

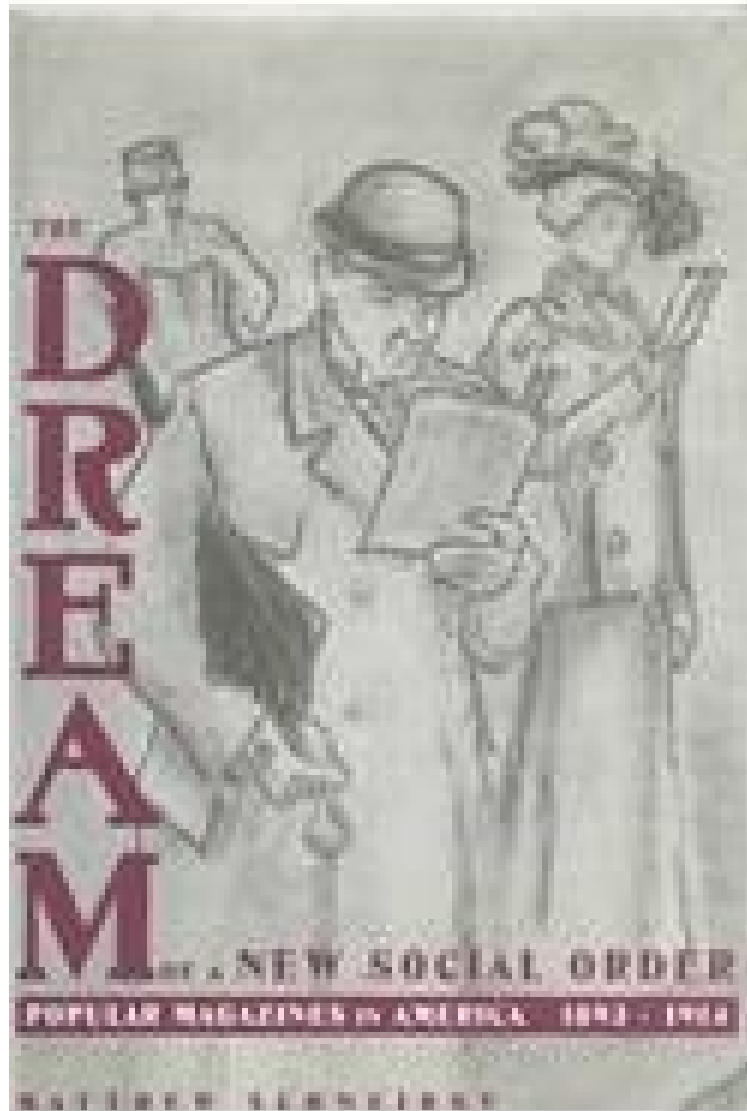
#3710803 in Books 1994-10-15 Original language: English PDF # 1 9.32 x 1.11 x 6.31, 1.39 #File Name:

0231082908357 pages | File size: 37.Mb



*Matthew Schneirov*

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## **The Dream of a New Social Order**

**Matthew Schneirov : The Dream of a New Social Order** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised [The Dream of a New Social Order](#):

This lively book explores how magazines became the first national mass medium in the United States and how they

expressed a new American culture based on the dream of a better future. Matthew Schneirov argues that the birth of such popular magazines as *Munsey's*, *McClure's*, and *Cosmopolitan* helped to form the foundations of contemporary consumer culture. These magazines, which usurped genteel "family house magazines" such as *Harper's Monthly* and *The Atlantic Monthly* at the turn of the century, actively spread ideas of abundance, social control, and justice. Revolutionary concepts and products from the skyscraper to the camera, the automobile, and the new-fangled "flying machine" were extolled in their pages as icons of the technological promise that would transform modern living. By promoting consumer culture, these dynamic magazines galvanized the national mood. Headed by savvy, cosmopolitan editors who were equally committed to the cultural and intellectual education of their fellow Americans and the growth of mass print culture, these publications encouraged readers to expand their personal horizons to accommodate a spirit of progress. Articles on consumerism, therapeutic culture, and social welfare were juxtaposed with the exposes of the "muckrakers" - a new breed of journalists including *Ida Tarbell*, *Lincoln Steffens*, and *William Allen White* who investigated municipal and corporate corruption in the "Gilded Age" of *Rockefeller*, *Carnegie*, and *Tammany Hall*. This vision transformed the traditional and elitist view of culture as a repository of timeless and fixed virtues to a springboard of ideas and energies directed toward achieving a cohesive, cooperative society. Engaged in the "whirlpool of real life," the popular magazines pointed to the vitality of consumerism and the industrial cities as sure signs of progress. Informative and stylish, as well as expansive in its eclectic coverage of the popular magazine, Schneirov brilliantly shows how this phenomenon

From *Library Journal* Schneirov sees *Cosmopolitan* (no relation to today's *Cosmopolitan*), *Munsey's*, and *McClure's* as three prominent magazines in the center of major shifts in American popular culture, attracting national audiences and appealing to Americans' dreams of technological progress and social utopias. The author (sociology, *Duquesne Univ.*) advances an interdisciplinary approach to culture as the dynamic interplay of economic, social, and ideological factors. He eschews explanations of class hegemony and economic or technological determinism for the emergence of popular (i.e., not highbrow) magazines and consumer mass culture. Though more discussion is needed of racial/ethnic minorities, the working classes, and regional (e.g., Southern) cultures, Schneirov richly describes the magazines' editors and articles on health and muckraking. Best for graduate collections in sociology, mass communications, U.S. history, and culture studies. *Charles L. Lumpkins, Bloomsburg Univ. Lib., Pa.* Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc. From the Back Cover This lively book explores how magazines became the first national mass medium in the United States and how they expressed a new American culture based on the dream of a better future. Matthew Schneirov argues that the birth of such popular magazines as *Munsey's*, *McClure's*, and *Cosmopolitan* helped to form the foundations of contemporary consumer culture. These magazines, which usurped genteel "family house magazines" such as *Harper's Monthly* and *The Atlantic Monthly* at the turn of the century, actively spread ideas of abundance, social control, and justice. Revolutionary concepts and products from the skyscraper to the camera, the automobile, and the new-fangled "flying machine" were extolled in their pages as icons of the technological promise that would transform modern living. By promoting consumer culture, these dynamic magazines galvanized the national mood. Headed by savvy, cosmopolitan editors who were equally committed to the cultural and intellectual education of their fellow Americans and the growth of mass print culture, these publications encouraged readers to expand their personal horizons to accommodate a spirit of progress. Articles on consumerism, therapeutic culture, and social welfare were juxtaposed with the exposes of the "muckrakers" - a new breed of journalists including *Ida Tarbell*, *Lincoln Steffens*, and *William Allen White* who investigated municipal and corporate corruption in the "Gilded Age" of *Rockefeller*, *Carnegie*, and *Tammany Hall*. This vision transformed the traditional and elitist view of culture as a repository of timeless and fixed virtues to a springboard of ideas and energies directed toward achieving a cohesive, cooperative society. Engaged in the "whirlpool of real life", the popular magazines pointed to the vitality of consumerism and the industrial cities as sure signs of progress. Informative and stylish, as well as expansive in its eclectic coverage of the popular magazine, Schneirov brilliantly shows how this phenomenon tapped into a national sensibility and ran away with it. *The Dream of a New Social Order* is illustrated with more than twenty photographs from nineteenth and twentieth century magazines.