evening Post*, *Nation's Business*, and in such magazines as the *Nation*, *New Republic*, and *Fortune*, rate well above this three-or-four-factors-in-a-situation level. It has been the effort of the writers to include under sophistication everything which could possibly be included under this category. Most if not all of the rays of hope, inspiration or comfort extended to the readers by the editors it has been possible to pick up under one of the four categories used.

When the results of the sophistication survey are averaged, it is found that the average magazine devotes 24.4 per cent of its editorial and article space to making the contemporary economic and political world which so notably affects the destinies of its readers somewhat comprehensible. The amount of sophistication is clearly one of the important elements in the editor-reader relation of the magazine. The extent to which the sophistication element in each of the magazines studied has vitality or sincerity, will be considered when the contents of individual magazines are described.

The sophistication survey shows one notable fact; that magazines specifically for women are low in respect to sophistication. Remembering that 24.4 per cent is the sophistication average for thirteen magazines, consider the degree of sophistication of the following magazines catering mainly to women: *Household Magazine*, 11 per cent; *Harper's Bazaar*, 2 per cent; *Woman's Home Companion*, 1.5 per cent; *Photoplay*, 0; and *Arts & Decoration*, 0. *Harper's Bazaar*, a fashion magazine; *Photoplay*, a movie magazine; and *Arts & Decoration*, an interior decoration magazine, are, of course, specialized magazines, with no interest in economics or politics. Nevertheless, the line-up seems to have some significance. Contrast the women's magazine sophistication record, for example, with the sophistication record of the magazines which have an exclusive or heavy male readership; *Saturday Evening Post*, 88 per cent; *Nation's Business*, 79 per cent; and the *American Magazine*, 41 per cent. The claim that the contents of women's magazines reflect the provincialism and low intellectual status of women was made in an article in the December, 13, 1933, issue of the *New Republic*. This article provoked a spirited rebuttal from no less a person than Carolyn B. Ulrich, Chief of the Periodicals Division of the New York Public Library, New York City. Miss Ulrich says, among other things:

"Who are the owners and editors of women's magazines? You will find that men predominate in the executive offices and on their editorial staffs. Would it not appear that we are still bound to what men think desirable? Is that what most women want? And are not these magazines really mediums for salesmanship, almost trade journals? Of the first importance in these magazines is the advertising. The subject matter comes second. The advertisements pay for the producing of the magazine. The subject matter, aside from a few sentimental stories, covers those interests that belong to woman's sphere. *There, also, the purpose is to foster buying* for the home and child. The entire plan of these magazines is based on the man's interest in its commercial success."

#### PERVERSION OF EDITOR-READER RELATION

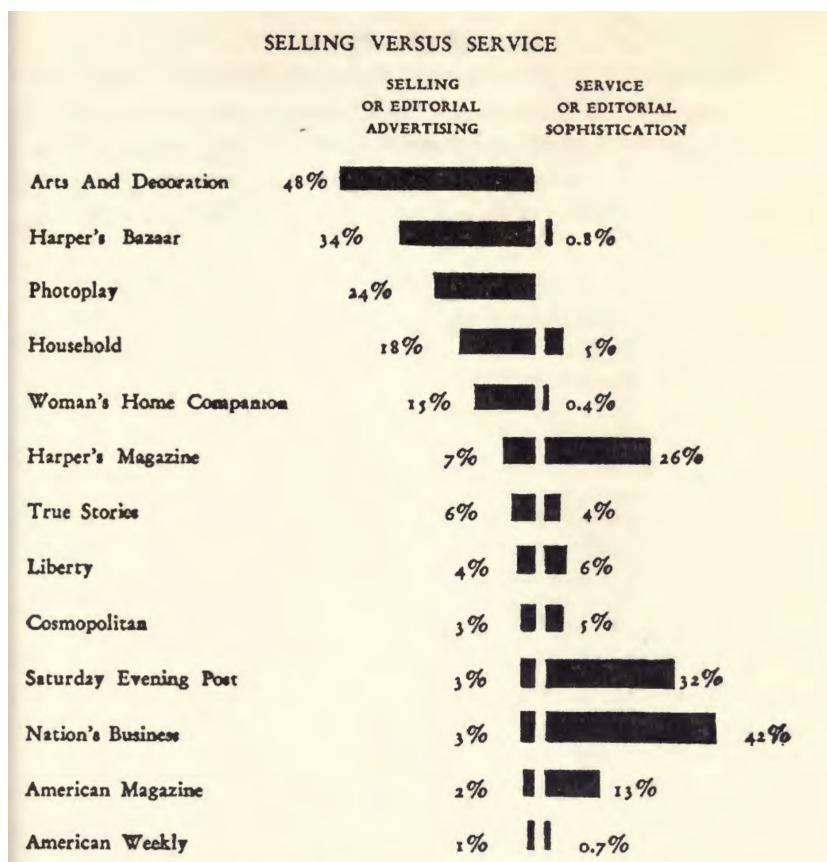
In one of Miss Ulrich's sentences, we find the clue to the nature and character of our present women's magazines. Miss Ulrich says: "The subject matter ... stories aside, covers those interests that belong to woman's sphere. There, also, the purpose is to foster buying." Miss Ulrich is correct. If the contents of the women's magazines are examined, it will be found that the editors devote from 48 to 15 per cent of the total contents of the magazine to ballyhooing certain classes of products or specifically named products; in short, to peddling something over the counter, just as advertisements do. The five magazines catering mainly to women, which rank very much below the average in respect to sophistication, rank highest in respect to the amount of editorial space devoted to salesmanship. The proportion of the total space in the women's magazines devoted to editorial advertising is as follows: *Arts & Decoration*, 48 per cent; *Harper's Bazaar*, 34 per cent; *Photoplay*, 24 per cent; *Household*, 18 per cent; *Woman's Home Companion*, 15 per cent. *Harper's Bazaar* devotes 26 of its non-advertising pages to mentioning the names of 523 stores and products.

The nature and character of our women's magazines becomes clear if one realizes that in these magazines the editor-reader relation has been perverted. Where this relation has vitality and sincerity, the readers get from the magazine something not wholly commercial. They do not merely get enough filler or entertainment to make them swallow the advertising; they are given something definite and humanly valuable, a friendly relation to the editor, who is or should be, from the reader's point of view, a person whose specific job it is to know more about affairs in general than the reader can take time to know. An editor's analysis of a situation, his judgment about it, have some weight with the reader, just as a friend's analysis of a situation and judgment about it have. However, where the editor-reader relation is perverted, as in the women's magazines, the editor does not give the reader something; he takes something away from the

reader. It is a case of the right hand giveth and the left hand taketh away. The left hand of the editor takes away from the reader part of the non-advertising or subject matter space of the magazine which is presumably what the reader pays for, and devotes it to editorial advertising. The right hand of the editor gives the reader something humanly valuable; sophistication. In the five magazines catering primarily to women, as the accompanying chart shows, the editorial left hand, the hand which takes, is the active hand.

#### EDITORIAL ADVERTISING

Editorial advertising in the accompanying chart includes three categories. In the order of their importance, that is, in the order of the amount of space devoted to them, they are as follows:



- Item 1: Pushing of advertised products.
- Item 2: Pushing of sales of, or subscriptions to the magazine.
- Item 3: Editorials or articles, pushing buying in general, or pushing the buying of certain classes of products, which may or may

not appear in the magazine's advertisements.

Of the total space of the thirteen magazines, 10.9 per cent is, on the average, devoted to pushing products; 2.6 per cent is devoted to pushing the magazine; and one per cent to pushing buying generally. House ads, pushing the sale of the magazine are familiar, and hardly need illustration. The pushing of advertised products is also more or less familiar. A few examples will probably suffice:

#### *Artificial Skills*

"I sometimes think the women of today aren't sufficiently thankful for or appreciative of the fabric marvels which are theirs.... As a miracle, for instance, doesn't artificial silk answer every requirement of the word?" (*True Story*: "Sheer Fabrics That Would Make Cleopatra Jealous.")

#### *Oil Heater*

"Where lack of a basement makes installation of the usual type of cellar plant impossible ... there are heat cabinets available.... With one of these oil heaters in a room, the old fire-building, stove-nursing, ash-carrying, half-warmed days are over." (*True Story*: "Is Your Home Old-Fashioned in Its Heating Apparatus?")

#### *Canned Meats*

"In looking around to see just what I could discover in canned meats and chickens, I found great variations in the size of their containers." (*Household Magazine*: "A Short Cut to Meats—The Can-Opener.")

#### *Condensed Milk*

"She (my grandmother) tried cow's milk, the best she could obtain, but without any improvement. In desperation she finally tried a spoonful of the new condensed milk, a recent invention that a newcomer in the gold camp had brought from the East. The baby loved it." (*True Story*: "From My Grandmother's Diary.")

#### *Electric Lamps*

"She spent many months of patient searching for just the right lamps at just the right prices. Lamps that would give the perfect angle of light ...." (*Woman's Home Companion*: "A Healthful Luxury.")

#### *Hotels*

"No place in the world has such sparkle as New York at this time of year. Come for the fun of shopping ... to see the new ballets ... to enjoy the restaurant life of these new days of the wine list .... For help in choosing your hotel, write to the Travel Bureau." (*Harper's Bazaar*: "New York at Christmas.")

### *Tea Table Accessories*

"All of our social existence is tied up in a few familiar rituals. A hostess is known by her tea tables and dinner tables. Marriages and births and political victories and personal achievements are celebrated there.... Occasionally something definite and permanent arises phoenix-like from a passing mode. Lines that appeared as startling innovations on the tea tray of some smart hostess gradually become familiar in decorative treatment and in architecture. So a new style is created." (*Arts & Decoration: A Portfolio of Modern Accessories.*)

Somewhat more subtle and interesting are editorials and advertisements pushing buying generally, or the buying of certain classes of products.

### *"A Call to Colors for the American Male"*

"The pioneering hard-fisted, hard-boiled American Male will cheer campaign speeches on the benefits of rugged individualism and whistle laissez faire, whenever he has to keep up his courage in a financial crisis. He will grow turgidly eloquent on the benefits both to himself and society of doing just as he sees fit when and if he pleases. He will battle to his last breath against any code prescribing a uniform way of running his business, auditing his accounts, educating his children or divorcing his wives. Any form of regulation is to him a symptom of Bolshevik tyranny. But the one moment when he is terrified of freedom is when he buys his clothes. *He is more afraid of wearing a bright orange necktie to his office than of carrying a red flag in a communist parade*" (*Harper's Bazaar.*)

### *"Bare Without Jewels"*

"To the great dressmakers and to the women who make fashion a matter for prayer and meditation, and especially to foreign women, we Americans are as incomplete as the vermillionless painting.... Lean back in a stall in Covent Garden on a Ballets Russe night and compare the jewels you see with those worn at the average American soiree. Foreigners cannot understand our modesty in this regard. How extraordinary, they say, that you Americans who have money are content with the small bracelet, the one string of pearls, the nice ring or two....

These simple molded gowns of black or jewel colored velvets, these dark green sheaths, these brilliant columns of stiff white satin crave the barbaric fire of emeralds, diamonds, rubies.... For the last twenty years we have been genteel and timid about jewelry. It was not always thus. Let those who feel shocked by this modern splendor remember that their aristocratic grandmamas blazed with dog collars and tiaras. *And who are we to say that the Queen of Sheba was not a lady?"* (*Harper's Bazaar.*)

*"Contempora"*

"A contemporary chair or service plate can range as far in cost and beauty as those of Louis the XIVth or any other period. *Chromium is more expensive than no chromium, beveled glass is more expensive than glass that is not beveled.*" (And a vote for Wintergreen is a vote for Wintergreen.) *Arts & Decoration.*

Perhaps it is because editorial advertising is newer than pure advertising that the tone of editorial advertising is often so brash. In *Arts & Decoration*, the magazine which has the highest percentage of editorial advertising, the situation has gone so far that the strident voice of salesmanship concentrates in the subject matter, while the advertisements are comparatively dignified and serene.

The editor-reader relation is the vital core of the magazine. The study of thirteen magazines shows that this relation has its credit and debit side; that it is at once an Angel Gabriel and a Lucifer. In short, it is a most human relation, in which the itchiness of the editor, eager to attract more advertising and revenue, competes with his desire to be humanly useful.

No description of the magazines would be complete without a reference to the advertisements, which in contradistinction to the editorial advertisements, are openly and unhypocritically concerned with selling. Our statistics show that on the average 30.6 per cent, or a little less than a third of the magazine is devoted to straight advertising, while on the average 43.5 per cent, or a little over two-fifths of the magazine, is devoted to straight advertising and editorial advertising combined. This 43.5 per cent is the Selling-end of the magazine. The other 54.6 per cent is devoted to what is generally known as filler and what for the purposes of this study we have defined as Sophistication and Entertainment.

## MAJOR ADVERTISING APPEALS: FEAR, SEX, AND EMULATION

It is perhaps worth noting that the five magazines catering mainly to women rank highest not only in respect to the proportion of space in the total contents of the magazine devoted to editorial advertising, but also in the proportion of space devoted to selling. The amount of space devoted to selling averages 43 per cent in the thirteen magazines and 62 per cent in the case of the five women's magazines.

Advertisements are, to the student of a culture, one of the most revealing sections of the magazine. A great many studies of advertising have been made. First, they reflect, as in a mirror, the material culture of a people. Second, they throw light on economic levels and class stratification. With the material culture of the United States we are not, in this chapter, primarily concerned. The extent to which ad-

vertisements reflect class stratifications has already been mentioned, and will be referred to again in more detail. For the moment, we shall limit ourselves to asking one question: To what extent do the advertisements in these thirteen magazines give the reader useful information about the product? The success of the magazine, *Ballyhoo*, and its imitators, showed that many people found some ads absurd, and perhaps annoying, and that they were glad to have them kidded. Not all advertising, however, is of this character. The question is what proportion of the ads are useful, and what proportion are natural material for satire?

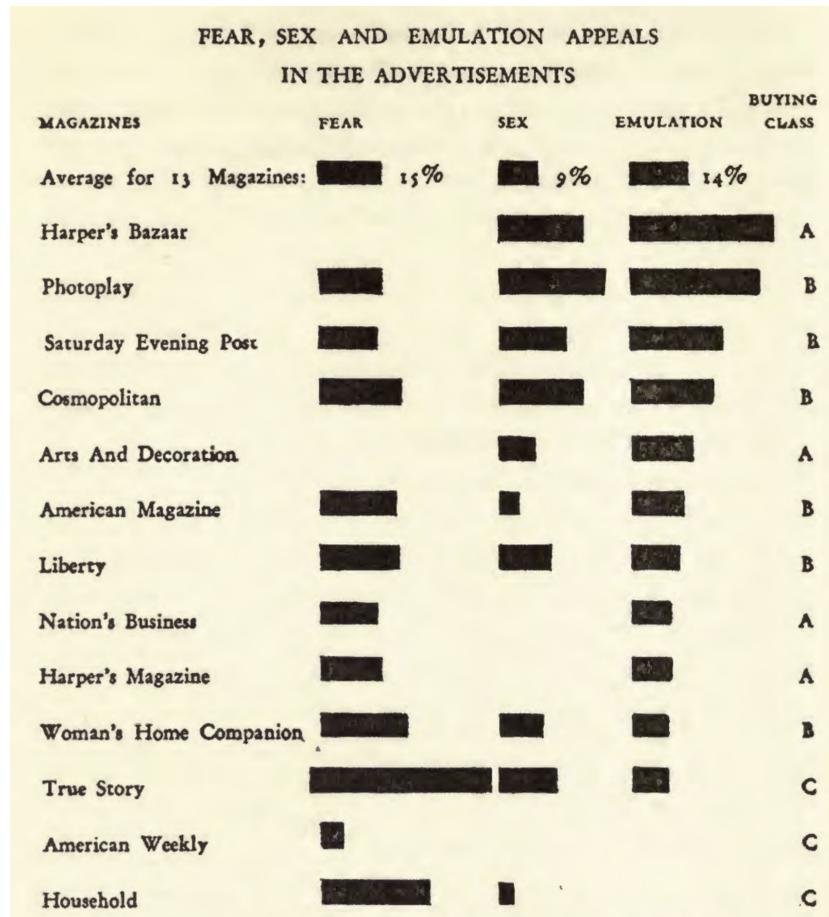
It was necessary to find a simple measuring stick. An analysis of the advertisements showed that they appealed to many different instincts on the part of the reader, to fear, to sex, to emulation, to the desire to make money, the desire to save money, and so forth. Moreover, a single advertisement often combines several appeals. It soon became apparent that the three major appeals of the ads, those that appeared most frequently, were fear, sex, and emulation. It was therefore decided to break up the ads into two categories: 1) those that unmistakably contained one of these three appeals, regardless of what other appeals the individual ad might also contain; 2) ads which did not contain one of these three appeals, and which were called straight ads. In the main, it might be said that the straight ads contain more description of the product than the fear-sex-or-emulation ads. This latter type of ad is more concerned with creating atmosphere than with describing the product.

What the writers mean by advertisements appealing to the instincts of fear or sex hardly requires explanation. Emulation, however, needs to be defined. As used in this chapter, emulation is equivalent to snobbism, it is the keeping-up-with-the-Joneses motif, the desire on the part of the individual to prove to his neighbors that his social status is enviable. In short, it is a particular form of competitiveness, relating not to personal charm or financial rating, but simply and strictly to success in maintaining or achieving social status.

An examination of the ads showed that, on the average, 39 per cent of the ads are fear-sex-and-emulation ads, while 61 per cent are straight ads. The minimum percentage of fear-sex-and-emulation ads was 6 per cent; the maximum, 66 per cent. Three out of the four magazines that reflect the culture of the rich, the Class "A" magazines, were low in respect to fear-sex-and-emulation ads. The statistics are as follows: *Harper's Bazaar*, 57 per cent; *Nation's Business*, 28 per cent; *Arts & Decoration*, 23 per cent; and *Harper's Magazine*, 17 per cent. No equally clear correlation appears in regard to the magazines which rank high in respect to fearsex-and-emulation appeals.

Nevertheless, it may perhaps be said that a low percentage of fear-sex-and-emulation ads is characteristic of the Class "A" magazines. This correlation may perhaps to some extent reflect the sophistication of this class; what it probably reflects in the main is the good manners of the rich; the desire for good tone, as *versus* vulgarity or stridency.

A further correlation between the fear-sex-and-emulation ads and class stratification appears, when we consider the percentage of advertising space devoted to each one of these three appeals in the various magazines. The appeal to fear predominates in seven magazines, which are, generally speaking, the magazines of the lower income-levels, while the appeal to emulation predominates in six magazines of the upper income-levels. In no magazine is the appeal to sex dominant over the appeal to fear or to emulation. The following graph shows not only what percentage of the total advertising space is devoted to appeals to fear, sex, and emulation, but which is the dominant appeal in each magazine.



A little reflection shows that the dominance of the fear appeal in the magazines of the lower income-levels and the dominance of emulation in the magazines of the upper income-levels is quite natural. The poor cannot afford emulation; the rich can. Moreover, the poor are used to fear and insecurity, with them the reference to fear is not an alien thing. As is the case with primitive peoples, they live surrounded by fears.

The fact that sex proves in the advertisements of these typical American magazines to be less powerful as an appeal than either fear or emulation is interesting. One grants easily, without being able to prove it, that fear is probably a stronger motivation than sex, in all societies. The question remains whether emulation is in all societies a stronger motive than sex, or whether it is merely in American society that emulation is a powerful motivation, while sex is a weak motivation.

Before leaving the discussion of the ads to consider the section of the magazines devoted to what we choose to call Entertainment, it may be in point to make a few concluding but scattering comments concerning advertisements.

First: We have seen that the majority of the ads, 61 per cent, are straight ads, dealing in the main with the product, rather than fear-sex-or-emulation ads, which are interested mainly in creating emotion or atmosphere. A qualifying note is necessary at this point. It would be inaccurate to assume that 61 per cent of the ads devote themselves mainly to describing the product. The majority of these ads devote more space to describing the effect upon the buyer of using the product than to describing the product itself. Very elaborate statistical work would have been necessary to document this observation, and because of the difficulties involved, no work of this character was done.

Second: With two exceptions, advertisements of products that appear in the magazines of the rich, the middle classes and the poor, tend to be the same; that is, to have the same words and copy, the assumption of the ad-men being that we Americans are all brothers and sisters under the skin. Of the two conspicuous exceptions, one has already been noted, namely: the fact that fear appeals predominate in the lower income-brackets, while emulation appeals dominate in the upper income-brackets. The other exception is that the fear appeals in the lower income-brackets are somewhat cruder than the fear appeals in the upper income-brackets. Specifically, there is more appeal to fear of parents for the safety and well-being of their children. Illnesses and discomforts from which both adults and children may suffer are in many instances embellished with photographs of wan, reproachful children.

1. "Mother, Why Am I so Sore and Uncomfortable?" (Waldorf Toilet Tissue ad in *True Story*.)
2. "Scolded For Mistakes That Father and Mother Made." (Postum General Foods ad in *Household Magazine*.)
3. "And Don't Go Near Betty Ann—She's a Colds-Susceptible." (Vick's ad in *Women's Home Companion*.)

Third: An examination of the advertising and also of the editorial contents of the magazines shows that the commercial interests back of the magazines treat women and the poor with scant respect, while men and the rich have a somewhat better rating.

### III. THE AD-MAN'S PSEUDOCULTURE

It is perhaps desirable once more to say what we mean by the ad-man and what we mean by the pseudoculture. We have tried to show in the preceding chapter that the commercial American magazines are essentially advertising businesses. Hence the editors of these magazines may be, with some minor qualification, correctly characterized as advertising people motivated by considerations of profit.

But a society does not and cannot live solely by acquisitive and profit-motivations. If this were possible the joint enterprise of the advertising writer and the commercial magazine editor, which is, by and large, to promote and construct a purely acquisitive culture, would be a stable and successful enterprise.

It is nothing of the sort. Frankly the writers started with a pessimistic hypothesis, viz.: that the acquisitive-emulative cultural formula had so debauched the American people that they really liked and approved this formula as worked out by the mass and class magazines. The writers expected on examining the magazines to find the acquisitive culture dominant in all of them, and to find that in the majority of cases this culture existed undiluted by any admixture of the older, traditional American culture. If they had found what they expected to find, they would have been obliged to accept the conclusion that the ad-man's acquisitive-emulative culture is an organic thing, something capable of sustaining human life. The findings did not show this. On the contrary, they showed beyond the possibility of a doubt that the acquisitive culture cannot stand on its own feet, that it does not satisfy, that it is, in fact, merely a pseudoculture.

The magazines live by the promotion of acquisitive and emulative motivations but in order to make the enterprise in the least tolerable or acceptable to their readers it is necessary to mix with this emulative culture, the ingredients, in varying proportions, of the older American culture in which sex, sophistication, sentiment, the arts,

sciences, etc., play major roles. Only three of the thirteen magazines examined are able to build and hold a circulation on the basis of an editorial content consisting solely of acquisitive and emulative appeals. All of these three are in one way or another special cases. *Arts & Decoration*, *Harper's Bazaar*, and *Photoplay* are all three essentially parasitic fashion magazines. The first two are enterprises in the exploitation of the rich, who constitute over 50 per cent of their circulation. *Photoplay*, a middle class gossip and fashion sheet, is, by and large, simply a collection agent for the acquisitive and emulative wants built up by the movies which, as we have seen, function predominantly as a want-building institution in the American culture.

In other words the business of publishing commercial magazines is a parasitic industry. The ad-man's pseudoculture parasites on the older, more organic culture, just as the advertising business is itself a form of economic parasitism; in Veblen's language, it represents one of the ways in which profit-motivated business "conscientiously withdraws efficiency from the productivity of industry," this "conscientious sabotage" being necessary to prevent the disruptive force of applied science from shattering the chains of the profit system.<sup>4</sup> It is, we feel, important to note that this phenomenon of parasitism or sabotage extends not merely to the economy considered as a mechanism of production and distribution but to the culture considered as a system of values and motivations by which people live.

But the American people do not like this pseudoculture, cannot live by it, and, indeed, never have lived by it. The magazines analyzed, which were published during this the fifth year of a depression, show that fiction writers, sensitive to public opinion, often definitely repudiate this culture. Americans tend, at the moment, if the magazine culture can be considered to be a mirror of popular feeling, to look, not forward into the future, but backward into the past. They are trying to discover by what virtues, by what pattern of life, the Americans of earlier days succeeded in being admirable people, and in sustaining a life, which, if it did not have ease and luxury, did seem to have dignity and charm. Although the main drift of desire is toward the past, there are other drifts. Some editors and readers even envision revolution and the substitution of a new culture for the acquisitive and the traditional American culture.

#### THE BATTLE OF THE CULTURES

In the older, more humane culture, sex and sophistication are the major elements. In the artificial profit-motivated pseudoculture by which the commercial magazine lives and tries to make its readers live, emulation tends to replace sex as a major interest, whereas so-

<sup>4</sup> [Thorstein Veblen, *Absentee Ownership and Business Enterprise in Recent Times: The Case of America* (New York: B. W. Huebsch, 1923).]

phistication dwindle and ultimately disappears. The following table exhibits a striking inverse ratio:

#### COMMERCIALISM VERSUS SOPHISTICATION

<i>Magazine</i>	<i>Per cent of editorial and article space devoted to sophistication</i>	<i>Per cent of total magazine space devoted to editorial advertisements</i>
Saturday Evening Post	88%	3%
Nation's Business	79%	8%
American Magazine	41%	2%
Harper's Magazine	37%	7%
Cosmopolitan	28%	3%
Liberty	24%	4%
True Story	16%	6%
Household	11%	18%
Harper's Bazaar	2%	34%
Woman's Home Companion	1.5%	15%
American Weekly	.7%	1%
Photoplay	.0%	24%
Arts & Decoration	.0%	48%

In the *Saturday Evening Post* we find the maximum of editorial and article space, 88 per cent, devoted to sophistication. By sophistication we mean a realistic attempt by the editors to deal with the facts and problems which constitute the everyday concerns of their readers. The *Post* devotes a minimum of space to editorial advertising. Yet, paradoxically enough, the *Saturday Evening Post* is the greatest advertising medium in the world. This would seem to indicate that editorial advertising is to a magazine what makeup is to a plain woman. Not that the *Post* is in any true sense a satisfactory and creative cultural medium. The most that can be said for the *Post* is that it functions with some sincerity and effectiveness as the organ of a specific economic and social class.

At the bottom of this dual ascending and descending scale, we find *Arts & Decoration* with a sophistication rating of zero and 48 per cent of its total space devoted to editorial advertising. Obviously, *Arts & Decoration* represents the phenomenon of pure commercial

parasitism. It is the organ of nothing and nobody except its publishers and advertisers, and it holds its 18,000 readers by a mixture of flattery and insult, which magazine publishers, it seems, consider to be the proper formula to be used on the new-rich and the social climber. The slogan would seem to be: Mannerless readers deserve a mannerless magazine.

#### RAUSHENBUSH SWANSON MAGAZINE ANALYSIS

*Table A*

Analysis of the contents of single issues (November and December, 1933, and January, 1934) of nine mass magazines, with circulations of over a million, and four class magazines.

MAGAZINE	SATURDAY EVENING POST	NATION'S BUSINESS	AMERICAN MAGAZINE	HARPER'S MAGAZINE	COSMOPOLITAN	LIBERTY	TRUE STORY	HOUSEHOLD	HARPER'S BAZAAR	WOMAN'S HOME COMPANION	AMERICAN WEEKLY	PHOTOPLAY	ARTS & DECORATION
CONTENTS: Total contents: (by inches)	4,608	2,772	4,140	2,800	5,481	1,650	4,008	1,728	7,345	4,512	3,080	3,600	3,208
% Advertising	47	47	28	15	30	15	30	39	46	38	22	21	20
% Editorials	3	28	5	17	4	9	13	5	7	17		40	7
% Articles and features	20	25	27	52	16	34	13	20	39	14	58	39	73
% Fiction	30	40	16	50	42	44	36	8	30	30	20		
CONTENTS: % Editorial advertising*	3	3	2	7	3	4	6	18	34	15	1	24	48
1. Promoting advertised products				1	1	2	3	2	11	30	11		20
2. Promoting sale of magazine	3	2	1	5		2	3	7	2	4	1	4	1
3. Promoting buying						1		2					10
% Selling space: Advertising & editorial advertising combined:	50	50	30	22	33	19	36	57	80	53	23	45	68
% Space not devoted to selling	50	50	70	78	67	81	64	43	20	47	77	55	32
BUYING CLASS:**	B	A	B	A	B	B	C	C	A	B	C	B	A
\$0 - \$1,999	16.8	no data	21.3	10.1	19.3	19.9	45.9	38.1	15.9	23.9	no data	22.2	11.4
\$2,000-\$4,999	50.8	"	57.1	48.2	55.4	66.1	51.7	53.3	36.6	56.7	"	51.1	35.8
\$5,000-and up	32.2	"	21.5	51.7	25.2	13.8	2.3	8.5	47.5	19.3	"	25.7	52.8

\* For definition of editorial advertising, see page 94.

\*\* Daniel Starch: Magazine Circulations Study.

There is another inverse ratio in which this battle of the cultures is apparent. In the magazine literature of the prewar days, men and women grew up, fell in love, married, had children, and lived more or less happily ever after. Among current magazine examples we find that the *American Magazine* is still reasonably confident that this biological pattern is fundamental to human life. In 78 per cent of its fiction content sex—sentimental sex—is a major appeal. Significantly, we note that only three per cent of the *American Magazine*'s non-advertising space is devoted to promoting emulative motivations. With the *Saturday Evening Post*, a magazine which goes to a somewhat wealthier class of readers than the *American*, the emphasis on sex has lessened, and the interest in the acquisitive society is much more pronounced. Only 28 per cent of the *Post*'s fiction is devoted to sex, compared to the *American*'s 78 per cent. 45 per cent of the *Post*'s

subject matter space is devoted to emulation. Still more extreme is the situation in respect to *Photoplay* and *Arts & Decoration*, where sex rates five and zero per cent respectively, and emulation rates 20 and 43 per cent.

The magazine spectrum breaks down into three major categories; the five magazines in which the acquisitive culture is dominant, the four magazines in which the two cultures co-exist; and the four remaining magazines in which the older culture is dominant. It is significant that the first group of magazines caters exclusively to women; the second and third groups to both men and women.

Table B

MAGAZINE	SATURDAY EVENING POST	NATION'S BUSINESS	AMERICAN MAGAZINE	HARPER'S MAGAZINE	COSMO-POLITAN	LIBERTY	TRUE STORY	HOUSEHOLD	HARPER'S BAZAAR	WOMAN'S HOME COMPANION	AMERICAN WEEKLY	PHOTOPLAY	ARTS & DECORATION
<b>SOPHISTICATION:*</b>													
% of editorial, article, and feature space	88	79	41	37	28	24	16	11	2	1.5	.7		
% of editorial, article, feature, and fiction space	37	79	18	30	7	16	6	9	2	16	.5		
% of total magazine devoted to sophistication items appearing in editorial, article, and feature space	32	42	13	26	5	6	4	5	.8	.4	.7		
<b>EMOTIONAL APPEALS:**</b>													
<i>Advertisements:</i>													
% Fear:	6	14	20	8	20	19	42	27	22	5	8		
% Sex:	8	3	5		18	11	13		10		26		7
% Emulation:	23	9	13	8	21	11	9	3	35	9	31		15
<i>Editorials, Articles and Features:</i>													
% Fear:	11	15			17					10	11	7	
% Sex:	27				13	17	64				21		
% Emulation:	9		8		5			40	65				58
<i>Fiction:</i>													
% Fear:	13	no fiction			9		3		23		no fiction	no fiction	
% Sex:	28	no fiction	78	42	62	78	59	58	85	22	60	no fiction	no fiction
% Emulation:	71	no fiction			16	34	51	29	18	35			

\* For definition of "Sophistication," see page 90.

\*\* Fear, sex and emulation appearing as major or minor appeals. Exception: "Fiction; Sex:", which includes only stories in which sex is a major appeal.

There are two other women's magazines in which the acquisitive culture is dominant. The *Woman's Home Companion* is edited for the urban woman, and *Household Magazine*, the largest and most popular of the rural women's magazines, caters to the small town and farm woman. *Woman's Home Companion* may be said to be typical of the six urban women's magazines with over 1,000,000 circulation—*Ladies' Home Journal*, *McCalls*, *Woman's Home Companion*, *Good Housekeeping*, *Pictorial Review*, and *Delineator*; while *Household* is typical of the five rural women's magazines with over 1,000,000 circulation—*Household*,

*Woman's World*, *Needlecraft*, *Mother's Home Life* and *Household Guest*, and *Gentlewoman*. These nine magazines alone distribute 239,000,000 copies of their product every year.

There is a distinct difference between the rural and the urban women's magazines; the rural magazines being much closer to the older traditional American culture. *Household Magazine* is one of the few magazines on our list that mentions God; the poetry is nai've and sincere, and the editor is human, honest, and even imaginative about his readers. The difficulty with *Household* would seem to be that there is a conflict between the editorial office and the business office; the business office being intent on apeing the formula and commercialism of the urban women's magazine group. In the urban women's magazines, the older American culture has become so thin as to be hardly visible. Even the interest in sex withers away in the *Companion*. While *Household* devotes 58 per cent of its fiction to sex, the *Companion* gauges its readers' interest in sex at 22 per cent. The sophistication element in *Household* is 16 per cent; in the *Companion* it is 1.5 per cent.

The group of four magazines in which neither culture is dominant, but in which both cultures exist side by side, includes the *Cosmopolitan*, *Liberty*, *True Story* and the *Saturday Evening Post*. The following table will show what elements of the two cultures are present:

<i>Magazine</i>	<i>Older Culture</i>	<i>Acquisitive Culture</i>
<i>Saturday Evening Post</i>	Sophistication	Emulation
<i>Cosmopolitan</i>	Sex	Emulation
<i>Liberty</i>	Sex	Emulation
<i>True Story</i>	Sex	Emulation

In the magazines in which emulation is dominant, less than three-fifths of the fiction is concerned with sex. But in *Cosmopolitan*, *Liberty* and *True Story* over three-fifths of the fiction is concerned with sex. The acquisitive culture is represented by a considerable dash of emulation: *Cosmopolitan* 13 per cent; *Liberty* 17 per cent; and *True Story* 30 per cent. In connection with *True Story* it should be pointed out that the emulative escape for the poor is crime and that this fact is quite definitely recognized in the fiction content of this magazine.

The *Saturday Evening Post* is in a class by itself. Its sophistication content of 88 per cent is the highest of any of the magazines examined, and its emulative content of 45 per cent is second only to *Harper's Bazaar*, which is 68 per cent. A third of the *Post's* readers have incomes of over \$5,000 a year. They can afford to play this emu-

lative game and the *Post* as a commercial enterprise duly exploits this fact in its fictional content.

There are four magazines in which the older culture is dominant: the *American Magazine*, *Harper's Magazine*, *Nation's Business* and the *American Weekly*. In *Harper's Magazine* we find perhaps the most typical expression of the "cultured" upper-middle-class tradition, as it carries over from the nineteenth century. The readers of *Harper's* are given no emulative stimulus whatever, except in the ads. The sophistication rating is 37 per cent. *Harper's* ranks fourth in this respect. In the *American Magazine*, the prewar, precrash culture persists. In particular, this magazine continues to exploit the fictional formula of the prewar culture. Its preoccupation with the pretty romantic aspects of courtship reveals how strong is the cultural lag against which the hard, galvanic, emulative culture battles. In its articles and editorials, the *American* appeals to the small city and small town American man, who admires business success, bristles alertly about politics, and believes that the world is inhabited by villains and kind people, with the kind people in a position of dominance.

In the *American Weekly* we encounter another emulation zero. Its readers are urban proletarians, too poor to play the emulative game. The Hearst formula realizes that they are strongly interested in sex: 65 per cent, but that they are even more interested in science. Three times as much space is devoted to science as to sex. True, the science is of a primitive sort, like Paul Bunyan's "Tales of the Blue Ox." Typical *American Weekly* titles are: "The Sleeping Habits of the Chimpanzee," "The Growth of the Iron Horse Since the Six-Wheeled Locomotive," "Chicago Observatory Telegraphs to the Dead," "Why Our Climate Is Slowly Becoming Tropical," "What the Tower of Babel Really Looked Like." The *American Weekly* is quite simply concerned with serving a satisfying dish of weekly thrills. The technique is robust since the modern world is full of wonders and the appetites of the readers are not complicated.

The *Nation's Business* is another very special case. This magazine is the official organ of the United States Chamber of Commerce, while the *Saturday Evening Post* might be thought of as its unofficial organ. The *Nation's Business* ranks with the *Saturday Evening Post* in point of sophistication. Its editorial content is devoid of emulative appeal and even the advertisements rate remarkably low in these respects; only 9.6 per cent of the ads appeal to emulation.

It would be a commonplace to remark that most of the editorial content of these magazines is quite ephemeral. Fifty years hence the literary historian will probably have little difficulty in condensing the creative contribution of our total commercial magazine-press during the postwar period into a brief dismissive paragraph to the

effect that the fugitive literature of this period was ugly, faked and frail. After one has diligently read this curious stuff over a period of weeks, one begins to see our contemporary magazine pseudoculture as an almost human creature. It is a robot contraption, strung together with the tinsel of material emulation, galvanized with fear, and perfumed with fake sex. It exhibits a definite glandular imbalance, being hyperthyroid as to snobbism, but with a deficiency of sex, economics, politics, religion, science, art and sentiment. It is ugly, nobody loves it, and nobody really wants it except the business men who make money out of it. It has a low brow, a long emulative nose, thin, bloodless, asexual lips, and the receding chin of the will-less, day-dreaming fantast. The stomach is distended either by the abnormal things-obsessed appetite of the middle-class and the rich, or by the starved flatulence of the poor. Finally it is visibly dying for lack of blood and brains.

#### THE ROLE OF EMULATION

In anatomizing this pseudoculture we must refer again to our definition of culture as the sum-total of the human environment to which any individual is exposed, and point out again that the test of a culture is what kind of a life it affords not for a few but for all of its citizens. One grants immediately that emulation has a place in any genuine culture. It is a question of balance, and the point here made is that the quantity and kind of emulation exhibited by the magazine pseudoculture is such as to affect adversely and probably disastrously the viability of this synthetic creature that the magazines offer us. Specifically, snobbism appears to be the antithesis of sex. Where the first is dominant, the other tends to be recessive.

An analysis of the entire contents of the thirteen magazines shows that sex and emulation are the principal appeals in the subject matter. Sentiment occupies on the average only 1.8 per cent of the total space in the magazines, humor only .9 per cent. In the advertisements there is more emulation than sex. The average appeal to sex in the ads in the thirteen magazines is 9.6 per cent, the average appeal to emulation is 14.7 per cent. In the subject matter sex continues to dominate emulation. This is particularly true in the fiction where 55 per cent of the stories have sex as the main appeal. Emulation, however, occupies no inconsiderable place in the magazines. Twenty-two per cent or one-fifth of the subject matter is concerned with emulation.

There is one generalization about emulation as it appears in these magazines that can safely be made, emulation is not a commodity that can be offered to the poor. Not even the lower middle-class can

afford it. It is distinctly for the well-to-do and for the rich. While fear is the dominant appeal in the advertising sections of seven magazines which are read by the lower income class, emulation is the dominant appeal in the advertisements of six magazines which go to the upper income-levels. For example: in *True Story*, 42 per cent of the ads are fear ads. In contrast, *Harper's Bazaar* has no fear ads, and 35 per cent of the ads are devoted to emulation.

Emulation is, of course, most apparent in magazines in which the acquisitive, emulative culture is undiluted, like *Harper's Bazaar*, *Arts & Decoration* and *Photoplay*. In the previous chapter, "Chromium Is More Expensive," we have already quoted emulative editorial advertising taken from the first two of these magazines. A few brief examples of snobbism, chosen not only from these magazines but from the general list of magazines, will perhaps illustrate the prevalence of snobbism and its character.

(1) "It was a subtle satisfaction that no big social affair was considered complete without us. 'Were the Roger Browns there?' was the regular question in the aftermath of gossip." (*True Story*)

(2) "'She's one of the Mount-Dyce-Mounts.' 'One of the Mount-Dyce-Mounts,' echoed John unbelievably, and forgetting all about Jean, he hurried down the steps ... and went up to where the old lady had settled herself in a chair. John introduced himself with a charming air." (*Liberty*)

(3) "'I keep only one groom so I help to look after my ponies myself in the morning. I did not stop to take off my coat, because I was afraid I might miss you. Excuse.' He removed his duster solemnly. In his tweed coat and well-worn riding breeches, his costume conformed to type." (*Woman's Home Companion*)

(4) "He's a hotel aristocrat. You're a country gentlewoman. I'm so glad it's all over. How wise Dr. Fancher was not to announce the engagement." (*Saturday Evening Post*)

(5) "Now for the problem of the Christmas gift, for, despite the pleasure we all must surely feel in giving gifts to our friends, the choosing of gifts is indeed a problem, and the problem lies mainly in avoiding the banal." (*Harper's Bazaar*)

(6) "Those who are demanding 'contempora' are in a sense the patrons of modern design. Just as the Church was at one time, and the King at another." (*Arts & Decoration*)

#### THE ROLE OF SEX

Before plunging into the jungle of our magazine sex fiction it will be necessary to establish certain points of reference.

1. The biological norm of the sex relation tends to assert and re-assert itself against the religious and other taboos of the social environment, and against the limitations and frustrations of the economic environment. In other words, the readers of the magazines are both biological and social animals who would doubtless like to be human, to live balanced, vigorous and creative sexual and social lives.
2. Theoretically, the magazines, in so far as they deal with sex at all, are trying to instruct and aid their readers in solving their problems of sexual adjustment within the existing framework of the economy and of the mores. Since the writer of fiction or verse exhibits directly or indirectly a set of values, the verse and fiction writers are inevitably affecting, for good or ill, the values and attitudes of their readers in regard to sex. There are also the articles which deal with sex directly.

Against this background, let us now attempt to describe what actually goes on in these magazines. The exploitation of the sexual dilemmas of the population by advertisers will be given consideration in the chapter on "Sacred and Profane Love." In the fictional and verse content of the popular magazines we have another, less direct form of exploitation. We know who writes the advertisements and why. It is necessary now to ask: who writes the sex fiction and why?

The first point to note is that very little of it is written by literary artists. There is a categorical difference between the equipment, attitude and purpose of the literary artist who deals with sex relations, and the equipment, attitude and purpose of the sex fictioneer.

The work of the artist is a work of discovery, including self-discovery, and of statement. In the field of sex the mature artist exhibits neither timidity nor shame. True, the artist is often, like other human beings, the victim of biological or socially acquired defects, inhibitions and distortions, both physiological and psychological. Hence much genuine literature in the field of sex must be characterized as in a sense compensatory writing. It would seem probable, for example, that practically all the work of D. H. Lawrence is of this nature, as well as some, at least, of the work of Walt Whitman. But both these writers, being genuinely gifted artists, are concerned only with the presentation of the observed or intuitively perceived truth; they are concerned with discovery. They are serving no ulterior purposes, and are in one sense writing primarily for themselves. And being strong natures, they assert their own values, attitudes, judgments, for value judgments are implicit in the most "objective" writing.

In contrast, the commercial sex fictioneer is primarily concerned, not with the discovery and statement of truth, but with the making

of money. If, as ordinarily, his is a tenth rate talent, his maximum service lies in the telling of a tale; but in the telling he illuminates little or nothing. At his worst the sex fictioneer is merely commercializing an acceptable formula; he is "selling" the pseudoculture to itself; he does nothing creative with the current sexual fact or with the current sexual make-believe; he does not even achieve clear statement.

In this commercial sex fiction, the pattern is cut to the requirements of the editor, who specializes in calculating what can and cannot be said within the limits of a commercial enterprise designed to acquire or hold a certain class or mass circulation. It is a fairly complex calculation, and much study and experiment are required before the apprentice sex fictioneer gets the editorial "slant" of a particular magazine.

Of the thirteen magazines examined, *True Story* is the only one which definitely claims to offer sex instruction to its readers.

"Until five years ago," said a full-page advertisement, ... "there was nowhere men and women, boys and girls, could turn to to get a knowledge of the rules of life.... Then came *True Story*, a magazine that is different from any ever published. Its foundation is the solid rock of truth.... It will help you, too. In five years it has reached the unheard-of circulation of two million copies monthly, and is read by five million or more appreciative men and women."

While *True Story* is certainly a commercial enterprise, and while an unsympathetic commentator might well allege that it was specifically designed to exploit the postwar relaxation of the sexual mores, it is nevertheless true that *True Story* is immeasurably closer to reality than any of the other twelve magazines examined. This, in spite of the fact that most of its "true stories" give internal evidence of being fake stories, nine-tenths of which are written by formula and perhaps one-tenth by high school graduates eager to become writers.

The distinction of *True Story* rests on the fact that it admits that sexual temptations sometimes occur and are sometimes yielded to; also that it deals with matrimony rather than courtship. Its limitation is its virtuous surrender to the Puritan conviction that an extramarital slip is a sin, inevitably followed by remorse and retribution.

Of eleven stories and articles in the issue examined, six have sex for a major theme and five of these stories deal with matrimonial difficulties, i.e., sexual temptations not evaded. One must, of course, point out that no true description of the sexual behavior of the poor is to be derived from *True Story*, although there are scenes in which a married woman prepares the room for the reception of her lover and receives him. What true descriptions we have must be looked for in the work of such novelists as Edward Dahlberg, James T. Farrell, Erskine Caldwell and Morley Callaghan. The *True Story* formula, in

its negative and positive aspects, runs somewhat as follows: sinner redeemed, sinner pays, sinner repents, saint sacrifices all; the beauty of duty, of security after a narrow escape from losing one's reputation and job; the beauty of being a true wife, the beauty of resignation, of truthfulness, and of character.

After a particularly lurid escapade the *True Story* heroine is obliged to say something like this: "If every silly, sentimental fool in this sad old world could have witnessed that scene, it would have done an enormous amount of good. Many a home would have been saved from ruin. They would have known the tempting Dead Sea fruit of illicit love for what it was, giving a bitter flavor to life for all who taste it."

Obviously, the success of Mr. Macfadden's enterprise is based on the profitableness of bearing witness.

An analysis of 45 sex stories from ten magazines, including *True Story*, yields much interesting material for speculation. But as regards the technique of sexual behavior the harvest is meagre indeed. We were able to discover only four items of premarital and two items of postmarital technique.

Premarital technique: How a mother can recognize the first sign of love in her adolescent son (*Woman's Home Companion*). How to approach a virgin (Data in a number of stories, but all very meagre and questionable). How, if a girl is careful and smart she can take everything and give nothing (*American Weekly*). Why an unmarried woman who wishes to seduce a youth should avoid tragic diversions such as those incident to the mistake of taking along her pet goat (*Harper's Bazaar*).

Postmarital technique: How to commit bigamy. How to kill a drunken husband and thereby improve one's social status.

In addition to the information about technique, the 45 sex stories present the following conclusions about sex, sex and economics, and morals:

*Men:* "All men are pretty dumb and clumsy. There might be men somewhere who lived up to the things the poets, novelists and musicians said of men. If so, she had never met them."

One man may be able to arouse a frigid woman, while another may not.

A man will bet on his ability to pluck the bloom from a virgin, and then not want it.

A genius is not bound by the moral code of Puritanism.

*Marriage:* The sex revolution of the postwar era led to unhappiness.

After "sleeping around," actually or mentally, a married couple's chance of happiness is with each other.

Through reading light, trashy stuff a woman may lose her husband.

*Sex and Economics:* Millions cannot buy love. A mercenary woman cares more for her car than for her husband. A rich girl is smart if she marries a poor boy who has brains. Since a poor girl is often no good, it is safer to marry a rich girl.

*Morals:* Virtue is more attractive than vice. An "indiscretion" can strip a woman of her good name, rob her of her freedom, and cost her every penny she has in the world. A common-law marriage may ruin a man's social position years later. A married couple should be an example to other married couples and to unmarried persons.

These conclusions and the six technical points represent *all* that is to be gained from this magazine sex fiction.

Of the 45 sex stories examined, only 13 were straight sex stories. The complications introduced in the remaining 32 are as follows:

Thirteen: economics plus sex; eleven: romance plus sex; five: the American scene plus sex; two: the sex revolution; one: religion plus sex.

It is worth noting that although complications due to intermarriage of races and nationalities might be expected, practically nothing of this sort was encountered.

It should be emphasized that this magazine sex literature centers around women rather than around men. The problems of men are considered in only three of the 45 sex fiction stories. It is also significant that men outnumber women in the cast of characters; a surplusage of men is necessary properly to dramatize the feminine dilemma. This surplusage of men is more pronounced as we ascend the class ladder. The woman of *True Story* hopes for no more than a single lover. The middle-class heroine must have at least the choice of two. The grande dame of *Harper's Bazaar* requires a circle of adoring youths with beautiful bodies, including at least one millionaire.

So frequently does the theme repeat itself in this magazine sex fiction that we feel warranted in saying that the dominant desire of the woman is to be freed from some situation in which she is bound or caught. But in only two instances out of the 45 (the sex revolution stories) does the heroine herself initiate positive action toward such liberation. The most that the average heroine permits herself is to give some clue to her prospective liberator. Out of a wealth of data we submit the following quotations which serve best to reveal the typical heroine's attitude:

"Restlessness, dissatisfaction possessed her. She wanted more—more, somehow, than life was giving her. Other women were happy—sometimes such stupid, plain, elderly women were happy, but she was continually fretted and harassed by this sense of missing something—of being cheated." (Kathleen Norris. "Three Men and Diana." *The American*)

"I had Wanted Out. Always I had Wanted Out. Yet whenever I had tried to find a door—when I had taken some great risk, like marriage, in order to find the door—I had failed. There had been no door. Then, suddenly, in some unexpected place the door would open!" (Elsie Robinson. "I Wanted Out." *Cosmopolitan*, April, 1934)

All these fiction heroines want happiness, of course, but it is notable that they get happiness only in the romantic moment which precedes marriage. Stories of happy married life are entirely lacking in the samples examined. Significant class differences characterize the behavior of these heroines. The extravagance of the rich woman in the matter of lovers has already been indicated. The shifting milieu of these stories would also seem to show a class difference.

In Class "A" magazines the scene is always Europe, the Swiss Alps, Scotland, England, the Riviera. America is ignored geographically. In the Class "B" magazines the geography is mixed; Africa, London, the Oregon of the gold rush, a fresh water college town, New England, Chicago, New York and Hollywood. In the Class "C" magazines with only a few exceptions the locale is America—the poor don't travel. The typical scene is the country or small town, New England, Chicago, New York and Hollywood. It would appear that Hollywood is the Riviera of the proletarian as well as to a considerable extent the focus for the dreams of the middle-class woman.

The following table indicates the range of fiction heroines encountered by class categories. Note that the typical rich heroine is mercenary, the typical middle-class heroine is an unawakened or unresponsive woman, and the typical poor heroine is sexually responsive as well as biologically more prolific. In magazine fiction as well as in life the poor woman has the largest number of babies. While the 41 fiction heroines of the middle-class produce only three children, the eleven fiction heroines of the poor produce nine children.

#### SEX FICTION HEROINES

##### MERCENARY WOMEN:

Class "A" Magazines	51 per cent
Class "B" Magazines	10 per cent
Class "C" Magazines	10 per cent

## UNRESPONSIVE WOMEN:

Class "A" Magazines	56 per cent
Class "B" Magazines	45 per cent
Class "C" Magazines	17 per cent

## RESPONSIVE WOMEN:

Class "A" Magazines	45 per cent
Class "B" Magazines	34 per cent
Class "C" Magazines	17 per cent

As to inter-class relationships the typical fictional device is the Cinderella theme, either straight, Poor Girl Marries Rich Man, or in reverse, Poor Boy Marries Rich Girl, the latter being apparently more popular. Proletarian characters are frequently encountered in Class "A" sex fiction. It would appear that the readers of the Class "A" magazines like to parasite emotionally upon the richer sexual life of the poor.

The bulk of American magazines are read by the middle class, the \$2,000 to \$5,000 income group. In the case of ten magazines which we have selected as representative types, 51 per cent of the circulation goes to the middle class. Twenty women's magazines, studied by Daniel Starch, show about the same percentage; 57 per cent of them have middle-class readers. The fact that the middle-class woman is the principal reader of mass and class circulation magazines is important to keep in mind in considering what we feel to be one of the significant findings of the study. The editor of the typical mass circulation magazine, usually a man, addresses himself primarily to the restless unhappy middle-class woman. The fiction exploits rather than resolves this unhappiness, just as the advertising exploits the emulative things-obsessed psychology of this woman, which it would seem arises chiefly from her sexual frustration. Here are two quotations which exhibit the condition of this middle-class woman.

(1) "Quite suddenly, without warning, Diana realized that her marriage had been a losing fight. A mistake as far as her own interior happiness was concerned.... She could still go on gallantly—picking strawberries, heating rolls, brewing coffee. But somehow the glamour, the excitement was gone. Neal seemed to be just a man, she just a woman, there seemed no particular reason for their being together." (Kathleen Norris. "Three Men and Diana." *American Magazine*)

(2) "The second period in a woman's life is when, after many strenuous years of adjustment toward husband and family, she feels entitled to let her own personality have full scope. She wants to forget as much as possible those difficult years, she wants to live her own life, to entertain

her own friends in her own background. By this time plain Romeo has turned into Mr. Romeo Babbitt, *but there is no Mrs. Babbitt*. There is instead a gracious woman in the prime of life who has matured in excellence like old wine and the cask must be adequate." (Daisy Fellowes. "Home, Sweet Home." *Harper's Bazaar*)

We have already noted the inverse ratio of sex deficiency and emulation. Material emulation and snobbism are apparently substitutes for sexual satisfaction. From the point of view of a commercial publisher interested in achieving a maximum "reader interest" for his advertisers the ideal subscriber to a middle-class woman's magazine is the woman who has never experienced the full physical and emotional satisfactions of sex; who is more or less secure in her economic position and who determinedly compensates her sexual frustration by becoming an ardent and responsive buyer.

One of the most frequent charges leveled against American culture is that it is woman-dominated. Women, it is said, read the books, attend the concerts and exhibitions, run the charities, figure increasingly in politics, etc. The inference is that our cultural deficiencies are caused by this domination of the woman, for which various explanations have been offered.

Our examination of the magazine literature leads us to question the accuracy of this picture. Is it women who have created this ad-man's pseudoculture? Is it women who own and direct these commercial enterprises of mass publications? No, it is predominantly men. It may also be alleged that it is the stupidity of men which is largely responsible for the sexual and emotional frustration of the typical middle-class woman. The result of the middle-class woman's physical or emotional frustration is not that she compensates by achieving a culture superior to that of the man. A much truer statement would be that the exploitation of the dilemma of these women by men has helped to bring about the collapse of culture in the United States. It is significant to note in this connection that it is precisely in the women's magazines that sophistication tends to disappear. Of the five women's magazines examined, four devoted less than three per cent of their article and editorial space to sophistication.

In summarizing the sex content of the magazines it is sufficient merely to note that it is almost incredibly thin and vapid, useless as instruction, and deficient in thrills.

#### RELIGION, ART, SCIENCE

In the thirteen magazines examined, we find God mentioned once in a fiction story and twice in poems. Art is mentioned only by *Arts*

& Decoration. Science, which gets full if crude treatment in Hearst's *American Weekly*, is encountered in only one other magazine, *Liberty*, which contains a story by Edgar Rice Burroughs, "Tarzan and the Lion Man," in which the author has a paragraph or two about the imaginary genesis of his hybrid.

#### THE ROLE OF SOPHISTICATION

Of the four criteria for sophistication referred to in earlier chapters only one, the treatment of the depression, proved to be important in quantity or revealing in content. *Photoplay*, *Arts & Decoration* and *Harper's Bazaar* do not mention the depression at all. The negative response to the depression takes the form of a repudiation of the acquisitive culture and a turning back in time to the older American virtues and the older American pattern of life.

(1) "Looking back [to the days when her husband, now a farm-hand, had an \$8,000 a year salary] it seems as if we never found anything very—very real to quarrel about. And the queer thing is I know we were both rather clever then. We weren't stupefied with work, the way we are now. I suppose that must be the answer. If I weren't too tired to think clearly, I'd be able to see some sense to it. It actually seems as if there were more dullness and stupidity in those smart squabbles about books and plays and clothes and places to eat than there is in sitting here—like dumb animals, too tired to talk, contented because we're warm, and fed, and alive." (Hugh McNair Kahler. "Winter Harvest." *Saturday Evening Post*)

(2) "Jonathan could not understand his sister's passionate loyalty to the old house. He worshipped the modern, the technical, the efficient. It was this that had made him persuade his brother to abandon the leather factory, with its century-old reputation for honesty and fair dealing and follow the will-o'-the-wisp of fortune with the vacuum cleaners. Their story was the story of dozens of small industries.

"'Listen to me, Jonathan,' said Charlotte coldly, 'I want to read you a few lines from this book.' She read, her voice trembling with the intensity of her feeling:

"'Never the running stag, the gull at wing,

The pure elixir, the American Thing....'

"'It's that—"The American Thing"—we've got away from it, from everything we stood for. And now we're going back to it.... Look at the farmers. They've got food they can't sell but no money. We'll take their leather goods in exchange for food and hides.' ...

"'But that's barter,' Jonathan gasped.

"'Savagery.'

"Bartlett looked at her steadily.... 'Barter,' he said, at length. 'Ancient as the hills and modern as tomorrow'." (Francis Sill Wickware. "The American Thing." *Woman's Home Companion*.)

In considering the positive response to the depression a brief summary of the essential characteristics of these class cultures will be useful. In magazines read by the poor, fear and sex are dominant and emulation is negligible. The middle-class are immunized against fear, exhibit a definite sex deficiency and are strong in emulation: they are the climbers. In magazines going to the rich, fear reappears, and sex is exploited chiefly for its mercenary or amusement value. Since these magazines primarily exploit the climbing *nouveau riche*, emulation is very strong and is reinforced by a tremendous preoccupation with "things." An example of the mercenary characteristic of the rich as exhibited in the high income magazines is the following:

"'My dear Mr. Sherrard,' he said, 'as a man of the world, you will at once comprehend the situation. My wife and I are devoted to each other; unfortunately, we have no money. Not-a-single-sou.' He paused to let this sink in, then continued blandly as before. 'Our tastes are what might be described as traditionally extravagant. We can't help it, we inherit them from our ancestors. Together, our life, save for a few moments of bliss, is impossible. Apart, we simply cannot prevent I repeat, *cannot prevent* money coming to us in large quantities. It is odd.'

"'Very,' agreed Sherrard.

"'I know what you are thinking: that it would be more noble to starve than acquire such money. But then we are not noble-men that way'." (Margery Sharp. "Immoral Story." *Harper's Bazaar*.)

Where, in a transitional period, do the readers of magazines think they are going? Before attempting to answer this question, it is worth noting that the letters from readers warrant the belief that the readers are going somewhere much faster than the editors would like.

The *American Magazine* represents the lower middle-class male; the *Saturday Evening Post*, the upper middle-class male; *Nation's Business*, the rich. How do the men of these different classes regard the future of business and of government? The *American Magazine* is behind the New Deal sturdily and optimistically. None the less, in a pinch it is clear that the typical *American Magazine* reader would go fascist. This is revealed by the general direction of the articles and by readers' letters. The *Saturday Evening Post* is belligerent and not frightened. The creed of the *Post* is to repel every invasion of business by the government. It professes to believe that business is capable of running the country without government aid. Whenever this illusion breaks down the magazine alertly serves its readers by offering optimistic adaptations to the necessities of the moment. The *Post's* high point

of sophistication is registered in the following quotation which is the concluding paragraph of an article by Caret Garrett entitled "Washington Miscellany."

"The law of necessity hitherto acting [before the Roosevelt Administration] was a law of nightmare. For that it is proposed to substitute a law of the disciplined event. To say this has never happened is not to say it cannot happen. But certainly it was by the other way that the world grew as rich as it is, which is richer than it ever was before."

The *Nation's Business* is too near, perhaps, to the seats of power not to have looked over the edge of the precipice and to have become doubtful. "Capital is Scared," it headlines, and in recording the timidity of investors remarks: "In other words they wonder whether or not the days of private capitalism are numbered." Curiously the editor of *Nation's Business* seems to be less confident that Fascism is our next phase than are the editors of the Communist *Daily Worker*. In reading the articles and editorials of *Nation's Business* one gets the impression that these frightened business men of Wall Street, and of the provincial chambers of commerce, would not be surprised if they awoke tomorrow morning to find the revolution on their doorsteps.

With regard to the poor, our magazine indices are *True Story* and the famous Vox Pop of *Liberty*. It seems clear that *Liberty* readers comprise a high percentage of war generation males, especially Legionnaires. Their notion of a revolution would appear to be a miraculous change of political administration whereby suddenly everybody would get \$5,000 a year. In the lack of such miracles they advocate homespun nostrums like the scrapping of machines, going back to the land, etc. While it is clear that the readers of *Liberty* are not sophisticated radicals, labor legislation, technological unemployment, and the revolution get mentioned in the Vox Pop pages. Whether the *Liberty* readers go fascist or communist would appear to depend upon the energy and astuteness which one or the other party manifests in proselytizing and mobilizing them.

*True Story* is a mine of sophistication data regarding the poor. The editors write about the family problems created by the depression and invite contributions on the subject from their readers, but the absorption with these problems is clearly evident in the fiction as well. To the poor, poverty is a perpetual problem, in good as well as in bad times. It is the unique distinction of *True Story* among the magazines examined that it is the only one which contains stories about the poor. Despite the fakery which is apparent in much of this fiction, there is also much genuinely revealing stuff. In the issue examined, four of the nine fiction stories deal with the working class and two deal with the very poor.

As already noted, the fiction writers for *True Story* recognize that

the way out for the poor is crime. In the following quotation there is presented a typical white-collar depression dilemma. The story concerns a burdened father who, unwilling to seek the way out through crime, kills himself in such a way that his family may collect the insurance and pay their debts.

"'You know, Lois, the rottenest part of it all is Dad,' he said slowly.... 'Dad hasn't had much out of life. Mother's a swell person in her way, but she's certainly made his life miserable. He's crazy about us—about all his kids—but we've cost him an awful lot and I don't think we've given him much in return. When I look at Dad and think of all the years he's striven beyond his strength, of all the things he's gone without to give us things—of how little he's had out of life, I get sick inside. He's a man made for cheerfulness, and freedom and happy-go-lucky ways. And he's been harnessed to routine and duties and schedules all his life. And for what? He's ended in disgrace and failure. No matter what we think—and we don't think he's a disgrace and a failure—that's what it boils down to in the eyes of the world.'

"'A letter from Papa a letter.... He's going to commit suicide.... He's doing it for us.... You can see for yourself. He thinks he's no good, and that he'll never land another job at his age. He wants to leave us his insurance. He knows that'll wipe out every debt we have and start us fresh. It's all he has to give and he's willing'."

("Desperate Days." *True Story*.)

The alternative to crime as a way out would appear to be suicide. But what happens when the poor do essay crime as a way out of their dilemmas? The following quotation is taken from a story dealing with the very poor.

"It was the first motion picture I had ever seen, despite the fact that our little hamlet had boasted two shows weekly for many years.... We walked ten miles to the next town.... Jimmie's pockets were bulging with the life savings of his aunt, while he let me believe the money was rightfully his.... In my talks with Jimmie, I came to see a change in him. He laughed about the decencies of life, about the people who worked hard for their bread, about the poor people who stood for oppression from the rich.... The well defined line between right and wrong seemed to grow fainter as the days passed. Sometimes I thought Jimmie was right about the unfairness of things and our privilege to make up for it outside the law....

"Jimmie was sentenced first, and taken to prison several days before my sentence was fixed. As he passed the women's cells, I could hear him singing 'Let the Rest of the World Go By.' He was trying to be a good sport.... Club women called on me and tried in their mechanical way to preach morals to me. Their visits served only to antagonize me. All the time they were talking, my heart cried out 'But you've had a chance in life. You had love and home and friends. I didn't want to

steal. Jimmie was sick, and I was scared he'd die, if I didn't help him get the stuff.' My lips did not form the words. In fact I hardly spoke to them at all. I scowled my hatred at them, and saved my tears for my pillowless bunk."

("His Mother's Confession." *True Story.*)

The conclusion indicates that crime, that is theft, is no way out after all since the wages of crime is jail. It is estimated that the poor, that is to say, those having less than \$2,000 a year, constitute over 75 per cent of the total population. Where are they going in this transitional period? It seems clear that a considerable percentage of the readers of *True Story* are desperate and cynical about the possibility of escape from their dilemmas by any other route than the crime route. Clearly that route is being increasingly followed as Abraham Epstein notes in "Insecurity, A Challenge to America," when he points out that since the depression the total value of insurances policies lapsed for inability to pay amounts to \$3,000,000,000, and that the prisoners admitted to Sing Sing for robbery have increased by 70 per cent. It would seem apparent that here we have a nexus of potential revolutionary material, inert at the moment, but capable of mobilization by an able revolutionary leader who could show a practical way out, other than the way of crime.

Recently in talking to a group of business men who were refocusing their advertising expenditures upon the narrowing sector of the population which represents any exploitable buying power, I raised the question as to what business intended doing with these extra-economic men. The answer was "Nothing." The assumption so far as I could gather seemed to be that the surplusage of the population would starve peaceably and eliminate itself. I recommended the reading of *True Story* to these bemused plutocrats. It seems very clear that the readers of *True Story* will not starve peaceably.

Here then we have the spectrum of the ad-man's pseudoculture as revealed by its mass and class magazine literature.

Is it desirable to rehabilitate this ad-man's pseudoculture? The question is somewhat beside the point since history does not evolve by a series of moral or esthetic choices. A culture is rejected, not because it is ugly and unjust, but because it is not viable. The more pertinent question, therefore, is: "Is it possible to rehabilitate this pseudoculture?" The answer here is the same answer which must be given to the question: "Is it possible to rehabilitate the capitalist economy?" The capitalist economy can survive as long as it can validate its rising mound of paper titles to ownership and income by the enslavement of labor and by progressive imperial conquests. The capitalist culture—the ad-man's pseudoculture—can survive as long as it can give some substance to the traditional concept of individual

opportunity; the ability of the able individual to rise out of his class. The economy and the culture are Siamese Twins; or rather, they are aspects of the same thing. Examination of this magazine literature reveals clearly that the democratic dogma is dying if not already dead; that the emulative culture is not accessible to the poor and to the lower middle-class; that the poor are oriented toward crime, and potentially at least, toward revolution; that the middle classes are oriented toward fascism. In short, the ad-man's pseudoculture is not satisfying. To be effectively exploited it must be diluted with elements derived from the older culture and with some measure of sophistication and service, particularly with respect to the lower income groups. Its decadence parallels rather strictly the decadence of the capitalist economy. Historically, the ad-man's pseudoculture will probably be regarded as a very frail and ephemeral thing.

We must therefore conclude that this culture, or pseudoculture, is not viable, hence cannot be rehabilitated. This conclusion will be regarded as optimistic, or pessimistic, depending upon the point of view of the reader.