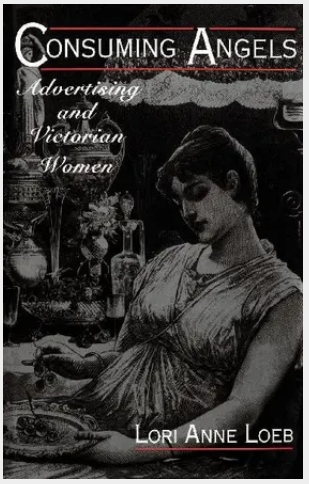
Loeb

Consuming Angels

Advertising and Victorian Women

Timid and retiring, the Victorian housewife was an "angel in the house," or so says the stereotype. But when this angel picked up a popular magazine--The Lady, for instance--she saw in its advertisements images of Greek goddesses, women warriors, queens, actresses, adventurers. These arrestingly sexual and surprisingly powerful images are the subject of Consuming Angels, a major examination of how Victorian ads shaped social values. Stylishly written and featuring 73 reproductions, this book shows how ads used the hedonistic aspects of Victorian culture to sell their wares, glorified consumerism, and mythologized the middle-class life. Images of aggressive women, Loeb shows, played well to both men and women. And ultimately, these ads helped usher in the twentieth century with the creation of a new community: the community of consumers.

Timid and retiring, the Victorian housewife was an "angel in the house", or so says the stereotype. But when this angel picked up a popular magazine she saw in its advertisements images of Grecian goddesses, women warriors, queens, actresses, adventurers. Stylishly written and featuring a wealth of illustrations, Consuming Angels demonstrates how advertisements picked up hedonistic patterns in Victorian culture, glorified the culture's consumerism, and mythologized a middle-class life which offered prosperity for all. Since advertisements appealed to female as well as male consumers, Lori Anne Loeb argues that on some level these advertising images must have touched on the Victorian woman's perception of herself as a powerful force in the home. And she finds in the Victorian conception of heroism democratic aspirations that reveal the origins of the twentieth-century's democracy of consumption, a society held together by a shared culture of consumerism. This richly researched book will appeal to historians, students, and anyone interested in examining the prominent role advertising played in reflecting and shaping Victorian social values and ideals.



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