

Archiving the “Sweet” Candy-Loving Matinee Girl:
Fashion, Confectionaries, and Fan Scrapbooking in Urban American Culture, 1880-1915

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ABSTRACT

A product of Broadway theatre and celebrity culture in New York City, the matinee girl—a fashionable city dweller and a theatre-loving girl—first emerged in popular media at the end of the nineteenth century. She was both a fictional figure in the popular media as well as a young female fan that reflected the tensions of a changing society. In contextualizing the matinee girl within girlhood studies, theatre history, performance studies and fandom, I examine how this modern girl—from a wage-earning immigrant to a middle-class college student—co-existed in public spaces and disrupted power structures and class lines. Chapter one questions how gender was performed and negotiated by the matinee girl through exploring the ways she used temporal and urban spaces to revise and reproduce identities for modern girls between 1880-1915. In using fashion as a tool, she destabilized notions of class and gender. In addition, chapter two explores newspaper articles, postcards, playbills and advertisements to understand the relationship between matinee girls and the consumption of sweets, including chocolate bonbons and ice-cream soda. My research pays particular attention to the ways in which girls destabilized and challenged the categories to which they were assigned, from chewing loudly in public to purchasing their own boxes of chocolates, a symbol of romantic heteronormative relationships. In examining the witty and provocative “The Matinee Girl” columns, two decade-long columns that were published in Winnipeg’s *Town Topics* by Harriet Walker and the *New York Dramatic Mirror* by an anonymous author, chapter three explores how these texts were used to fight against gender stereotypes. In doing so, these columns provided autonomy for girls and highlighted the labour and housing issues affecting single, wage-earning women during the period. Chapter four questions how female fandom was conceptualized and performed by matinee girls by exploring scrapbooks and fan art created by fans of matinee idol sensation, Maude Adams. Finally, I draw on the idea of “place” to understand how girls have been, both then and now, active producers of culture. From making noise to being actively present in public, the matinee girl, in particular, has helped to cultivate a culture of female fandom and shaped modern girlhood.

DEDICATION

To Maria de Jesus and Jose Fernandes Mendonca
for always encouraging me to keep learning.

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This page is about acknowledging those who have helped me to the finish line. It would not be possible to name everyone but there are a few that demand recognition. Without them, this dissertation would not have been possible.

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Introduction

The Girl Fad Phenomenon: A History

In the last decade or so, girls have appeared as the new heroes of television shows, podcasts, and blogs. They have starred in and written their own comedies and have become cultural icons for post-feminist ideologies of femininity. From *Sex and the City*, which follows the lives of four single “girls” living in New York City, to the many popular television shows that include the term girl in their title, including *Gilmore Girls*, *Gossip Girl*, *New Girl*, *Two Broke Girls*, and *Girls*. Each of these television shows represent the changing roles of girls and young women today; they also provide insight into the lives of young women, friendships, and love. Despite the pervasiveness of the term “girl” today, the girl, as a socially active agent in popular culture, first emerged as a popular identity in North America in mid-late nineteenth century. My dissertation looks at the modern girl from a historical approach by examining the matinee girl as an early image of modern girlhood. I argue that this historical figure paved the way for contemporary understandings of girlhood and female fandom.

The matinee girl, a commercial theatre fan, first emerged as a public figure in New York City in the late nineteenth century. She was the first visible female fan in North America and cultivated a culture and community of girlhood that today is recognized as female fandom. The matinee girl was both a fictional character in social commentary, theatre, literature, magazines and newspapers, as well as a historical representation of a young female fan. She was an adoring fan of stage actors and attended cheaper afternoon performances on Broadway with friends or groups of other girls rather than a male companion. She represented a group of young, theatre-loving girls across the U.S., and in Canada, who purchased tickets to matinee performances with their own money, participated in consumer culture by purchasing the latest dress or fashion accessory in order to emulate their favourite stage actress, and collected theatre memorabilia,

including music sheets, actor biographies, commercial scrapbooks, postcards etc. These theatre-loving girls spent hours creating and curating scrapbooks dedicated to their favourite stage heroes/idols and waited in line after performances to meet the stars, sometimes bringing with them bouquets of fresh flowers.¹

Why study matinee girls? The matinee girl becomes a starting point for understanding early female fandom and the ways in which girls cultivated, self-organized, shared, and created a homosocial community, one that established their presence in urban spaces and in popular media. To fully understand the ways in which American commercial theatre shifted at the turn of the century, my research examines American female audiences and the influence they had in the changes that occurred in theatre and performance at the turn of the century. Throughout my dissertation, I point to the different ways that the matinee girl successfully contributed to theatre, female fan culture, understandings of girlhood, and American culture in general. For example, the matinee girl helped shift the types of plays that were produced on Broadway, influenced fashion and beauty products endorsed by actresses, and had a significant impact on the influential star system that was made possible by these theatre-loving adolescent girls.

The matinee girl was part of the “girl fad” that hit New York City—and the West in general—in the 1890s with an array of plays on Broadway, magazines, newspaper articles, and literature that focused on this young, single, frivolous and candy-crazed girl in the big city. The increasing number of girls and young women occupying urban spaces suggests that the matinee girl’s public appearance was a marker for modernity at the turn of the twentieth century. In addition, matinee girls played a significant role in which plays were being produced on

¹ The term matinee idols were often used to refer to male actors.

Broadway, both shifting and feminizing the production of commercial theatre. By 1910, an article published in the *Green Book Album* noted that 85% of young women made up the audience on Wednesday matinees.²

In addition, the matinee girl helped to create fan culture as it is understood today, from attending regular shows, purchasing memorabilia, analyzing plays, exchanging postcards, to creating dialogue and having conversations about stars and stage productions. Thus, my research suggests that this group of girls helped craft both the definition and identity of a female fan culture. It is through the emergence of the matinee girl, as one of the earliest public female fan groups to appear in urban spaces and popular media, that other female fan groups materialized. For example, with the rise of the motion picture, the screen-struck girl appeared, along with specific fan practices that emulated the matinee girl. In fact, it is possible that matinee girls went from attending regular matinees in commercial theatre to attending motion pictures, bringing along their fan practices with them. Thus, I argue that this historical research becomes the founding block to understand female fandom and girl culture.

In examining both the emergence and importance of the girl as a popular cultural phenomenon in the 1880s, this dissertation explores the cultural constructions of identity and the importance of place in the formation of girls' agency, with a particular focus on how urban spaces helped to establish a field of performative stances for girls to negotiate and contest notions of identity. The importance of understanding the nuances of the matinee girl not only establishes the importance of space and place—concepts that are considered crucial to the identity of girlhood today—but also the importance of fan communities that were cultivated by girl culture.

² Marlis Schweitzer, *When Broadway Was the Runway: Theater, Fashion, and American Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009) 37.

With this in mind, the historical and theoretical framework of this dissertation is informed by girlhood studies, fandom, theatre and performance history, and feminist theory in order to examine the phenomenon of the matinee girl and her contributions to American history.

In addition, this dissertation seeks to understand the matinee girl both as a subject who embodied a set of cultural assumptions and stereotypes about class, race and gender, and as a real young woman who took pleasure in the theatre and participated in consumer culture as a form of self-construction and self-expression. In taking this approach, I use a vast array of primary sources—newspapers, posters, postcards, and scrapbooks—to explore the tensions that emerged as more girls were taking up public spaces beginning in the 1880s. These tensions arose from the strong desire to maintain strict notions of class, gender, and age. More importantly, this dissertation is interested in how matinee girls challenged Victorian notions of girlhood and created new identities for girls. Through close analysis of scrapbooking practices and the proliferation of fan art, I explore the lived experiences of young theatre-loving girls at the turn of the century.

Despite the popularity of the matinee girl as a cultural icon during the period, very few scholars have written on the influence of this fan community in American theatre. Historians Richard Butsch and Marlis Schweitzer are among the few who provide important insight into the influence these young women had on the development of commercial theatre in New York City. Butsch, in *The Making of American Audiences: From Stage to Television, 1750-1990*, argues that the “(r)e-gendering of theater was part of fundamental cultural shifts, first to a middle-class founded on respectability, and then to a culture of consumption conceived around the female

shopper.”³ The implication is that the shift in theatre audiences from men to women did not result from the women’s movement. Instead it was a business strategy to market the theatre to a new consumer. In order to engage more women in commercial theatre, managers redefined the theatre as a safe space for girls and women. Alas, it became a feminized space that offered women access to the perceived dangers of the city. According to Schweitzer, among these spaces of consumption that encouraged women’s participation were the department store and ice-cream parlour, drug store, or soda shop that sold ice cream and/or soda water: a popular post-theatre treat for young girls. These feminized spaces were all within close proximity, allowing girls to travel freely from place to place. According to Butsch, “with [the rise of] consumer culture, status and identity were defined through consumption,” and the once popular term, “fashionable,” so often attached to upper class women, shifted to include any woman who participated in consumer culture and could afford the latest fashions, including wage-earning women.⁴ Thus, it was during this period that young women became major players in the consumer industry, including wage-earning immigrant girls who cultivated a life of leisure outside the workplace.

This cultural shift of the “fashionable” woman was particularly important to the matinee girl phenomenon. Girls of all classes, from upper, middle, and working-class girls, began to dress in similar styles and participate in consumer culture along the same lines, either at the theatre or the soda shop. Therefore, the emergence of the matinee girl fad meant that Euro-American girls were considered “fashionable,” thereby conflating class distinctions and identities. The theatre, in particular, became a runway for the latest fashion trends. Schweitzer’s research in *When*

³ Richard Butsch, *The Making of American Audiences: From Stage to Television, 1750-1990* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 66.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 67.

Broadway was the Runway, examines the theatre as a type of fashion show, where actresses paraded Parisian fashions, hair styles and make-up for audiences to take note. Essentially, these young women were attending the theatre and transforming their physical appearances to look more like stage heroines, from dying their hair colour to wearing similar outfits to the ones they saw onstage. In fact, theatre critics and journalists often commented on the many Annie Russells, Sarah Bernhardts, and Ellen Terrys there were sitting in theatres or roaming the city. As such, fashion and beauty became integral to the identity of girls at the turn of the century. In addition, historian Kathy Peiss provides an in-depth exploration of the ways fashion allowed working class girls to wear similar styles of clothing to upper class girls, blurring class lines.

Women and girls' access to fashion was easily available in New York City. In fact, "Grand Street clothing stores cheaply produced the styles found in exclusive establishments. Working women read the fashion columns, and many could observe wealthy women in department stores and the streets for inspiration in their dressmaking," notes Peiss.⁵ This was instrumental in the way matinee girls, of all classes, were able to blur class lines by wearing similar styles, albeit cheaply made. In addition, Peiss notes that "patterns of speech, manners, levels of schooling, attitudes toward self-improvement, and class consciousness differentiated groups of women beyond the obvious divisions of ethnicity and religion. In workshops, stores, clubs, and dance halls, observers noted the cliquishness of adolescent girls around these

⁵ Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), 63.

considerations.”⁶ Thus, the desire of the matinee girl to cultivate homosocial relationships was based on shared interests.

While my research provides insight into the fan practices of early twentieth-century girls in North America, I want to clarify that the fictional figures of the matinee girl do not represent all American and European experiences of girls, nor does it speak to all self-identified “matinee girls” during the period. Through my research I provide context on the performance of class and gender by examining specific immigrant girls living in New York City—Italian, Irish, and Jewish—who moved for work and cultivated a life of leisure outside of their workplace. While many Anglo girls were attending commercial theatre, and participating in the consumption of chocolate bonbons and star memorabilia, it is important to note that immigrant and working-class girls were also present.

Communities of immigrant girls were emerging in New York City. As they moved to the city for work, they saved their hard-earned money to purchase cheaper theatre tickets on Saturday afternoons. In the workplace, they cultivated friendships and built communities based on their leisure activities. Matinee girls attended the theater together in groups of two or more girls. In popular media, these immigrant girls were usually depicted as disruptive, both in their physicality (shabby gloves that burst at the seam) and their behavior (clapping in all the wrong places). In my research, I argue that critics were threatened by this new type of female identity and accused such matinee girls of lacking in femininity. This new group of young girls, many of them recent immigrants from Europe, made themselves both seen and heard. They prompted a backlash from

⁶ Kathy Peiss, “Putting on Style” in *The Girls’ History and Culture Reader: The Twentieth Century*, eds. Miriam Forman-Brunell and Leslie Paris, (Urbana, Chicago, and Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2011) 49.

the media however, as they blurred class lines when they attended the theatre with upper-class Anglo girls, and challenged their identities as working-class immigrant girls by wearing fashionable outfits and emulating the matinee stars on stage.

Before moving on, it is important to note that class was a crucial component in the development and image of the popular and new modern girl. Despite the vast numbers of girls emerging during this period in print and popular media, they were always predominantly Anglo and of middle or upper-class. My research indicates, however, that there was a significantly large population of wage-earning European immigrant girls. It was the integration of wage-earning and immigrant girls that raised fears and tensions about this new, emerging, modern girl that occupied the urban streets of America. These wage-earning girls challenged the idea of a white middle and upper class Anglo girl and offered a representation of a young woman who blurred class lines. Despite wage-earning and immigrant girls destabilizing gender and class during the period, it is crucial to highlight that the experiences of black women and girls were significantly different from the research I include in my dissertation.

Although the scholarship on race and girlhood at the turn of the twentieth century continues to have limitations, Robin Bernstein's remarkable work in *Racial Innocence: Performing American Childhood from Slavery to Civil Rights* provides an in-depth analysis on the racial concept of "childhood innocence."⁷ In examining the experiences of racialized and white children, Bernstein explores the ways in which toys, books, and other objects are scripted by historical acts. She concludes that black children are excluded from the concept of innocence. In addition, *Race and Gender in the Broadway Chorus*, a doctoral dissertation by Kellee Rene

⁷ Robin Bernstein, *Racial Innocence: Performing American Childhood from Slavery to Civil Rights* (New York University Press, 2011).

Van Aken, provides insight on gender and race on the early twentieth-century stage. Van Aken historicizes black women's contribution and participation in American theatre, and particularly chorus girls. In addition to this crucial work on nineteenth and early twentieth century scholarship on gender, race, and girlhood, is Nazera Sadiq Wright's recent book, *Black Girlhood in the Nineteenth Century*.⁸ This archival research, including newspapers and works of fiction traces the writing on black girlhood in African American print in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and suggests that "writers relied upon black girls as emblems of home and family. Whatever stage they chose for their writing, the black girls they wrote about appeared to carry stories of warning and hope, concern and optimism, struggles and success."⁹ Throughout her research she draws on tropes and representations of black girls, including Frado in *Harriet Wilson's Our Nig* (1859) and Linda Brent in Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861). In addition, she examines a serialized novel by Frances E.W. Harper from the late 1880s and a manual of conduct for black children by Silas X. Floyd's *Floyd's Flowers: Or, Duty and Beauty for Colored Children*. This work provides insight into the newspaper advice columns of Gertrude Bustill Mossell as well as clippings that express the challenges of and prejudice against black girlhood in America. In taking these resolutely historical documents, she provides extensive and crucial documentation on the ways in which black girlhood was represented, from black men's perspective to the way women wrote about black girls in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

⁸ Kellee Rene Van Aken, *Race and Gender in the Broadway Chorus* (University of Pittsburg, 2007).

⁹ Nazera Sadiq Wright, *Black Girlhood in the Nineteenth Century* (University of Illinois, 2016), 14.

My decision to focus on immigrant and working-class girls' participation in the theatre is based on my research findings. More and more of the young women who were employed in shops and/or factories were pursuing leisure outside of the home. The theatre provided girls with opportunities to assert agency by playing and experimenting with new identities. This was appealing to young immigrant girls who left their homes in Europe for employment in New York City and were looking to identify with the new culture they found themselves in. Therefore, dressing like stars on stage and other American girls helped them to feel connected to their new homes.

The Matinee: A History

The American theatre as a space of leisure and entertainment has historically been considered masculine. However, young women's participation came after the implementation of matinee shows. Historian Richard Butsch's documentation of the theatre as it transitioned from a male-centred space to a female one provides crucial historical context. As he notes, throughout most of the nineteenth century, the American theatre was dominated by men. In the 1800s drama columns appeared in male-focused newspapers rather than ladies' magazines.¹⁰ Theatre managers chose plays that were considered masculine or "manly" with villains and "robust heroes" who evoked hyper-masculine traits over romance and matinee idols.¹¹ To entice men to attend the theatre, prostitutes were given free entry into the gallery. However, while prostitution was profitable to the theatre industry, it also raised concerns about the respectability of the space. By

¹⁰ Butsch, *The Making of American Audiences*. It wasn't until the 1880s that dramatic criticism appeared in women's magazines.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 68-69, popular "manly" plays included *Richard III*, *MacBeth*, or plays that with heroes such as Spartacus (a slave), Metamora (noble savage) or Mose (the Bowery b'hoy).

the 1830s and 1840s questions and concerns about the respectability of the theatre submerged in popular media. Butsch explains, “The subdued qualities that ruled middle-class behavior in the 1830s and 1840s insisted on a separation from coarseness, rowdiness, and other forms of emotional outlet that characterized the lower classes.”¹² In response to the “rowdiness” around the culture of American theatre during the period and the rise of middle-class respectability, including “[...] middle class culture required men to suppress the roughness that had been the mark of American masculinity, and continued to be so for the working class, and to adopt restraint and self-control that was becoming the defining character of the middle class at midcentury.”¹³ This attempt to “tame” the audience’s behaviour, which was linked to stereotypes of the working class and its presumed lack of manners, resulted in the elimination of alcohol in the theatre and the admission of men who were accompanied by a woman. This process of shifting the theatre from a “rowdy” space to one of respectability was slow, in fact, it wasn't until the 1870s that prostitution was extinct from commercial theatre.

As such, the re-gendering of the theatre space became an attempt to dismantle separate spheres of the public and private. According to Butsch, this process happened in three phases. The first involved reconstructing the theatre into a family space, and the second involved de-masculinizing or eliminating any masculinity inherent in the theatre. And finally, the third phase was to introduce regular matinees which meant producing melodramas that would entice women. These changes meant that “women *as women* were recruited as the primary audience.”¹⁴ By the

¹² Ibid., 72.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid., 68.

1880s, it was common to see young single women, on Wednesday or Saturday afternoons, filling up theatre seats and giggling or nibbling on chocolate bonbons between the acts, or meandering the city as they discussed in excitement the play they had just seen, or others drinking sweet bubbly soda at a nearby soda shop.

The transition of the theatre from a male-dominated space into one that was more female-friendly, however, took time, beginning with occasional holiday matinees as early as the 1830s. New York's opera matinees were becoming popular and better attended by the 1850s, but it wasn't until the 1860s that regular matinees became established in commercial theatres.¹⁵ Beginning in the 1860s, vaudeville manager Tony Pastor wanted to entice women to attend the theatre so he ran "*Ladies Invitation Nights*," a night of free theatre for women only.¹⁶ He produced melodramas that offered female audiences female heroines and male leads. He even went so far as to offer women door prizes and household necessities which included everything from dress patterns and bonnets, to food like cake and ham, and items including flour and coal.¹⁷ Schweitzer has discussed the popularity of door prizes that enticed women to attend an afternoon show, outlining the details of the events that caused the pushing and shoving of women rushing to get their hands on a new Merry Widow hat that was offered to audiences. As more and more women attended afternoon matinees, the theatre came to be considered a space of leisurely

¹⁵ See Butsch; Schweitzer; Peiss.

¹⁶ Schweitzer, 57.

¹⁷ Ibid; Butsch, 105.

activity for women and girls. This, of course, came with criticism around women's influence in "dumbing down" commercial theatre.¹⁸

By the 1880s, girls were regularly attending afternoon performances. As per Schweitzer, the popularity of the theatre as an afternoon activity that encouraged homosocial relationships between young women was imperative during this period. In line with Schweitzer, Peiss asserts, "It was in leisure that women played with identity, trying on new images and roles, appropriating the cultural forms around them—clothing, music, language—to push at the boundaries of immigrant, working-class life. This presentation of self was one way to comment upon and mediate the dynamics of urban life and labor—poverty and the magnet of upward mobility, sexual assertion and the maintenance of respectability, daughterly submission and the attractions of autonomy and romance, the grinding workday" and the possibilities of urban life.¹⁹ With the rise of matinees at the end of the nineteenth century, the theatre became a popular leisurely activity for girls of all classes. For example, Marion Earle, a young working girl, wrote a letter to *The Evening World* in 1902 proposing to form a small club for working-class girls to attend the theatre together rather than going alone or relying on a male companion. She encouraged the creation of "a little club of wage-earning girls who, like myself, [long] occasionally for an evening's diversion [of opera] or theatre, and who [do] not wish to depend upon an invitation from time to time from a man."²⁰ Hoping to receive a few letters from interested wage-earning girls, she was surprised when over one hundred girls responded with great interest to her letter.

¹⁸ Schweitzer provides insight into the ways critics blamed matinee girls for decreasing the value of theatre, she uses the term "dumbing down" theatre.

¹⁹ Peiss, *Putting on Style*, 62-63.

²⁰ Schweitzer, 39.

The Bachelor Girls' Club was officially formed after its preliminary meeting in New York City, which 150 girls attended.²¹ Actress Elsie de Wolfe, upon hearing about the Bachelor Girls' Club, provided free tickets for the girls to attend her performance of *The Way of the World*. Schweitzer proposes that this female club “gave working women an opportunity to declare their economic independence, express pride in themselves as single, professional women, and perhaps most importantly, indulge in their own tastes and interests.”²² Thus, the desire to self-organize and the will to create a homosocial community is evidenced in the creation of *The Bachelor Girls' Club*.

In addition, the identity of the matinee girl was organized around desire and pleasure. The fan or the “viewer” doesn’t exist without the star or the “viewed,” and vice-versa.²³ As the matinee girl watched the performance while consuming chocolates from a box bearing an image that resembles her, she both affirmed her identity as well as helped to construct it. The eroticism that arose between the viewer and the viewed and her desire for the chocolate bonbons established the matinee girl as an active agent during the period. Such consumptive acts also broke down the barriers between viewer and viewed through the desire of the matinee girls as they cannot exist without one another.

Thus, the culture of the matinee girl was informed by an intense desire: the desire for friendship, the matinee star, and for herself as she is represented in popular media. This deep desire was seen as acceptable; it was even encouraged during the period. The matinee girl was recognized as a young adolescent who went to the theatre to express her desire for the stars.

²¹ Schweitzer, 38.

²² *Ibid.*, 39.

²³ Rebecca Schneider, *The Explicit Body in Performance* (London: Routledge, 1997), 88-92.

According to Sharon Marcus, “Victorian commodity culture incited an erotic appetite for women, framed spectacular images of women for a female gaze and prompted women’s fantasies about dominating a woman or submitting to one.”²⁴ As such, the culture of the matinee girl was organized around female relationships. Girls devoted their Saturday afternoons to sit in the theatre with their female friends and watch their favourite stage-interest. This desire became a part of their fan practice. They devoted hours cutting and pasting articles to scrapbooks, collecting postcards, writing, in their best penmanship, their favourite lines from a play. This eroticism towards other women was considered respectable. Marcus suggests, “Victorian society accepted female homoeroticism as a component of respectable womanhood and encouraged women and girls to desire, scrutinize, and handle simulacra of alluring femininity”.²⁵ While these relationships and acts were socially accepted, it is noteworthy to point to the importance of intense female desire that was rooted in the identity and practices of the matinee girl.

In chapter two I point to how bonbon boxes portrayed a sexualized image of a matinee girl. If the box of bonbons, branded with an image of herself, is symbolic of pleasure then the act of eating the chocolate affirms her desire of herself. My fourth chapter examines the fans of actress Maude Adams. Not only did fans cultivate relationships of close female friends, but Maude Adams was known to have a close circle of female friends, some of whom evolved out of her fans. Both Phyllis Robbins and Laura Kennedy dedicated their fandom to Adams’ performance, attending multiple performances of the same show, creating intricate scrapbooks that showcased their all-consuming hobby, followed the star on tour, purchased photographs,

²⁴ Sharon Marcus, *Between Women: Friendship, Desire, and Marriage in Victorian England*, (Princeton University Press, 2007) 112.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 103.

postcards, and newspapers. In the case of Robbins, her friendship with Adams blossomed out of her constant presence at the theatre which promoted Adams to invite her backstage. Thus, the relationships cultivated during this period are deeply rooted in desire.

The Turn-of-the-Century Girl: From Victorian to Modern

In order to understand the category of girl, it is crucial to turn to its etymology. While the origins of the term continue to be unknown, it was once used to refer to social status, for example, according to The Oxford English Dictionary “A female servant or domestic employee; a maid ... Frequently with connotations of social inferiority.”²⁶ While the term “girl” has gone through historical shifts, contemporary scholarship understands the category of “girl” as a stage to be passed through on the way to becoming a woman.²⁷ Catherine Driscoll argues that while every woman has experienced girlhood at some point and every female child is a girl, it is not clear what boundaries delineate girl as a category and what girlhood means, as it tends to have various registers for different generations and cultural groups. She proposes that despite the murky understanding of girls, “Girls, young women, and feminine adolescents were highly visible in twentieth century Western culture—mostly as a marker of immature and malleable identity.”²⁸ In drawing from girlhood studies scholarship, I wish to demonstrate through my research that girlhood is a set of performative practices that coalesce under the term.

As such, my research on the matinee girl examines the performative identities of girls at the turn of the century and the ways in which they established an identity that was influenced by

²⁶ www.oed.com, accessed October 29, 2017.

²⁷ See Peiss, and Catherine Driscoll, “Girls Today: Girls, Girl Culture and Girl Studies.” *Girlhood Studies*, 1.1, Summer 2008, 2.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

the rise of glitzy celebrity and Broadway culture. Thus, the girl as both a subject and an identity is a modern construction, one that reflects the social, economic and cultural shifts of the period. In order to understand the emergence of the modern girl, an important figure who has paved the road for our understanding of girls today, it is crucial to examine the cultural-political issues that were occurring at the time.

The emergence of girls as public figures became a national phenomenon in the west at the end of the nineteenth century. Some questions that drive my research include: what role does the modern girl play in historical understandings of girl culture? The modern girl represented the changing cultural environment of urban spaces. She “became recognizable, consumable, and locally intelligible” at the end of the nineteenth century.²⁹ What made a girl modern? The Modern Girl Around the World Research Group investigates the modern girl, noting that “the Modern Girl was singled out as a marker of ‘modernity.’”³⁰ She “always relied upon and reworked notions of modernity and femininity (and consequently, also the ideas of masculinity).”³¹ In distinguishing between the modern girl and the New Woman, both emerging at relatively the same moment in history, “the New Woman is identified with reform and with social and political advocacy,” whereas the modern girl is associated with “‘frivolous’ pursuits of consumption, romance, and fashion.”³² They were two very different identities: one of which was rooted in

²⁹ Alys Eve Weinbaum, Lynn M. Thomas, Priti Ramamurthy, Uta G. Poiger, Madeleine Yue Dong, and Tani E. Barlow, “The Modern Girl as Heuristic Device: Collaboration, Connective, Comparison, Multidirectional Citation,” *The Modern Girl Around the World: Consumption, Modernity, and Globalization* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 8.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 9.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

political advancement while the other was defined by her desire to have fun and participate in consumer culture. Throughout my dissertation I refer to matinee fans as “girls,” a term that reflects modernity. The matinee girl, then, was a modern construction, one whose desires and pleasures were tied to her gender, marital status, and age.

Education, Labour and Commodity Practices for Girls

The modern girl, particularly the matinee girl, was a response to the changing climate of the period. Due to changes in education, labour, and commodity practices, new and shifting identities were being created for girls at the turn of the century.³³ Jane Hunter in *How Young Ladies Become Girls: The Victorian Origins of American Girlhood*, Sally Mitchell’s, *The New Girl: Girls’ Culture in England, 1880-1915* and *Secret Gardens: Satanic Mills: Placing Girls in European History, 1760-1960* edited by Maynes, Soland and Benninghaus reaffirm that education, labour, and leisure all played significant roles in redefining and determining girlhood as a key stage in life. Prior to the mid-nineteenth century, there were two categories for girls and women: child (pre-marriage) and woman (post-marriage). According to Maynes et al., “the parameters defining youth, marking its beginning and its end, were becoming much clearer and institutionally defined for both girls and boys.”³⁴ These defining changes were largely attributed to laws that redefined what it meant to be between child and adult at the end of the nineteenth century. The changing expectations of adolescent girls were instrumental in forming the identity of the modern girl.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Maynes et al., *Secret Gardens, Satanic Mills, Placing Girls in European History, 1750-1960*. (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2005), 3.

A major shift in the identity of girls was their mandatory requirement to attend school. By the end of the nineteenth century girls were required to attend school for a few years, regardless of their class. Working-class girls attended school for two or three years and then went on to work in factories or department stores. Middle and upper-class girls, on the other hand, stayed in school a little longer and took on careers as secretaries. Maynes et al. note, “most girls as well as boys attended schools at least intermittently until at least age twelve or thirteen” at the end of the nineteenth century.³⁵ Attending school not only allowed girls to leave their mothers’ home and their housework duties but it also introduced them to the sidewalks of city life. Aside from going to and from school, girls laid claim to public spaces where they would purchase drinks at soda fountains, buy treats at confectionaries, or run errands for their mothers. The period from childhood to adulthood varied for many girls and the girl was always identified as a “girl” up until she married. This means that the “girl” period could last longer for some young women than for others.

Although education played an instrumental role in the reshaping of female youth in the latter part of the nineteenth century, the changes that occurred in the labour market were crucial to girl culture. Recently, cultural historians have focused on the working-class girl, specifically the shop girl and factory girl that promenaded throughout city streets.³⁶ Girls of all classes co-existed and filled urban sidewalks. Their visibility in public space challenged notions of Victorian girlhood and created a new culture for the modern girl that challenged patriarchal and

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Nan Enstad, *Ladies of Labor, Girls of Adventure* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000); Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements*; Shelly Stamp, *Movie-Struck Girls*, (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2000).

domestic authority.³⁷ It was this act of public visibility that allowed girls to challenge gender and class politics.

In addition to education, the labour market played an instrumental role in shifting the identity of girls. The labour market provided girls with opportunities to find work outside the home. Their presence outside of the home called attention to the “girl” as a social category. Thus, the labour market afforded girls the agency to become active consumers. According to Sally Mitchell, “between 1880 and 1915 both working-class and middle-class girls increasingly occupied a separate culture.”³⁸ These modern girls were “no longer a child, not yet a (sexual) adult [but] occupied a provisional free space. Girls’ culture reveals new ways of being, new modes of behaviour, and new attitudes that were not yet acceptable for adult women.”³⁹ On the other hand, these new modern girls also represented tensions of urban spaces. Christina Boufis in her essay, “Of Home Birth and Breeding: Eliza Lynn Linton and the Girl of the Period,” asserts that the girl represented class dissolution and fears of societal change. Linton advocated for a return to motherhood and housekeeping, which was considered to be “women’s first social duty.”⁴⁰ Linton’s article sold over forty thousand copies and became a cultural sensation.

³⁷ Jane Hunter, *How Young Ladies Became Girls: The Victorian Origins of American Girlhood* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 273.

³⁸ Sally Mitchell, *The New Girl; Girls’ Culture in England, 1880-1915* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 3.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Christina Boufis, “Of Home Birth and Breeding’: Eliza Lynn Linton and the Girl of the Period,” *Girls Own Cultural Histories of the Anglo-American Girl, 1830-1915*, Ed. Claudia Nelson and Lynne Vallone (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1994), 98.

However, both the modern girl and the new woman challenged Victorian ideologies of female identity and instead offered new opportunities for women.

The Girl Fad Phenomenon at the Turn-of-the-Twentieth-Century

By the 1890s an array of new *types* of girls emerged in popular media. From the confident Gibson Girl, the educated Fisher Girl, and the sporty Christy Girl, to the vulnerable stage-struck girl, the boisterous matinee girl, the frivolous shop girl, the factory girl, etc., these iconic “girls” reflected the cultural shifts during the period as well as the fears and pleasures of a changing society.⁴¹ During this period, these images infiltrated magazines, sold products, and were central figures in films and plays. Posters of different types of girls and women filled up shop windows and were published in magazines and newspapers.



Figure 1: Gibson Girls at the beach

⁴¹ Carolyn Kitch, *The Girl on the Magazine Cover: The Origins of Visual Stereotypes in American Mass Media* (The University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

One of the most famous girl types during the period was the Gibson Girl emerging out of the late nineteenth century. She was a type of modern girl created by Charles Dana Gibson (Figure 1). According to Maria Elena Buszek in *Pin-Up Grrrls: Feminism, Sexuality, Popular Culture*, “the Gibson Girl was held up as not just an actively desiring, but an abundantly *desired* sexual object.”⁴² The image of the Gibson Girl flourished and by 1900 *Life*, *Scribner’s Harper’s Monthly*, *Century* and *Collier’s Weekly* had published his illustrations. Gibson’s girls were beautiful, young, hyper-sexualized, and predominantly Anglo. They were depicted as independent; went to the beach with friends, cycled around the city, and rejected men’s flirting. They also became symbolic of the new modern girl of the period.

The Gibson Girl’s increased popularity can be reflected in the various material objects made and sold, from handkerchiefs to china, posters and framed prints. She became an iconic figure and recognized across the country. According to Carolyn Kitch, this caricature of the new girl sold ideas of gender.⁴³ She maintains that “the Gibson Girl image was valued as a status symbol, [and] it also contained specific ideas about gender.”⁴⁴ While Buszek and Kitch argue that the Gibson Girl was a type of New Woman, I challenge this as each of these emerging “girl” types had one fundamental similarity: they occupied a life of leisure. Neither girl was political nor did they represent the women’s movement. In fact, Kitch states, “Gibson’s version of the New Woman was one who came from wealth and had no need or wish for political or financial independence. Even so, she often was shown (in drawings where she had a body) in some sort of

⁴² Maria Elena Buszek, *Pin-Up Grrrls: Feminism, Sexuality, Popular Culture* (Duke University Press, 2006), 61.

⁴³ Kitch, *The Girl on the Magazine Cover*.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 41.

conflict with men. The strong will of women was a recurring theme in Gibson's commentary on turn-of-the-century gender relations."⁴⁵ The Gibson girl, I argue, represented the leisure and independence that new modern girls were afforded. She occupied public spaces and gained access to urban streets because of her flare for fun. Therefore, I argue that the new girl fad suggests that the Gibson Girl was a caricature of a modern girl, not a New Woman, as her name reveals. This new type of girl was depicted as being interested in enjoying herself in public spaces. She was not invested in politics, nor did she fight for women's independence. Instead she cultivated a life of leisure, refused men's advances, and wished to be surrounded by a community of other girls, qualities that are inherent of the modern girl of the period and also the matinee girl.



Figure 2: Harrison Fisher's College Girls' Fudge Party, 1908

⁴⁵ Ibid., 41-43.

In addition to the Gibson Girl at the turn of the century, the Fisher and Christy Girls were also both American ideals of the modern girl, all emerging in the same period. Harrison Fisher published a series of illustrations of college girls called “Harrison Fisher’s College Girls,” which Kitch states is a “tribute to the young women who comprised 40 percent of college students by the century’s second decade. Fisher’s college scenes blended conventionally feminine activities with newer pastimes of the outdoor girl.”⁴⁶ The Fisher Girl sang and cooked, but she also played basketball and rowed (Figure 2). In the example provided, the Harrison College girls have gathered to play music and cook. They participate in both masculine and feminine activities. Despite the vast differences in each type of girl they all represent the emergence of a newfound community of female urbanites.



Figure 3: Howard Chandler Christy, “At the Theatre”

⁴⁶ Kitch, 48.

The Christy Girl, created by Howard Chandler Christy, was more popular than the Fisher Girl, and was published in *Scribner's*, *Leslie's Weekly*, and *Harper's Monthly*. His image, "At the Theatre" depicts a woman who is watching a performance. Her body image suggests a disinterest in her male companion as she focuses on the stage with her lorgnette in hand. The Christy girl, Kitch notes, had her debut in the late 1890s, and like the Gibson girl, had her share of hats and shoes named after her. Christy depicted his girls as physically fit. His depiction of young women played tennis or participated in outdoor life. In addition, "Christy's beliefs paralleled those of Edward Bok, who editorialized in *The Ladies' Home Journal* that 'A truly educated girl ... comes back to her home and friends broadened in heart as well as in mind ... Her greatest lessons are to be learned after she leaves college.'"⁴⁷ While the Christy Girl had access to higher education, the expectation that she marry after she graduated maintained the status quo. As a young liberated woman, she was celebrated along with the Fisher and Gibson girls.

These three types of girls are only a few that emerged during the girl fad and were made popular by their extensive media coverage. The images of young, single girls were making their way into the public eye and represented the *girlification* happening to North America's urban fabric.⁴⁸ While the Gibson, Fisher and Christie girls were ideal American girls of the period, the theatre itself had a number of girl types emerging as well, including the stage-struck girl, the Broadway girl, chorus girls, and the matinee girl, all of whom had articles, columns, or images

⁴⁷ qtd. in Kitch, 48.

⁴⁸ I use the term "girlifying" to indicate that these girls were not just feminizing spaces but also establishing a space where young modern girls could disrupt and challenge notions of femininity and recreate ideologies of what it meant to be young and feminine at the turn of the century. The new girl was a modern, young adolescent or a young woman who was single, financially independent, and interested in leisure and consumer culture.

published in the popular press. By the end of the nineteenth century, the “girl fad” was in full swing in New York City.

Of the many girl types during this period, theatre-loving girls of all classes co-existed on the urban streets of New York, at the theatre or opera house, and in the drug store, raising concerns about the morality of wage-earning girls. As more immigrant and wage-earning young girls were taking up spaces outside of the home, the criticism about their participation in public life was considered to be distasteful. According to Peiss, “immigrant cultures that dominated the urban working class at this time, young women were to be dutiful daughters who helped with the housework after their day of wage labor, turned over their pay envelopes unopened, and followed the Old-World traditions about women’s social participation that, in some cases, were highly restrictive.”⁴⁹ With the rise of immigration to large cities like New York or Chicago immigrant girls were experiencing the city in new ways. Peiss notes that the working culture in shops and factories, for example, was shifting as more young women were taking on employment. The idea that leisure was accessible to working class girls was cultivated and reinforced in the workplace.

As such, with the expansion of commercial forms of leisure such as dance halls and theatres at the turn of the century, the expectations for young working-class women to conform to old traditions loosened. According to Peiss “commercialized recreation fostered a youth-oriented, mixed-sex world of pleasure, where female participation was profitable and encouraged. Many young women, particularly the daughters of immigrants, came to identify ‘cheap amusements’ as the embodiment of American urban culture, particularly its individualism, ideology of

⁴⁹ Peiss, *Cheap Amusements*, 5.

consumption, and affirmation of dating and courtship outside parental control.”⁵⁰ These girls likely attended cheap matinees and their public visibility helped to recreate new notions and roles for the modern girl in America.

The Rise of Transportation and the Emergence of Women in Public Space

Why were girls taking up public spaces *now*? When examining the girl as a new category at the turn of the century, it is crucial to highlight the expanding transportation options that offered girls access to the city. Along with the rise of immigration and employment opportunities in urban centres, Alison Piepmeier asserts that it was the rise of transportation that provided the female body with cultural visibility. From the subway to the bicycle, women gained access to explore the city in new ways. Girls’ use of transportation meant that they had the freedom to navigate and challenge the tensions that attempted to control and limit their mobility. Hunter notes, “As girls attended school, strolled the city streets, met and flirted with friends, and visited bake shops, they came to reevaluate their lives, challenging the narrow terms with which they had measured value and meaning.”⁵¹ This accessibility to public exploration pushed many girls to question and assert their agency.

The emergence of the subway, which opened in 1904 in New York City, provided women and girls with new ways of getting around the city. The subway granted female citizens of New York opportunities to travel beyond their communities and into larger social spaces. Therefore, women and girls had the opportunity to leave the confines of the home and travel without a companion, either to do errands for their mothers, or to attend school. Thus, the mobility of girls

⁵⁰ Ibid., 6

⁵¹ Hunter, 2.

and young women in public destabilized categories of public and private that had been historically attached to gender. Despite this new way of traveling, a systemic attempt to maintain boundaries and power structures between women and men was still prevalent. For example, in 1909 *The Evening World* printed an image of a subway with a caption that read “Mid-Car Doors for Women Would End Present Subway Horrors” which illustrates the division of gender in public and an attempt to continue the segregation of gender (Figure 4). While the article asserts that middle cars be made available exclusively for the “women who are forced to travel in the subway” and whose distress is caused by “their inability to withstand the rough treatment received from male passengers,” it also argues that, “if the middle doors were reserved exclusively for women, it not only would give them a better chance at obtaining seats, but would also spare them the torture of struggling in the mass of pushing, crowding, desperate men, who fight like wild animals for a place in a car.”⁵² The literal representation of the image— which illustrates men clustered around the front and rear doors while the women crowded into the middle car, between the men—maintains that mobility should be structured and controlled.

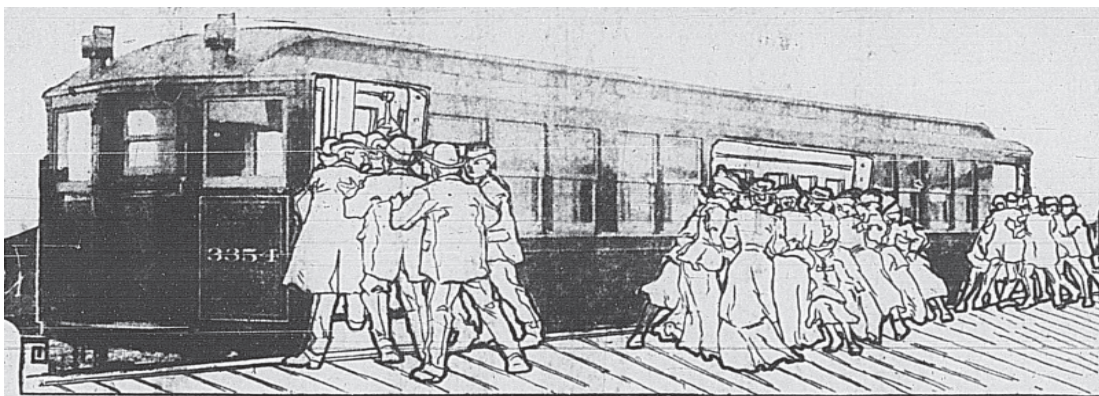


Figure 4: *The Evening World*. 21 March 1909

⁵² “Mid-Car Doors for Women Would End Present Subway Horrors,” *The Evening World*, March 1909.

These rapid transformations in early twentieth-century New York City, from being employed to accessing public transportation, offered women opportunities to be part of the cityscape. In “A Girl’s Letter,” published by *Pictorial Review* on 15 November 1899, Polly writes to her dear friend Edith while revealing the urban spaces to which she had access. Polly writes, “[w]e took an automobile and toddled merrily up the avenue. It was a lovely drive, and as we passed the park I stopped the cab and ordered him to go to Francis.”⁵³ She talks about moving through the city, from shop to shop in search of the latest fashionable outfits. “I was almost sorry when we came to Sixtieth Street, and pulled up (or in a horseless trap one say handled, or cranked up?) at No. 16 East” where her friend Kitty orders “a blue Oxford cloth, flecked with grey, lined with pale blue. The skirt is to be made with the new box plait. The collar and revers of silver fox.”⁵⁴ The girls move to No. 464 Columbus Avenue to look at tailored gowns and furs and then to No. 381 Fifth Avenue where Polly buys a gown and is “so in love.”⁵⁵ Finally, Kitty declares, “To Paul Dominik’s, No. 1383 Broadway” where “we found everything pretty and fashionable in the fur line. The prices were remarkably moderate, considering the cut and style.”⁵⁶ Polly continues to name the different locations where the girls stop, “Bergdorf & Voight’s, No. 125 Fifth avenue” and then “we went to E. Weingreen, No. 786 Broadway. Their line is alluring.”⁵⁷ Finally, she says, “We fell in the café across the street and had dinner.”⁵⁸ Polly documents the

⁵³ “A Girl’s Letter,” *Pictorial Review*, 15 November 1899.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

different spaces in the city to which she has access, establishing a sense of social freedom that (presumably middle and upper class) girls occupied.

With an influx of women participating in public life, social spaces started to cater to female patrons. Outside the theatre, the large boulevards between Union and Madison Square on Fifth Avenue, going east towards Sixth Avenue and west to Broadway were lined with restaurants and bars, small boutiques and large department stores that provided opportunities for women to wander between shopping sprees, confectioner's shops, see a matinee show, or meet at the soda shop post-show to indulge in a bubbly vanilla soda. Hunter suggests that these spaces allowed girls a sense of agency, and "... girls who were no longer defined by domestic work, and who spent much of their time outside of the home, either at school, or in public thoroughfares walking to and from school, began to think of themselves in different terms. Girls began to define themselves by their capacity for fun, and by the figure they cut stepping out in public, rather than simply by their domestic virtue."⁵⁹ This new landscape created a culture of consumption and changed societal ideologies of what constituted female spaces.⁶⁰ While the terms agency and access are contested in relation to girls during this period, in drawing from Hunter, I argue that the ability to participate in public life provided girls of all classes with some agency to blend class lines and to experiment with female identity. It is important to note that there were still

⁵⁹ Hunter, 305.

⁶⁰ Mona Domosh, "'Gorgeous Incongruities: Polite Politics and Public Space on the Streets of Nineteenth Century New York City,'" *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 88.2 (June 1998), 209-226.

boundaries and control on women and girls' access to the city, which I explore through the popular press' cloaked concerns and criticism on the matinee girl in chapter two.⁶¹

The Wheeler or Bicycle Craze

In addition to the new modes of transportation that emerged during this period, the bicycle craze made a significant impact on the way women were seen in public. The bicycle, or “wheeler,” provided women with a kind of physical mobility that took them beyond the public roads and neighborhoods which they were familiar with and into Broadway, where theatres, confectioners and soda shops were feminizing their spaces to cater to young women. This new movement helped push women's political advancement. In fact, “nothing in recent times has done more for the desirable advancement of women than the bicycle,” claimed the *New York Sun* in 1896.⁶² The bicycle meant that the female body was out of the home and in public. It also meant that she was free of the physical constraints of clothing that had confined the body: instead of long skirts and tight-fitting corsets that limited the body from movement, she began to wear bloomers and pants which allowed the ability to move freely. This form of dress was considered to be risqué, as it exposed her bare ankles.

⁶¹ Scholar Angela McRobbie, in her examination of British women, argues that not all women had access to the same kinds of agency. For example, middle and upper-class women had a different type of access to department stores than wage earning girls. She argues that upper and middle-class girls were free to consume in ways that other girls were not. Instead the access of women of lower classes—immigrant and wage-earning—to such spaces as the department store was likely based on being employed there. In other words, they consumed differently. The same argument can be made about the matinee girl. However, American girls were pushing boundaries. Girls of different classes were still participating as audiences and actively engaging with what they were seeing on stage in the way of producing fan art (see chapter four).

⁶² “Women and the Bicycle,” *New York Sun*, August 9, 1896.

This transformation was celebrated by some, including *The Columbian* (Pennsylvania) that stated in 1895, “she is riding to greater freedom, to a nearer equality with man, to the habit of taking care of herself, and to new views on the subject of clothes philosophy.”⁶³ This change in women’s “clothes philosophy” created interest in what women were wearing. Newspaper reporters felt it was their duty to offer their thoughts and opinions on women’s habits, this is seen in discussing the matinee girl which I discuss in chapter one. One article in particular, from the *New York Sun* in 1897, provides a detailed description, complete with illustrations of women’s bare ankles in different American cities. In *The Evidence of the Bicycle from the Shores of the Atlantic to Those of the Pacific—a Trail of Wondrous and Varied Beauty*, the writer W.J. Lampton offers his “thoughts on what regional fashion revealed about the city in which a woman was biking.”⁶⁴ This article is one example of the many newspapers during this period that were littered with men’s opinions on female issues, including women’s choice of attire, even their choice to bare their ankles.

⁶³ qtd. in Adrienne LaFrance, “How the Bicycle Paved the Way for Women’s Rights: The Technology Craze of the 1890s Meant Fashion Freedom and Transportation Independence,” *The Atlantic*, 26 June 2014.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

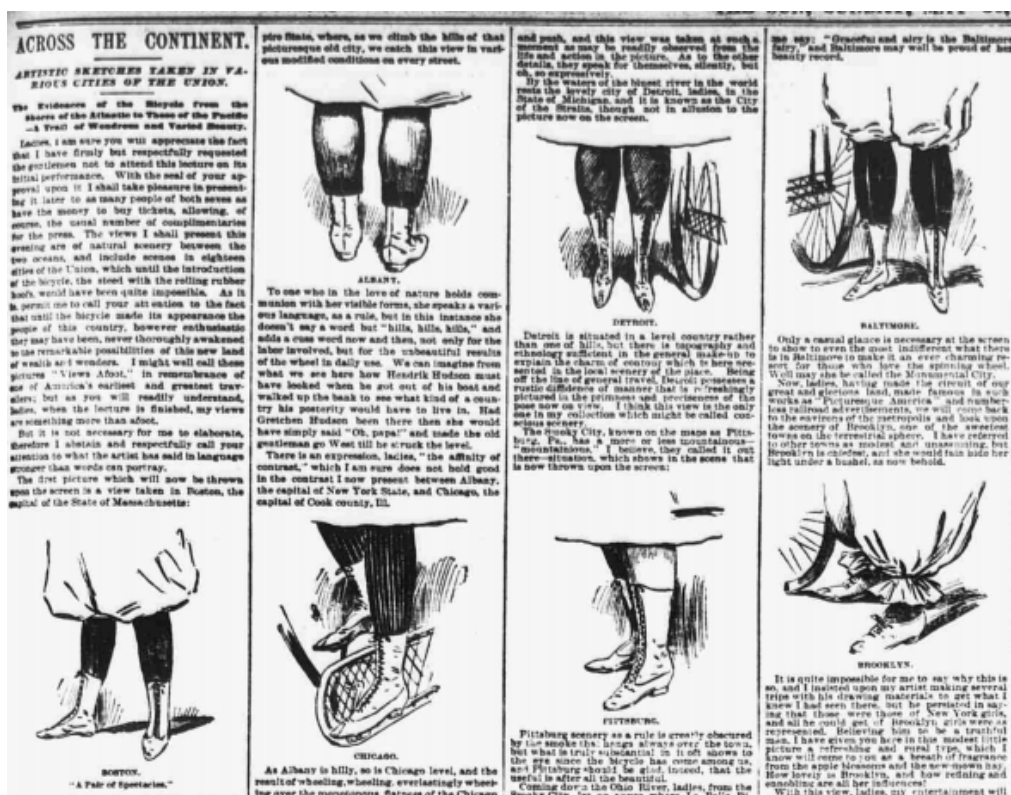


Figure 5: "Across the Continent," *The Atlantic*, 30 May 1897.

The writer examines each female body as though they are a part of the landscape. Of the New York Woman he says, "There is that innate and inimitable stylishness in this view which cannot be found in any other limscape on the continent, and which have made our New York girls the envy and the model of their sisters all over the world."⁶⁵ The reference to women as a "limscape" provides insight into how Lampton (and others) read the female body. It also suggests how women were looked at and observed through popular media, and in particular, the male lens. In this particular article, Lampton's approach in his examination is establishing and identifying the different types of "new" female ankles that were being revealed across the

⁶⁵ "Across the Continent: Artistic Sketches in Various Cities of the Union," *The Sun*, 30 May 1897.

country. In this article, the exposed female body or “limbscape” becomes symbolic of both the fascination with and the fears of women’s shifting roles.

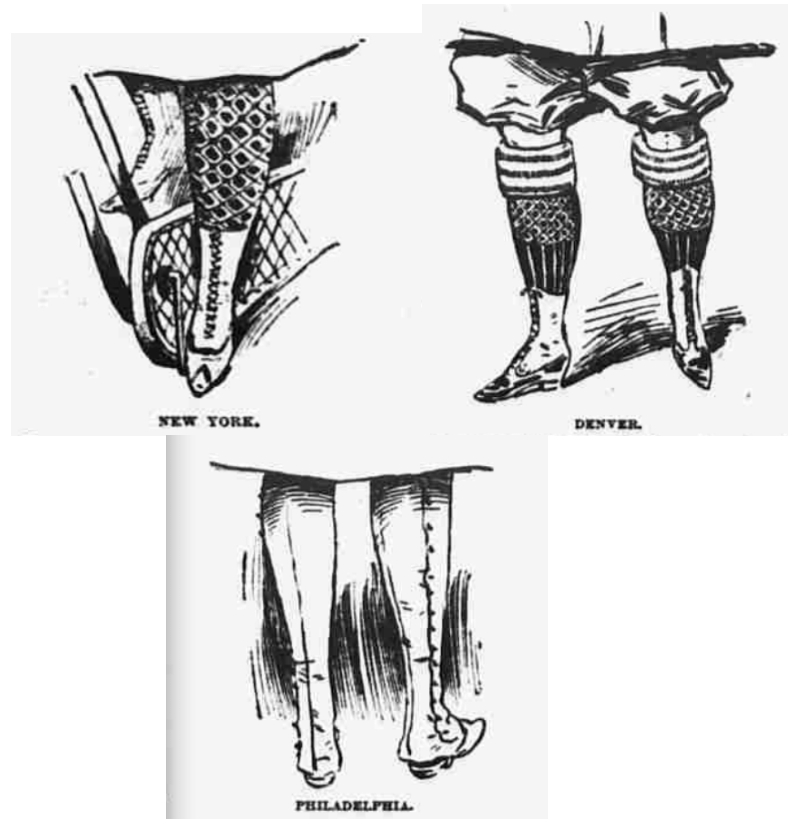


Figure 6: Close ups of New York, Denver and Philadelphia

Of the Denver woman, he compares her to the extraordinary white mountains. “It was once the custom for Denvarians to point with pride to the distant snow-white mountains as the finest sight on earth; but what a change the bicycle wrought! Denvarians now have other things to point at with pride, and while they give their snow-white mountains a rest ...”⁶⁶ The witty banter continues with each image. He claims of the Boston woman: “As you are all so well aware, Boston is famed for her intellectuals ... There is a delicate grace and refinement limned

⁶⁶ Ibid.

upon the canvas, so to speak, that is as transcendental in its esoteric concept of the metempsychosis of a plate of beans as there is in the sacred codfish that flutters its ichthyologic tail over the golden dome of the State House.”⁶⁷ He continues to satirically refer to women in Albany, Detroit, Baltimore, St Louis, Pittsburg, Cincinnati, Louisville, New Orleans, Brooklyn, Nashville, San Francisco, Washington, Atlanta, Chicago, and while he satirically celebrates them as a new attraction to each city, he also reduces them to objects and sights to be seen. He says of the Philadelphia women, “As will be seen, this view is a happy medium between Boston and Cincinnati, and shows neither too much intellect nor too much physical vigor. It also indicates by the leggings, which are unmistakable in their outlines, that shrinking diffidence which has justly [sic] made Philadelphia admired and loved by the classes as well as the masses.”⁶⁸ The Philadelphia woman is evaluated on her intelligence and the physical space she takes up and celebrated for not taking up too much intellect or space. As such, these examples demonstrate the ways in which women and girls were taking up space. It is illustrated in this article that women helped to shape and frame the way one experiences the city. In addition, this article, while written in a humorous tone, implies that the world was created without the consideration of women, therefore, their presence turned into a public spectacle.

Articles such as Lampton’s highlight the tension that existed in American culture and how these new girls and women helped to change the urban environment. Thus, the introduction of bicycles was instrumental to the social and political advancement of women. It was through these new forms of transportation that women enjoyed a sense of adventure and freedom. They moved

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Adrienne LaFrance, “How the Bicycle Paved the Way for Women’s Rights,” *The Atlantic*, 26 June 2014.

women from private into public domains and provided women with opportunities to become engaged in public life. Another example of the tensions in American culture is in the *Sunday Herald* in 1891. The writer is less impressed with women's advancement in social spaces and states, "I think the most vicious thing I ever saw in all my life is a woman on a bicycle—and Washington is full of them. I had thought that cigarette smoking was the worst thing a woman could do, but I have changed my mind."⁶⁹ This example reveals the effect women's public appearance had in the popular press. Her mobility and active participation in urban life caused concern for the traditional man who feared that she would overtake the city. In addition, women's access to the city and the wheeler signified that the structure and control of public space was being disrupted by women on bicycles. Nonetheless, the discussion around what women and girls were wearing and their occupancy of space is further examined in chapter one where I explore the ways in which (male) journalists were responding to the matinee girl craze.

Matinee Girls: Girlifying New York City

As more and more theatre-loving girls accessed the city, articles appeared in the press, often criticizing the ways in which the city was shifting and becoming *girlified*. Helen Ward, a journalist from *The Morning Times*, states, "There is a theatre in New York City that stands nearly diagonally from a corner drug store. This store makes a specialty of the "Between the Acts" matinee girl [...] at the right minute it sets forth its little luncheon promptly."⁷⁰ She discusses how the drug store serves "up all kinds of little things to eat, with big things to drink, without waiting to have them ordered" for the girls to enjoy between the acts. In addition to the

⁶⁹ "The Woman on the Bicycle," *The Sunday Herald*, 1891.

⁷⁰ Helen Ward, "Between the Acts," *The Morning Times*, 08 March 1896, 21.

drug store that caters to the matinee girl's appetite, the department store is another place that has shifted to accommodate girls and women. "A great deal can be done between the acts by the professional matinee girl. At one of Mrs. Leslie Carter's performances a party of matinee girls attended in a box. The prettiness of the star's gowns attracted them all at once. 'I am going out between the acts to get a hat precisely like that if I can find it,' 'And I want a pair of slippers with those high heels' said a second. 'And do you suppose I can get a cloak just like that?' remarked a third, and so on until the rising of the curtain nearly all the articles of the wardrobe were mentioned."⁷¹ The journalist claims that by the end of the act, the entire box of girls ran out of the theatre, into cabs, and "at the rising of the curtain Mrs. Carter was surprised to behold seven young ladies in the box near her all arrayed in parts of her own wardrobe."⁷² The article, which exaggerates the habits of this female identity, ascertains the ways in which early female fans were emulating female stars (see chapter one). It also points to the ways in which urban spaces were shifting to accommodate and provide girls with opportunities that helped shape their identity.

Not only was New York City expanding to accommodate girls, as Ward demonstrates in *The Morning Times*, but the shifts that were occurring in transit and the feminizing of public spaces were providing girls with more agency and access. Leisure became an important part of women and girls' lives. Ward discusses the ways in which the theatre cultivated a feminized space for girls,

... the matinee girl does part of her resting at the theatre. In one of the finest theaters in New York there is a very pretty reclining room fitted up with soft couches and bouquets. There are soothing pictures on the wall and costly works of statuary. The matinee girl forsakes her seat in the darkened theatre and seeks this resting spot. An

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

attendant has taken her wraps early in the afternoon. With a feather boa for a pillow, she lays her head down upon the arm of the couch and wakens only when the rising bell rings, the bell that sends up the curtain. The attendant keeps her notified of it.⁷³

Ward mocks the theatre, and notes that the attendant caters to the matinee girls' frivolous desires by providing them with a lounge to rest between the acts where they find soft couches, bouquets, and feather boas. Ward explains that "Outside the quiet little room are pleasant hallways, set with palms, where the young men chat with the matinee girls and where very pleasant talking is done to the jingling of lemonade glasses and the tinkle of the piano that is in the ladies' reception room further along the corridor. That is the way they make it pleasant for the matinee girls."⁷⁴ The matinee girl's presence is begrudgingly exposed to be a significant contributor to the development and transformation of the city. More and more theatres and opera houses were becoming feminized spaces for young girls who would spend hours watching their favourite hero or heroine on stage. The drug store and department stores were also shifting to appeal to these young women. While this article is satirizing the *girlification* of the city, it reveals the consumption practices of young women during the period and their active participation in culture.

While many of the young women who attended afternoon performances with friends were not consciously creating change, I argue that through their presence in the theatre, including their taste for fashion, they pushed for a female culture of leisure and pleasure. Another example of the ways in which matinee girls were taking up space is revealed in *The Freeland Tribune* on 11 February 1897, "A Mirror of Fashion for Dressy Women: New York's Matinee girl—Her Fads and Foibles—Gowns Seen at the Bazaar of the Red Cross Society." This article focuses on Miss

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

Matinee Blossom's busy day in the city by providing a detailed account of what a day for a matinee girl looks like in New York City. This synopsis is an attempt to highlight this culture of girlhood as frivolous:

Miss Matinee Blossom's programme for a Saturday afternoon is a varied one. It usually starts with a curtain raiser in the shape of a luncheon resorts in the neighbourhood of Twenty-third Street. After this comes a promenade intermission just long enough for a jaunt to the confectioner to have the bon-bon box filled, and then the hurry and flurry to reach the theatre in time to have five or ten minutes in the foyer in which to gossip with the other matinee girls, show off pretty tailor-made costumes and criticize those that are not strictly "en regale." At last the play begins—and so do the praises and criticisms. If a popular actor—that is, if he be handsome, which is the height of popularity in the matinee girl's eyes [...] and finally the promenade up and down Fifth avenue and Broadway, with another stop for the glass of soda water and a chat with the young men who, knowing the habits of these coquettish maidens, never fail to make a call at the confectioners about this time every matinee day.⁷⁵

Miss Matinee Blossom's day of consumption begins with a luncheon on Twenty-third Street, her scurry to the confectioners and then to the theatre on Broadway. Her afternoon ends with "promenad[ing] up and down Fifth avenue and Broadway" for some soda or a chat with a young man. Her access to the city is controlled by the location of the shops and theatre.⁷⁶ Nonetheless, her presence is noted with detailed attention as a way to comment on the ways in which girls were participating in a culture of leisure. Most of her day is based on moving through public spaces and indulging in pleasuring herself. These articles, despite being presumably fictional, provide a narrative of the kinds of agency girls were afforded during this period. They document her public presence. Historian Richard Butsch explains this change, "With consumer culture,

⁷⁵ "A Mirror of Fashion for Dressy Women: New York's Matinee girl—Her Fads and Foibles—Gowns Seen at the Bazaar of the Red Cross Society," *The Freeland Tribune*, 11 February 1897.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

status and identity were defined through consumption.”⁷⁷ The term “fashionable” also shifted to comply with the cultural changes that were happening. “The new middle-class standard of public status would become ‘fashion.’ ‘Fashionable’ was no longer exclusively a synonym for the upper class, but began to refer to whoever could afford the approved clothing and furnishings.”⁷⁸ If they could purchase tickets to a matinee, a box of bonbons at the confectioners, and soda water at the shop then they had access to the urban spaces that have been historically limited to men. However, this change meant that opportunities for young Anglo and European immigrant women were always attached to ideas of consumption.

Commercial theatre, in particular, offered girls of all classes the opportunity to enjoy cheap afternoon tickets to performances. “The culture of the ‘new girl’ gained strength from numbers and was often affirmed and expressed in the form of peer solidarity in public,” notes Hunter.⁷⁹ However, it is important to note the limitations placed on girls of different classes. Those who had extra money to spend had better seats, near the stage, and those who couldn’t afford the pricier tickets opted for top balcony seats. Despite the different types of access to the theatre, girls of all classes were participating in the same activity.

The accessibility of these spaces meant that many girls, despite class, were becoming extensions of the city and in some cases a part of the urban fabric. On 21 January 1900, an article in the *Omaha Illustrated Bee* claimed, “There are a million matinee girls in the United States, a

⁷⁷ Butsch, 68.

⁷⁸ Butsch, 68

⁷⁹ Hunter, 305.

friend for statistics has estimated.”⁸⁰ The article, called “A Million Matinee Girls,” discusses the intricacies of her habits and concludes, “Interesting development of late in the matinee girl is that she is not ashamed to cry over her heroine and come away bearing traces of the conflict with their feelings, just as this winter she has developed the habit of going out between the acts to snatch a sustaining snack of something at the nearest confectioners.”⁸¹ This article is one such example of the ways in which girls became a part of the urban experience and re-gendered the city. In displaying public emotion, the matinee girl dismantled “proper” female behavior while also disrupting a space that had been created without her in mind. The article’s statement that matinee girls were “bearing traces of conflict with their feelings” in public streets reveals the binary that girls were disrupting in order to perform a new type of female identity; one that displayed both emotion and pleasure.



Figure 7: “The Matinee Girl” by Charlotte Harding, 1901.

⁸⁰ “A Million Matinee Girls,” *Omaha Illustrated Bee*, 21 January 1900, 5.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

The above image, published by the New York Public Library's online digital collection, drawn by artist Charlotte Harding in 1901, is a good example of the perception of how the matinee girl was taking up space in the streets of New York (Figure 7).⁸² Although there was much criticism about the matinee girls' dress and public behaviour, there were also many who celebrated this new female identity. For example, the above image shows girls rushing out of the theatre after an afternoon performance. Groups of girls are leaving together in different directions. The girls are lost in discussion, possibly sharing their experiences, thoughts and desires of the stage hero or the heroine's fashion style. The image depicts a new era of young women who not only occupied but displayed agency in public spaces. They are dressed from head to toe in extravagant dresses and beautiful ornate hats. They occupy physical space, even feminizing the sidewalks outside the theatres. They occupy space in such a way that they become part of the city.

What I gather from these historical documents is that one could not sit in the theatre or walk along Broadway without being exposed to both the physical presence and the sounds of the many girls in their teens and early twenties who were meeting their friends at confectioners before a performance to buy chocolate, going to the department store to buy the latest fashion item, or visiting the soda shop after a matinee was over. They were publicly visible. A syndicate article on the disruptive nature of the matinee girl was published on 05 December 1906 in *The Silver Clifton* in Colorado and again in Louisiana's *St. Mary Banner* on 02 February 1907 under the title, "The Too Talkative Matinee Girl" claiming, "The jabbering and the giggling that seem

⁸² Art and Picture Collection: The New York Public Library, "The Matinee Girl, 1901," *The New York Public Library Digital Collections*. <http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47e0-d7d2-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>

to be an inevitable part of a Saturday afternoon performance mark the pleasure for the earnest theatre-goer.”⁸³ The journalist observes,

... the Saturday matinee folks laugh, cry and applaud in the wrong places. There is one strong play now on the boards that illustrates this tendency perfectly. From the beginning the ‘girls’ of all ages who are not familiar with the story of the play make bets with each other as to which girl the vacillating hero will marry, and the allusions to the plight of the apparently forsaken sweetheart call forth an explosion of giggles, especially from the top balcony.⁸⁴

The image created in syndicate articles like this one was of a young female spectator who was so noisy that she disrupted social spaces, both physically and aurally. Such articles not only highlighted the noise she made but criticized the way she did it. She made noise in the wrong places. Her emotional outbursts were inappropriate according to critics who examined this young female fan as a spectacle.

The matinee girl defied gendered conventions of the period by behaving in unprecedented ways and social spaces. She was considered to be a “‘girl of all ages.’”⁸⁵ The connection between age and gender is fascinating here. The journalist makes it clear that these girls are possibly too young to be unaccompanied to the theatre. They make “bets with each other as to which girl the vacillating prince will marry.”⁸⁶ The journalist also notes that girls “from the top” balcony were the most disruptive with “explosion[s] of giggles.” The top balcony was typically cheaper and

⁸³ *The Silver Clifton* was published in the small town of Silver Clifton in Colorado and the *St. Mary Banner* was a newspaper published in Louisiana. The same articles would be published in syndicate newspapers across the United States.

⁸⁴ “The Too Talkative Matinee Girl,” *The Silver Cliff*, 5 December 1906; and *The St. Mary Banner*, 2 February 1907.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

occupied by wage-earning girls. Hence, the journalist is making a statement about class and public behavior by pointing to the ways in which lower-class girls were more disruptive than their upper-class sisters. According to Georgina Hickey, working-class women's participation in public affairs gained publicity. Evidently, they became symbols of public disorder.⁸⁷ In the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century working-class women "pioneered new forms of urban leisure, sexual standards, family patterns and activism."⁸⁸ The emergence of wage earning women in cities across the country rapidly emerged as they blurred class lines. Many journalists responded to this mix of class in an attempt to maintain and control these class lines by identifying them in newspapers.

Methodology

The surge of matinee girls in public spaces heightened public awareness of and *concern* about their behavior, which found expression in the popular press. Journalists and so-called "experts" wrote prolifically about the disruptive behavior of these theatre-loving girls. In my research using digital newspaper archives, I came across hundreds of articles from across the country on the matinee girl's style, behavior—in and out of the theatre—choice of chocolate bonbons, post-theatre discussion in the soda shop, favourite matinee idol, etc., in local and national newspapers. In order to understand the nuances of this self-fashioning girl, my methodological framework draws on Performance Studies as a lens to understand and examine the matinee girl phenomenon.

⁸⁷ Georgina Hickey, *Hope and Danger in the New South City: Working-Class Women and Urban Development in Atlanta, 1890-1940* (University of Georgia Press, 2005), 3.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

Performance Studies, as an interdisciplinary discipline that relies on an array of different analytical methods to understand performance as a crucial element of social and cultural life, is central to understanding the matinee girl phenomenon. Thus, my dissertation uses discourse analysis, feminist revisionist cultural analysis, image and sound analysis to gain a greater understanding of the politics at the turn of the century. As such, each chapter takes on a unique lens that tells a story that is much more complicated than prior research has suggested.

It is through the use of Performance Studies that I can critically unpack the cultural performances of girls' lives in public spaces, from non-verbal communication captured in images (including bonbon boxes, photographs, newspaper sketches) to the public acts of disobedience described in newspaper articles. The cultural barriers of ethnicity, race, class, and gender – and the way matinee girls negotiated these identity categories through performance – can be extracted from the ways in which matinee girls were described and positioned in the media. I want to point to scholar Diana Taylor who poses a question that has become a jumping point in my research. She asks, “How can we think about performance in historical terms, when the archive cannot capture and store the live event?”⁸⁹ The complexity of this question drives my project. Through the archive, as a source of documentation, I explore how historical documents tell a unique story of emerging girlhood; at times these narratives are contradictory and complicated by gender and class politics, however, by drawing on performance studies as a framework, the archive begins to reveal the performative nature of this group of girls that caused a stir in the American theatre.

⁸⁹ Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Duke University Press), 2003, xvi

In using an array of historical documentation, I examine the role of both the theatre and the media in shaping female identities, and the spaces girls have used to express themselves.⁹⁰ In addition, in using Performance Studies as my methodology, my dissertation provides a foundation that recognizes the concern with what girls represented for modernity in New York City, and American theatre culture in general. It situates the vast ways that girls' lives unfolded with an emerging commercial and leisure culture. The following questions frame my research: what role did the theatre play in the development and negotiation of the performance of modern girlhood? How did the theatre provide girls with agency, a voice, and the freedom for self-expression? How did the matinee girl cultivate a culture of leisure, friendship, and fandom?

Chapter Breakdown

Chapter One

In the first chapter, I examine the criticism that surrounded the working-class immigrant girl who attended the theatre. The articles critically examined her clothing and appearance in an attempt to label her class status and control her public behaviour. It uses performance and gender theory to explore how girls' identities are constructed by attending the theatre and watching stage actresses. In referring to Judith Butler who establishes that gender is an unstable identity, a "stylized repetition of acts," a constructed identity where the audience as well as the actor performing these "stylized repetition of acts" or a repetition of cultural conventions, come to

⁹⁰ Most of my archival research was conducted in the New York Public Library, specifically The Billy Rose Theatre Collection (NYPL); The Houghton Library (Harvard University), The Harry Ransom Center (University of Texas Austin), The Media Commons (University of Toronto) and online newspaper archives, including *Chronicling America* and *Museum of the City of New York*.

believe that this is the norm.⁹¹ In taking this theoretical framework, I examine how girls revised and reproduced gender identities at the turn of the twentieth century. While they subversively re-performed femininity as they saw it on stage, they were criticized by the media for being disruptive. As such, this chapter provides insight on how matinee girls imitated actresses and put pressure on actress' own performance of gender, particularly actress Billie Burke who was aware of the expectations she was held to by her fans, and the way fashion played a role in the relationship between celebrity and fan. This chapter lays the foundation for the arguments made in the next chapters.

Chapter Two

Chapter two draws on the work of food historians and theorists, including Kyla Wazana Tompkins, Carole Counihan, Lewis A. Erenberg, Wendy Woloson and Elspeth Probyn whom explore the relationship between women and food in order to understand why the matinee girl was synonymous with notions of purity, refinement, and sweetness. It explores how the matinee girls' public consumption of sweet treats challenged notions of Victorian respectability and disrupted public spaces. She was loud in her chewing, responsible for orally pleasuring herself, and influential in the sales of chocolates and confectionaries. It is framed by performance studies to explore the cultural barriers that attempted to control and maintain conservative ideologies of class, gender, sex, and ethnicity. Again, this chapter uses articles by critics and journalists to reveal the tensions of class and gender that the matinee girl created. As such, many of these articles were penned by concerned men looking out for the matinee girl's health and beauty.

⁹¹ Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," *Theatre Journal*, 40. 4 (Dec. 1988), 519.

Thus, consuming, chewing, and purchasing sweets were acts of defiance that questioned proper female roles in public.

Chapter Three

Although my study is largely focused on girls living in New York City between 1880-1915, many of the newspaper articles that I use are spread across the U.S. revealing that the matinee girl phenomenon extended to the entire country. However, in chapter three I look across the border to investigate what Canadian matinee girls were interested in and how they were participating and engaging with theatre. I chose to examine “The Matinee Girl” column published in Winnipeg, Manitoba (Canada) in the publication, *Town Topics*, because of its uncanny similarity to the New York “Matinee Girl” column published in the *Dramatic Mirror*. Paying attention to format and structure, topics, language, and the writers’ self-identification as a matinee girl, my introduction of the Canadian publication demonstrates a similarity across borders. Through a comparative analysis of these two publications, which ran for the same period of time (both around a decade long), I highlight the temporal and spatial importance of this cultural phenomenon in North America and further suggest that the matinee girl was a popular agent who disrupted cultural ideologies and re-invented a new way of performing girlhood. Although differences existed in both columns, these differences were linked to national identities and helped to shape the identities of young women.

Through a comparative analysis of “The Matinee Girl,” columns printed between 1898 and 1913 –Winnipeg’s *Town Topics* written by press agent Harriet Walker and the *New York Dramatic Mirror* by an anonymous author—I argue that Walker was fighting against the same stereotypes, tropes, and tensions around girls’ new agency as the New York matinee girl. This chapter, then, examines how female writers were creating a different narrative of matinee girls by establishing their own intellect and wit. They appealed to all audiences by writing their columns

as diary entries beginning with “Dear” and including personal anecdotes, challenges, and what life was like for a girl in Winnipeg and New York before signing off as the Matinee Girl or M.G. As such, these diary-like columns also provide insight into the labour politics and the housing and rental culture for single girls living in the city.

Chapter Four

Chapter four positions the matinee girl as one of the first public female fans in American culture. A 2012 article in *Time* magazine called “Introducing the New Face of Fandom: Women” posits that female fandom is a relatively recent idea. Graeme McMillan asks, “So, is it simply that it took *Twilight* to wake executives up to the spending power of a female fan base that has always been there? Possibly.”⁹² He continues to make the argument that modern female fandom rose out of the internet age. “What really changed between female-led fandom of yore and today’s more recognized female fans is the method of communication. ‘My personal theory is that over the last decade or so, lots of people got Internet access and it became a more integral part of many people’s homes,’ he says. ‘As a direct result, fandom has become both more visible and more accessible to women who perhaps didn’t realize there were other women out there who liked the same things they did.’”⁹³ Thus, this chapter demonstrates how matinee girls were organizing groups of girls to accompany each other to the theatre, creating scrapbooks and fan art dedicated to celebrities, and essentially forming fan culture as is understood today.

While the study of fandom and fan studies is a contemporary one, the matinee girl fits into our contemporary and theoretical understanding of a fan. Brigid Cherry in *Cult Media*,

⁹² Graeme McMillan, “Introducing The New Face of Fandom: Women,” *Time*, 12 September 2012.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

Fandom, and Textiles: Handcrafting as Fan Art helps to contextualize the ways fans were not only active participants of popular culture but also produced texts and “fan art” or “handicrafts.”⁹⁴ In addition, by examining the scrapbook as a way to document girls’ lived experiences as well as their contribution to and participation in fan culture, I aim to explore how the fan practices of matinee girls during this period helped to cultivate a homo-social community. Through a case study of Maude Adams’ fans, I explore the culture of matinee girls and the ways in which they used scrapbooking, the collecting of postcards, and fan art to respond to live performances, engage with stage heroes well after they’ve been on stage, and as a way to mark significant moments.

Therefore, I use fan theory to understand the ways in which the matinee girl helped to cultivate a culture of female fandom: one that is founded on documentation, engagement and creation. By exploring scrapbooks, postcards and “fan art,” including bookmarks and handmade drawings of matinee idol Maude Adams, this chapter adds to the scholarship on female fan culture by investigating the practices cultivated and shaped by this group of girls. Thus, this approach provides a historiography of early female fans.

⁹⁴ Brigid Cherry, *Cult Media, Fandom, and Textiles: Handcrafting as Fan Art* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2016).

Chapter One

From Shabby Gloves to Puffy Sleeves: The Use of Fashion to Dismantle Codes of Gender and Class

This chapter examines the ways in which the matinee girl challenged conventions of gender and blurred class lines through her fashion choices. Concerns about class identification were raised in popular media by journalists who attempted to control and maintain boundaries of class and gender. Through the use of archival material, as a tool to both analyze and understand how this modern girl disrupted social spaces and posed a threat to the cultural environment of New York City's commercial theatre, I examine how the participation of immigrant and wage-earning matinee girls in the same leisure activities as middle and upper-class American girls contributed to class tensions by challenging ideologies of the American middle-class.

Specifically, I examine how the streets became a stage for the experimentation of identity, and how matinee girls used fashion as a tool to reshape notions of modern girlhood. In general, this chapter explores the connections between gender and American urban development and how young theatre-loving girls negotiated and disrupted public space, identities around age and gender, and the models of oppression that were inherently present in 1880s New York City. This research is crucial in understanding how place and space has and continues to be important to the development of girls and fan culture.

In examining the ways in which girls were navigating new public spaces, and further feminizing or girlifying American cities, this chapter draws from cultural historians, Jane Hunter, Marlis Schweitzer, Georgina Hickey, Nan Enstad and Kathy Peiss, as well as gender theorists, including Judith Butler and Simone de Beauvoir. It explores the ways in which New York City, and North America in general, was expanding and creating public (gendered) spaces for women

to participate in and become active citizens. It considers the narratives created by journalists to piece together the matinee girl's influence on American culture and commercial theatre.

The matinee girl's presence was instrumental to both the cultural shifts and urban development happening all over the U.S. Not only was the New York press regularly publishing articles on the matinee girl's presence but local papers across the country were highlighting this modern girl. From the *New York Sun* and *The Sunday Times* in New York to the *Morning Times* in Washington, D.C, *The Freeland Tribune* in Pennsylvania, *The Omaha Illustrated Bee* in Nebraska, *The Silver Cliff* in Colorado, *St. Mary Banner* in Louisiana, and the *Los Angeles Herald* in California, the matinee girl quickly became a national phenomenon. While these articles point to her public sensation in the media, the matinee girl was initially a product of New York City's commercial theatre. Therefore, I am particularly interested in how these rich primary sources, written by matinee girl enthusiasts and/or matinee girl critics reveal the social and cultural tensions that were tied to her presence.

In particular, I am interested in the *New York Sun's* examination of the matinee girl. In an article published in 1896 by an anonymous so-called matinee girl expert, in "Types of Matinee Girls: Best Studied in Broadway on Saturday Afternoon," the journalist highlights ways to differentiate the girls by class through their behaviour and choice of fashion. In an attempt to educate the public on class differences, this article reveals the concerns around class, gender, and age during the period and the ways in which matinee girls were contesting these roles. My aim is to provide a close analysis of this article in order to provide an understanding of the nuances of modern girl culture at the turn of the century, particularly the ways in which this adoring theatre fan became a fixed presence in urban American girlhood.

The Five Types of Matinee Girls

While hundreds of articles on matinee girls were published yearly between 1880 – 1915, “Types of Matinee Girls: Best Studied in Broadway on Saturday Afternoon,” in the *New York Sun* establishes that there are five distinct types, or in the journalist’s terms “species” of matinee girls. Before introducing the different types of girls, he claims that the matinee girl is “as separate and apart from all the other specimens of femininity.”⁹⁵ In fact, she is “distinctive in her style as the tailor made girl or the aristocratic, broad shouldered maiden that Gibson has immortalized in black and white: and as youth is her distinguishing attribute, she is more interesting than either of these fascinating young persons.”⁹⁶ Of the many types of modern girls emerging during the period, the matinee girl was considered to be unique to the onlooker. The wage-earning girl’s ability to blend in with girls of middle and upper classes—particularly through dress—became of significant interest to the media.

The New York Sun compares the matinee girl to a delicate flower. She is “just beginning to take notice, and life to her is a great budding rose, the fragrance of which she finds a trifle intoxicating. The thorns come later, and the perfume dies before the inner petals unfold, but to the matinee girl it is all a beautiful and bewildering discovery, and she exults in the mere fact that she exists.”⁹⁷ The journalist sees her as “a budding rose” who is yet to see “the thorns” of life, and her naivety and innocence is at the forefront of her existence. The five distinct types of theatre loving

⁹⁵ “Types of Matinee Girls: Best Studied in Broadway on Saturday Afternoon,” *New York Sun*, 14 April 1895, 4.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

girls are “The Bowery Girl,” “The girl who likes tragedies and melodramas,” “The girl art student,” “The real frivolous young person who represents the matinee girl,” and “The girl who occupies a seat in the top gallery at the Metropolitan Opera House on Saturday afternoon.”

Despite the journalist’s attempt to divide the matinee girl into different types, it is important to note that these young fans, despite class or cultural background, attended matinees with friends, dressed in their best theatre outfit, and congregated at the soda shop to discuss the performance. They cultivated a culture of female fandom, one that was rooted in celebrity and Broadway culture. It is important to note that not all girls had this privilege, however. It was limited to Anglo and a small community of European immigrant girls. The experience of racialized women and girls were significantly different from white wage-earning women and girls.

One aspect of distinguishing each type of matinee girl, according to many critics, was through her fashion choices. This is not surprising when considering the culture and importance of fashion to the theatre. According to Schweitzer, “Beginning in the 1890s and continuing through the first two decades of the twentieth century, theatre managers aggressively pursued the imagination and presence of female theatregoers by transforming the stage into a glorious site of consumer spectacle.”⁹⁸ Items from department stores were brought into the theatre, and actresses were promoting the latest fashion items onstage. Henry Savage, according to Schweitzer “had aligned female theatrical spectatorship with fashion consumption” presenting a new type of theatrical spectacle.⁹⁹ “Acutely aware that their financial solvency hinged on their ability to

⁹⁸ Schweitzer, *When Broadway*, 4.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

attract and retain the interest of socially advantaged women, these predominantly male impresarios presented actresses, the dresses they wore, and the objects they wore onstage as fantastic commodities, readily available in photographs and magazines, in nearby department stores or, in the case of the Merry Widow giveaway, in the theatre lobby just beyond the auditorium.”¹⁰⁰ With the rise of wage-earning girls attending the theatre, their desire to dress fashionably and to participate in consumer culture was no different than the desires expressed by girls of other classes.

The Bowery Girl



Figure 8: The Bowery Matinee Girl

In *The Sun's* attempts to differentiate girls by class the critic exposes the way fashion was integral to the identity of the matinee girl. He introduces “The Bowery Girl.” The Bowery Girl, or wage-earning girl sits in the cheaper gallery seats in the top gallery, “drink[in] in the music with a look of rapt ecstasy.”¹⁰¹ How does one distinguish this working-class girl from the upper-class

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ “Types of Matinee Girls: Best Studied in Broadway on Saturday Afternoon,” *New York Sun*, 14 April 1895, 4.

matinee girl? *The Sun* reveals that she “applauds until her shabby gloves burst open. She is not well dressed; as a rule, her clothes are last season’s style, and the less said about her hat the better.” *The Sun* continues to subtly point out her class status through her clothing in order to make a distinction about class and fashion, and to highlight working-class girls’ access to the theatre. She wears a small hat, possibly indicating that she couldn’t afford a bigger, more extravagant one, as seen in images of the middle and upper-class girls. She sits in the top balcony seat, slouched over, with her elbows leaning against the railing as she looks down at the stage. Not only does her body posture reveal her disposition but “[w]hen she leaves the theatre she has a “far-away look of happiness on her face that reminds you of the beatific expression usually worn by angels on an Easter or a Christmas card.”¹⁰² This last sentence is striking; it compares the working-class girl to an object of commoditization, specifically one that is presumably exaggerated.

In the nineteenth century, the term Bowery “meant bums” according to Eric Ferrara in *The Bowery: A History of Grit, Graft and Grandeur*. Presumably named after Bowery Street in New York’s Lower East Side Manhattan, the Bowery district was considered to be off the beaten path. Ferrara claims that while it was a shady neighbourhood, it wasn’t dangerous, “Not dangerous, no, it was just rock bottom, like an underworld hid beneath the slums.”¹⁰³ It was also “home to opera and burlesque, museums and saloons, hotels and brothels, gangsters and gays, the

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Eric Ferrara, *The Bowery: A History of Grit, Graft and Grandeur* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2011), Forward.

Bowery had catered to every taste.”¹⁰⁴ It was considered to be “America’s brightest street” because of the numerous advertisements that covered street walls. And while it was a bustling street and the city’s largest theatre district, many of the city’s poor and homeless lived there as well. The Lower East Side also housed many immigrants in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries who moved into crowded tenement buildings. European immigrants including Irish, Italians and Eastern European Jews populated this neighbourhood and by 1920 the Jewish neighbourhood was one of the largest ethnic groups in the area. Yiddish theatres became prominent in the Bowery, according to Edna Nahston in *New York’s Yiddish Theatre: From Bowery to Broadway, the Yiddish stage*, they “serve[d] as educator and guide for the Jewish immigrant masses in America...”¹⁰⁵ Therefore, the journalist’s reference to this matinee girl as “The Bowery Girl” is explicit in itself. She was likely an immigrant girl, possibly of Irish, Italian or Jewish background, and possibly worked in a factory or as a shop girl earning a meagre pay cheque.

Many wage earning girls, of whom a number were immigrants, worked in factories or shops in the 1910s. A shop girl earned under \$7.50 while a factory girl earned just under \$8.00 a week. Working as a shop girl was the second most popular job for the single wage-earning girl.¹⁰⁶ These already meagre wages could be docked for tardiness, poor workmanship, or other work

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 10.

¹⁰⁶ Peiss, *Cheap Amusements*, 34.

violations.¹⁰⁷ Despite working long hours and having few funds to pay for leisure, girls during this period cultivated a life outside of work that was paramount to their identities.

Leisure and the Wage-Earning Girl

Cultivating a life of leisure was crucial for girls of all classes; however, those who had to work for their salary endured challenges in the workplace. According to Peiss, four-fifths of the 343,000 wage-earning girls in the city were young and single, and one-third of these girls were from the ages of sixteen to twenty.¹⁰⁸ It was cheaper to hire girls in department stores and in factories than it was to hire men, “young, unmarried working-class women, foreign-born or daughters of immigrant parents, dominated the female labor force in the period from 1880-1920.”¹⁰⁹ However, these wage-earning girls needed to dress well in order to get hired. Wage earning girls in New York City earned below the “living wage” of nine or ten dollars a week in 1910.¹¹⁰ Employers justified these low wages by characterizing the women as temporary workers who were expected to work until marriage only. Peiss claims that girls’ wages were approximately one-half of what men received in their employment. Despite their meagre paycheques, girls cultivated a space for leisurely activities by cutting back on their spending. They would skip meals or walk home instead of paying for transportation in order to save money.

¹⁰⁷ Peiss, *Cheap Amusements*, 52.

¹⁰⁸ It was cheaper to employ women and girls than it was to employ men, therefore, there was a demand to employ young women. Popular places of employment for girls and young women included: department stores, factories, and offices.

¹⁰⁹ Peiss, *Cheap Amusements*, 34.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 52.

This meant that very few girls were able to live extravagantly or on their own, many living in boarding houses.¹¹¹ Despite their wages and the financial struggles they faced, many girls maintained and cultivated a rich life of leisure.

It was the urban presence of these girls that pushed for new spaces, allowing working-class and immigrant girls to participate in the same activities as middle and upper-class women. However, the fear of class integration was threatening and articles like the one in *The Sun* attempted to reinforce the status quo by suggesting that a shabby looking working-class matinee girl was significantly different from upper-class girls. According to the article, she behaves differently, is disruptive through the sounds she makes, dresses inferior to other well-off girls, and enjoys the theatre differently, as she leaves with a look of “ecstasy” unlike the respectable middle-class girl. This representation was an attempt to maintain clear class boundaries.

Contrary to columnists’ attempts to homogenize descriptions of the matinee girl, even among working class girls, Peiss’ research demonstrates that there was a range of different experiences related to girls’ consumer experiences, agency and mobility. For example, girls born to Italian immigrant families were expected to contribute all or a substantial amount of their earnings—handing their unopened pay envelopes to their parents. Parents ordered their daughters to go straight home directly from their place of employment, to turn in their unopened pay envelopes and help with housework.¹¹² A large number of immigrant girls lived with their large families. Nevertheless, Italian girls would carve out spaces for their independence and leisure.

¹¹¹ See Peiss, *Cheap Amusements*, for more on women and housing during the period.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 70.

Girls from the Lower East Side and of Jewish background saw leisure as a right and not a privilege. They were encouraged to participate in leisure activities and had greater freedom in spending their earnings. An Irish girl, on the other hand, was expected to contribute to the purchase of food and other living expenses. Nonetheless, Irish girls had a greater freedom in spending their money on clothing and returning home when they pleased. Despite the cultural differences of working class and immigrant girls, Peiss indicates that these girls had a shared experience of earning their own paycheque and using some of it to cultivate a life outside of work and home.¹¹³ The responsibilities of working and earning a paycheque shaped their understanding of freedom and independence.

Dressing up for the theatre—regardless of class—allowed girls new ways to re-create themselves and to construct new identities that challenged limitations of class, gender, and ethnic identity. According to Butsch, “[e]ver-changing fashion is built on illusion, constantly making oneself over. Founded on appearance rather than substance, fashion allowed people to ‘play at’ being various things.”¹¹⁴ The presence of girls of all classes participating in the same activities and participating in similar fashion choices meant that girls of all classes were co-existing in the same spaces, disrupting a familiar social order of the time. As a result, articles were published in an attempt to reinforce class difference by pointing out how wage-earning girls wore inexpensive items of clothing, clapped at the wrong times or too much, or chewed loudly in public spaces.

Due to the democratization of fashion and leisure, middle and upper-class anxieties increased, manifesting themselves in the critique of specific types of clothing and the attention to

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Butsch, *The Making of American Audiences*, 68.

detail. Despite the participation in the same type of outfits, middle and upper class groups considered wage-earning girls to be distasteful.¹¹⁵ Enstad notes that “[b]oth working- and middle-class women participated as consumers in the same clothing industry, but the middle-class categorized working-class consumption as “cheap” despite the fact that many times the clothing worn by both groups of girls were inspired by their favourite actress.”¹¹⁶ In addition, wage earning girls’ relationship to commodities “was a central aspect of their self-construction and self-expression.”¹¹⁷ While girls’ fashion choices were fueled with tensions around class and proper ways of performing femininity, I am particularly interested in exploring the ways matinee girls were creating new identities for girls by using fashion to assert their presence and right to participate in public culture.

Wage-earning girls participated, albeit differently, in these same practices and cultivated similar values of leisure and pleasure in their lives.¹¹⁸ It was understood that leisure was a separate sphere of life, for the working-class girl in particular, and one that was to be protected. In 1886, middle-class reformers and unions pushed legislation to decrease women’s working hours in order to “safeguard women’s health and reproductive capacities.”¹¹⁹ The law was enacted beginning in 1886 for women under twenty-one from working more than ten hours a day

¹¹⁵ Enstad, *Ladies of Labor*.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 31.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹¹⁸ In other words, consumer culture provided girls—of all classes—opportunities to create personal and leisurely spaces that were female-centred. It is important to note that the access to these spaces were not the same for all girls. For example, the top gallery was cheaper and usually reserved for girls who couldn’t afford to sit closer to the stage, changing their experience of seeing their idol from other girls who sat feet away from the stage.

¹¹⁹ Peiss, *Cheap Amusements*, 43

or sixty hours a week, thus popularizing the notion of leisure time for single girls. Shop girls supported one another by taking turns closing the shop and ensuring that each of the girls had a night to leave early. Working girls enjoyed their *own* time where they would attend Broadway shows or other types of entertainment, such as dance halls and later the movie theatre.

“Treating” during Financial Struggles

Despite participating in the same practices, wage-earning girls struggled financially to consume in the same ways as middle-class girls. *The Sun’s* journalist is particularly interested in what each matinee girl wears, suggesting that the Bowery Girl “has purchased her seat with the money she has saved through severe self-denial in other directions.”¹²⁰ This reference to saving money through “severe self-denial” points to the living conditions that wage-earning girls faced but it could also be a way to subtly imply her “treating” practices. According to Peiss, treating was made popular with the emergence of cheap amusements for youth at the turn of the twentieth century. It involved young men taking girls out and paying for their dinner and entertainment in exchange for sexual favors, which could include flirting, kissing, or at times intercourse. The difference between treating and prostitution was that treating referred to “women [who] formed more long-term relationships of sexual exchange, while professional prostitutes demanded cash for their services.”¹²¹ According to Elizabeth Marie Clement, this understanding of treating whereby men pay for entertainment in cash and women reciprocate through intimacy, “became

¹²⁰ “Types of Matinee Girls: Best Studied in Broadway on Saturday Afternoon,” *New York Sun*, 14 April 1895, 4.

¹²¹ Elizabeth Marie Clement, *Love for Sale: Courting, Treating, and Prostitution in New York City, 1900-1945* (University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 1. Clement’s work on women during this period is indebted to Peiss’s pioneering scholarship on treating.

embedded in dating, and it continues to lurk under the surface of the practice to this day.”¹²² The practice of treating provided girls with access to a world that had been historically limited to both their gender and age. Clement says, “Treating functioned as a way to gain access to entertainment, a public world often both economically and morally denied to young women, and to claim some ownership of their sexuality within an admittedly limited set of constraints. This ownership commodified their bodies, but it also allowed young women, and not their parents, reformers, or most men, to decide how and when to use them.”¹²³ Tales of young working-class youth who were moving to the city and engaging in treating could be read in articles, and regular columns that examined wage-earning girls’ leisure practices.

The Stage-Struck Girl

Starting in April 1904, the *Theatre Magazine* published a regular monthly column, “Confessions of a Stage-Struck Girl: The Theatrical life truthfully described by Julia Wemple, a debutante” that ran for several years. It was a popular series that fictionally documented a girl’s life in the city and is described as “fiction only as regards the names of the characters.”¹²⁴ The author of the article, Vivia Ogden, who was once a popular child-actress, uses the character of Julia Wemple to provide a glimpse into the life of a stage-struck girl. The stage-struck girl, like the matinee girl, was a theater-loving girl. While the stage-struck girl also attended the theatre, she was specifically defined for her desire to be on stage.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid., 164-5.

¹²⁴ Vivia Ogden, “Confessions of a Stage-Struck Girl: The Theatrical life truthfully described by Julia Wemple, a debutante,” *The Theatre Magazine*, April 1904, Vol IV, No. 38.

Like the matinee girl, the stage-stuck girl was part of the girl fad that emerged during the period. I draw from accounts of the stage-struck girl to better understand what life in the city was like for a wage-earning girl. In *The Theatre Magazine's* regular monthly column, stage-struck girl Julia documents her life and that of her friend, Rachel, who both move across the country to find a career on the New York stage. The two young women rented “a flat, or rather rooms, in a superior kind of tenement house,” a small space where she and her friend Rachel shared.¹²⁵ “Our housekeeping was very uncertain. We got our own breakfasts, then, as our funds were running low, we cut out our luncheon. Dinners we cooked, or we went to cheap restaurants.”¹²⁶ Boarding houses were common for single women who were moving to the city to find work. They often were gender specific and provided a hot meal. According to Thomas Gunn, the rise of boarding houses occurred when “an unprecedented urban turn during the middle decades of the nineteenth century had seen tens of thousands of Americans to migrate to or toward the nearest metropolis in search of work and leisure. Meeting them there were an equal number of foreign immigrants arriving mostly from Northern and Western Europe, as well as a surge in real estate prices and severe housing shortages that constituted the commercial, communal and logic behind boarding.”¹²⁷ The challenges of rental properties for young women became a real concern, one that I explore in chapter three when the New York Matinee Girl, in the “Matinee Girl” column discusses the challenges of young women in the city.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Thomas Gunn, *The Physiology of New York Boarding Houses* (New York, Mason Brothers, 1857), xi. Gunn suggests that the idea of boarding houses came from sailors who roomed together.

As such, with a surge in people coming to the city and the need for housing, different kinds of boarding houses were available. Depending on what one was looking for, some boarding rooms could offer one or two hot meals a day.¹²⁸ In providing details on what it was like to live in boarding rooms as single wage-earning girls, Julia reveals that they relied on treating to get through day-to-day expenses. However, when treating was not available, the girls “had [to] recourse to the delicatessen shop and dined on baked beans, lemon meringue pie and stewed prunes.”¹²⁹ Despite the type of girl, whether she was a stage-struck, matinee girl, or both, leisure was an important part of life, and the practice of treating was a part of the urban experience for some wage-earning or immigrant young women when their salaries couldn’t cover entertainment costs.

In one article, Rachel took Julia shopping on Twenty-third street, “where you could buy anything from a pair of stockings to an incubator.”¹³⁰ Rachel picked out two outfits, “one, a very grown up sort of dress, with a plumed hat and high heel shoes, while the other was a very child-like affair, with a simple, broad-brimmed hat and shoes with flat heels. Rachel explained that when one goes to look for an engagement one must ‘make-up’ for it just as you would for a part.”¹³¹ Julia explains that the first costume makes her look taller and older; she calls this the “grown-up costume,” which would be useful if she were auditioning for a part as an “ingénue or

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Vivia Ogden, “Confessions of a Stage-Struck Girl: The Theatrical life truthfully described by Julia Wemple, a debutante,” *The Theatre Magazine*, April 1904, Vol IV, No. 38.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid.

soubrette,” while the other outfit would make her look youthful.¹³² The use of fashion to re-create one’s identity was used as a tool to experiment and play with new ways of being female and blur age. Rachel indicates, “Clothes are part of the tools of our trade. You may be hungry, but you must never be shabby.”¹³³ Rachel’s insight into the use of fashion for young women at the turn of the century, although fictional, provides insight into how fashion was used as a tool by girls and young women during this period, despite which class she came from. Looking “shabby” was not an option for wage-earning girls.

I use this example to demonstrate the struggles working class girls and young women faced in order to maintain the same types of leisure activities as their middle and upper-class counterparts. More specifically, this monthly fictional series provides a glimpse into the ways writers and presumably readers understood the hardships that wage-earning girls who had moved to the city for work and leisure experienced. This included having to go without meals or cooking communal meals at home, sharing a boarding room with a number of other girls, sometimes two or three, or walking to or from work in order to save money on transportation.¹³⁴ While the *Theatre Magazine* series does not directly discuss girls’ exchange of sexual favors for theatre tickets, it asserts that wage-earning girls were dependent on men for basic necessities, such as food.

In addition, the fictional experiences of Julia and Rachel provide some insight into how the lives of wage-earning girls were constructed or understood in popular media. This included

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Peiss, *Cheap Amusements*, 52.

the importance of fashion, and to a larger extent consumer culture, and how it was *always* symbolic. Fashion didn't just reflect a young women's good taste, it was a political statement that marked her privilege.¹³⁵ When working-class girls were blending in with middle-and upper-class girlhood, it caused tensions for some who were adamant that there be a clear distinction across class lines. It was also a period where middle class respectability was being enforced in society. With the growing number of working-class girls participating in public culture, journalists often responded with disdain. A widespread narrative emerged that the consumption of *cheaply* made goods connoted poor *taste* and would lead to working girls' moral fall.¹³⁶ As a result, articles were published warning parents, guardians, and girls of the dangers of the city.

Morality and White Slavery at The Turn of the Century

The idea of girls, primarily immigrant and wage-earning girls, falling victim to their public participation in culture became popular narratives. According to Shelly Stamp, these exaggerated accounts were typically about girls who, while participating in commercial culture, would meet a young man who then lured these girls "into the sex trade by a vice ring operative through courtship and bogus marriage; the victims are taken out of state and held in a brothel; eventually traded to another member of the gang, the victims are held far from their family in a community unfamiliar to them and forced to prostitute herself."¹³⁷ These white-slave narratives became so prominent that "Vice commissions charged with investigating prostitution and white slavery formed in many cities during this period of heightened attention; no fewer than forty-

¹³⁵ Enstad, 29.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Shelly Stamp, *Movie-Struck Girls: Women and Motion Picture Culture after the Nickelodeon* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2000), 85.

three different municipalities conducted inquiries into the ‘social evil’ between 1910 and 1914 alone.”¹³⁸ The fears of the young and naïve matinee girl falling prey to white slavery were heightened during the period.

The Middle and Upper-Class Girls

In returning to *The Sun*’s typology, the journalist continues to distinguish between each adoring fan girl. Next is the “art student who lives picturesquely somewhere over a stable and gets her dinners in a chafing dial is another type of matinee girl who is a joy forever.”¹³⁹ She is confident as she and her friends, “saunter down the aisle to the best seats in the house looking as though they owned earth and the waters thereof.”¹⁴⁰ She and her friends are quick to criticize the play and during the climax of the performance, “they smile at one another as though they found it tame, but they are there only because they like it.”¹⁴¹ In discussing the Bowery girl next to the Art student, the journalist highlights dichotomies between class opportunities for each of the girls. He is critical of the Bowery girl who dresses in last season’s style but is excited by the confidence of the art student who attends art school, eats her meals on a chafing dial, and lives in the beautiful countryside, over a stable.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ “Types of Matinee Girls: Best Studied in Broadway on Saturday Afternoon,” *New York Sun*, 14 April 1895, 4.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

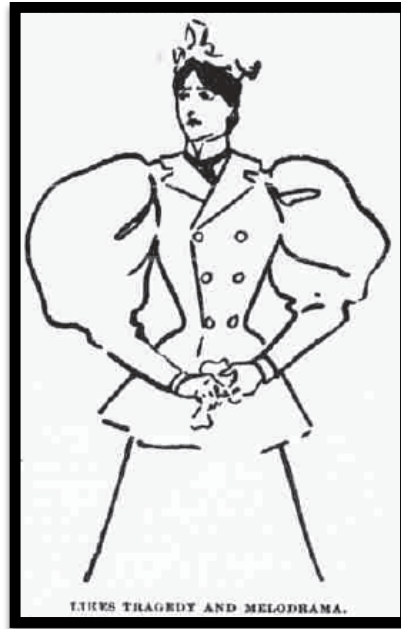


Figure 9: The Matinee Girl Who Likes Tragedy and Melodrama

Unlike the other girls who are judged for their “shabby” looking gloves due to the “severe” circumstances they endure to attend the theatre, the journalist crafts a narrative of class distinction and respectability. In addition to the Art Student, is “The girl who likes tragedies and melodramas of the lurid type.” This other type of girl is presumably an upper-class girl who is dressed in an exaggerated coat with sleeves that are larger than her torso.¹⁴² She wears what looks like a crown and holds on tightly to a used handkerchief. Her extravagant outfit possibly indicates her upper-class status. She is “anywhere from sixteen to twenty,” attends the theatre to revel “in the blood-sucking escapades and cliff-scaling adventures of the heroine and her lover.” She “weeps bucketsful of tears, and comes out with pale cheeks and red eyes, grasping her opera glass as if it were the villain’s throat.” The *Sun* informs its readers that this type of middle or upper-class matinee girl “is plain in her attire, and likes linen standing collars and cuffs and plain

¹⁴² Ibid.

skirts.” She is pale looking, doesn’t flirt. The article makes a connection between economic class and sexuality: the upper-class girl is dressed in plain clothing and is not flirtatious as she “withers a dude with a look if he ventures within her visor.”¹⁴³ Thereby she is able to avoid any possible sexualization. The journalist signals the girl’s sensibility through her conservative sense of fashion and emphasizes her purity by noting that she keeps men away. In thinking about how the Bowery girl was positioned as attending the theatre ‘through severe self-denial’ a possible reference to the practice of treating, this upper-class girl, on the other hand, avoided any kind of male interaction.

The Frivolous Matinee Girl

“The Real Frivolous Person who represents the Matinee Girl” is another matinee girl depicted as a typical theatre fan in the *Sun’s* account. She is a schoolgirl whose life revolves around being entertained, likely an Anglo girl from a middle or upper-class family. Her social life “consists in dreams of unreal situations and personages that she sees each week at her favourite playhouse.”¹⁴⁴ Although the theatre was a place that provided a sense of escape from the daily lives of girls, which allowed them to participate in a world of fantasy, the journalist proposes that this type of matinee girl lived in this fantasy world permanently. This narrative is suggestive of the criticism that matinee girls were too immature and naive to make intelligent choices, a common narrative that I explore in chapters two and three. Critics believed that “frivolous matinee girls” were “dumbing down” twentieth-century theatre.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Schweitzer, *When Broadway*, discusses critics’ concern that matinee girls lacked intelligence, thus, the theatre that was produced was being dumbed down to please these young patrons.

What this “Frivolous Person” reveals is the quick transformation that girls were capable of. This *type* of girl became an example of the ways in which matinee girls were venturing into new places and into new roles, which included dressing like and imitating their female idols. The journalist notes that she looks “through her lorgnette at life as portrayed by Lyceum ingénues and dress-coat actors, she makes a stern resolve that she will do her hair the same way and wear blue ribbons round her waist.”¹⁴⁶ Interestingly, accounts in the popular media tend to assume that matinee girls only attended the theatre to admire their stage heroes. However, from the many articles examined, it is apparent that the matinee girl adored female actresses more than male actors, attending the theatre only to admire the stage heroine. According to Butsch, “‘actresses’ costumes became ads for new fashions. Ladies might go to the theatre to imitate the star’s dress instead of her character.”¹⁴⁷ After all, actresses were fashion leaders of the period and this was part of the pleasures of attending the theatre. Girls learned about the current style and beauty trends by attending theatrical performances.

Actresses as Fashion Leaders

By the turn of the twentieth century, the fashion experts were considered to be stage actresses who had access to the latest Parisian styles. Theatre historians Schweitzer, Michele Majer, and Sheila Stowell, among others, have explored the actress as fashion icons. In *Staging Fashion, 1880-1920: Jane Hading, Lily Elsie, Billie Burke*, Majer examines the influence of the three titular actresses as “highly influential fashion arbiter[s],”¹⁴⁸ whose beauty “conformed to

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Butsch, *The Making of American Audiences*, 68.

¹⁴⁸ Michele Majer, “Staging Fashion, 1880-1920: Jane Hading, Lily Elsie, Billie Burke” (Bard Graduate Centre: Decorative Arts, Design, History, Material Culture, 2012), 22.

elite notions of class and race; each had a distinct ‘personality’ that was often conveyed by her stage roles and further underscored in photographic images as well as in the media; each appeared on postcards and in fashion and theatre magazines, newspapers, and other periodicals.”¹⁴⁹ Her research indicates that “throughout this period, both garments and accessories—particularly hats—were frequently named for women of the stage, titles of plays in which they appeared, or one of their characters.”¹⁵⁰ The early twentieth century was a crucial moment for actresses and audiences; Susan Glenn reveals, “the growing phenomenon of the female star went hand in hand with the rise in female spectatorship.”¹⁵¹ Girls attended performances to see the latest styles and to imagine themselves wearing the same outfits. Schweitzer asserts, “female audiences drew upon the cultural meanings associated with admired actresses to fantasize about alternative lives and make personal statements about themselves.”¹⁵² For example, Burke’s fans admired her stage wardrobe, and envied her financial support and aesthetic freedom to select those clothes. Actresses like Burke were well aware that their popularity partly depended on their ability to impress female fans with their costumes, and made fashion choices accordingly.

In general, fashion was crucial to the actress’ reputation as well as a staple in promoting and selling tickets to young female audiences. In fact, theatre manager Charles Frohman allowed

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 26

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 18

¹⁵¹ Susan Glenn, *Female Spectacle: The Theatrical Roots of Modern Feminism*, (Harvard University Press, 2002) 14.

¹⁵² Schweitzer, “Stylish Effervescence: Billie Burke and the Rise of the Fashionable Broadway Star,” *Staging Fashion, 1880-1920: Jane Hading, Lily Elsie, Billie Burke*, ed. Michele Majer (Bard Graduate Centre: Decorative Arts, Design, History, Material Culture, 2012), 163.

actresses to purchase the latest contemporary costumes to wear on stage, and his “actresses transformed his productions into sparkling fashion spectacles,” according to Schweitzer who reveals that Burke purchased dozens of white gloves for her performance in *My Wife*.¹⁵³ Burke noted, “they have to be pure white or I don’t feel fresh.”¹⁵⁴ In her memoir, *With A Feather On My Nose*, Burke states, “The styles of 1907 were in general quite ugly. Women wore heavy dark clothes. But I always appeared on stage in light, close-fitting things, with a *point d’esprit lace*, white with a rose sash, a hat ruffled with Valenciennes and crushed ribbons. Before I knew it, I was setting styles.”¹⁵⁵ In her book, Burke discusses the immense pressure that an actress was under in order to impress their female spectators. She states, “If my acting did not set the Hudson afire, my new clothes did fetch the audience. There was always a gasp and a little flutter of surprise on my entrance” [...] I honestly think I dressed more to please women than to please men.”¹⁵⁶ To understand the influence of the theatre-loving girl, in 1904 *The Sun* published the following, “Matinee Girl’s Way of Making an Idol of Her Favourite Actress” which corroborates Burke’s claim that fashion was an integral component for female spectators. “Many girls learn how to dress through observing the stage women they most admire ... the actress idol receives a great many notes asking questions about her dressmaker, her complexion and her fads. If she wishes to become an agent for face creams and powders she can make a small fortune

¹⁵³ Ibid., 79.

¹⁵⁴ qtd. in *Style* 79.

¹⁵⁵ Billie Burke, *With a Feather on my Nose* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1948), 79.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 89.

recommending some particular toilet article.”¹⁵⁷ Not only were girls dressing like actresses, but they would dye their hair to match their favourite star’s. As such, Billie Burke is an example of the relationship between fan and celebrity. This type of relationship was new and cultivated by these young modern girls.

In its continued documentation of matinee girls’ behaviour, *The Morning Times*’ 1896 article, “Matinee Girls Between the Acts” indicates that girls were redefining notions of girlhood at the turn of the century by replicating certain features of older actresses,

For the last month, the matinee girls have been looking like Bernhardt. There was no mistaking the imitation. Their plump little rosebud mouths were powdered below and powdered above, until only a narrow line remained for the lips. This line was vivid red.” Most recently, the journalist explains, “the matinee girl has been looking older. She has been cultivating the Terry frown. You know that straight line between Ellen Terry’s brows that tell you she is a somebody? Well, the matinee girls have been ‘somebody.’¹⁵⁸

Both Sarah Bernhardt and Ellen Terry were in their early fifties when this article was published. Therefore, that these girls were undergoing a “facial transformation” to look like older women is an example of how matinee girls were challenging notions of identity and age. In replicating Bernhardt’s “vivid red” and “plump rosebud mouths” and Ellen Terry’s frown that asserted girls’ agency, or as the journalist states, “tells you that she’s somebody.”¹⁵⁹ These important portrayals, although presumably more complicated than the journalists imply, reveal the ways in which matinee girls were challenging conventions

¹⁵⁷ “Matinee Girl’s Way of Making an Idol of Her Favourite Actress,” *The Sun*, 11 December 1904, 7.

¹⁵⁸ “Matinee Girls Between Acts,” *The Sun*, 08 March 1896.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

of gender, age, and class. They were aspiring for a much older look by “transforming” their physical appearance. They dismantled conventions of age and class, using fashion and make-up to experiment with identities. In taking on certain “looks” these girls were performing and negotiating what it meant to be a modern girl living in New York City at the turn of the twentieth century.

Broadway theatre, as a space that encouraged experimentation with identity, helped to reshape the artificial concept of femininity. By drawing on French feminist philosopher Simone de Beauvoir, “precisely because the concept of femininity is artificially shaped by custom and fashion, it is imposed upon each woman from without,”¹⁶⁰ I argue that matinee girls, by adding pressure to stage actresses to impress their fans, helped to create new female identities and reshape twentieth century notions of femininity for the modern. In addition, Schweitzer’s research indicates that Frohman’s biographers state his ability to highlight his performers’ “most appealing characteristics by selecting plays that best revealed their personalities.”¹⁶¹ In the case of Burke, he found plays that allowed her to be herself onstage. In addition, Schweitzer says, “Burke’s youthful effervescence, expressed onstage through her characters and offstage in interviews, public appearances, and advertisements, drew thousands of matinee girls to her plays.”¹⁶² Matinee girls connected to actresses who were either like them or who they wanted to be like. Rather than creating their own concept of femininity they replicated what they saw on stage by taking it off-stage and onto the streets of New York.

¹⁶⁰ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2009), 692.

¹⁶¹ qtd. in Schweitzer, *Stylish*, 178.

¹⁶² Schweitzer, 178.

From Burke's youthful appearance to Bernhardt and Ellen's older influence on matinee girls, girls were integrating different characteristics of femininity and recreating new identities that merged both young and old. Schweitzer argues that many fans "modelled their own performances of modern American 'girliness'" using Burke's sense of style, including her hairstyle and costumes.¹⁶³ This is exemplified in "Matinee Girl's Way of Making an Idol of Her Favourite Actress," when the journalist states, "[o]n Saturday afternoon, after the matinee, you may see a dozen or more girls whose demure and downcast gaze, poke and general style at once suggest the newest actress idol. It is an odd but eloquent tribute to the influence of the popular actress who plays the parts, which the matinee girl would call "sweet."¹⁶⁴ The journalist asserts that the start of the fad begins once she obtains female admirers. "Once this is discovered, the girl who is not on the stage goes to the theater one afternoon after another and carefully studies all the ways of the actress model. She notes the details of dress, the inflections of voice and facial expression."¹⁶⁵ The journalist explains how the matinee girl performed gender and identity by watching and experimenting with what they were seeing on stage. In fact, the journalist claims, "At one time, the city was full of Annie Russell girls. Every matinee girl who was thin and pale worshipped Annie Russell and wore the same kind of hats, the peculiar soft clinging gowns of grays and browns ... they copied her way of dressing the hair so perfectly that looking around the theatre at matinee, one fancied sometimes that they were seeing some illusion caused by

¹⁶³ Ibid., 176.

¹⁶⁴ "Matinee Girl's Way of Making an Idol of Her Favourite Actress," *The Sun*, 11 December 1904, 7.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

mirrors.”¹⁶⁶ In taking this into consideration, the matinee girl’s identity was malleable: she often changed her hair style, dress, the way she spoke or the inflection of her voice, depending on who she admired. As a representation of modern girlhood, she demonstrated the ways in which gender and identity were performative.

In thinking about the ways in which matinee girls played with notions of identity, using the public streets of New York as their stage, I am compelled to point to their identity as performative and experimental. Upon reflecting on Judith Butler’s argument that “gender is in no way a stable identity or locus of energy from which various acts proceeded; rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time—an identity instituted through a stylized repetition of acts,” it becomes clear to me that this theoretical framework can be applied to the matinee girl.¹⁶⁷ The matinee girl challenged but also repeated gender norms by dressing like her favourite stars, repeating their mannerisms, hairstyles, etc. The complexity of the matinee girl is in the way she subversively repeated the stylized acts of femininity while disrupting social and public expectations of women and girls. The matinee girl carried hyper-feminine images and ideas absorbed from the stage back home with her, experimenting and playing with identity.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Judith Butler. "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," *Theatre Journal*, Vol. 40, No. 4 (Dec. 1988), 519.

Asserting Power Through Puffy Sleeves and Feathered Hats



Figure 10: The Matinee Girl Exactly As She Will Be This Winter

The matinee girl's choice of fashion was a topic explored in conversation by journalists, fashion consultants, and stage actors. While some journalists advocated for the matinee girl to dress up, others criticized her blouse, hat, or coat for taking up too much space and keeping *men* from seeing the stage. In particular, *The Morning Times*' 1896 article, "The Matinee Girl Exactly As She Will Be This Winter," states, "One of the main objections to the former matinee girl was her shoulder puffs. These stood out too far and were offensively tall. They quite met the plumes upon the hat and formed a solid wall of feathers and lace, of silk and jet, through which no man could see." Instead, the journalist suggests that she wear a "neat little shoulder cape."¹⁶⁸ The

¹⁶⁸ "The Matinee Girl Exactly as She Will Be This Winter," *The Morning Times*, 17 October 1897, 17.

article, which is an account from the journalist's "study from life," positions the matinee girl's choice of fashion as taking up too much physical space. The journalist encourages the "little" cape in order to maintain and control women's choice of fashion and their access to the city (Figure 10).



Figure 11: The Girl Who Would Not Dress Up

The types of fashion critiques published in papers reveal an attempt to police the choices made by these young women and to assert control over the agency they were occupying in public spaces. In addition to journalist criticizing girls' fashion, is another article published next to the previous one on an alternative type of blouse that girls can wear if they don't want to dress up. The article criticizes, "The girl who would not dress up," as she neither wears a hat or a gown, instead choosing a blouse and skirt. It offers a new type of outfit for those girls who do not want to stand out. In reading these articles dedicated to the clothing girls should wear in public, they

begin to oppose one another. They criticize girls for dressing up and for *not* dressing up; for wearing sleeves that are too puffy, and lace or feathers that obstruct a man's view.



Figure 12: The Matinee Girl

To add to this dialogue on the matinee girls' dress, an image published in the *Los Angeles Herald* on October 17, 1897 accompanies the article "All About the Woman of Fashion" by Annie Laurie Woods. While Woods discusses the newest materials on the market, the image that accompanies the article suggests that the clothing was "too loud" and obnoxious, obstructing everyone's view, particularly, the man sitting behind her. The man at the theatre is surrounded by matinee girls whose hats and shoulder pads take up a significant amount of physical space. This

was a common criticism, as also seen in the image published alongside a poem on the matinee girls' use of space in *Puck's* 2 June 1886 by Lizzie Sylvester (Figure 13).¹⁶⁹ The fear of this young woman taking over physical space, asserting her right to dress as she pleases, and to make as much noise as she desires is significant in understanding the nuances of this young theatre-loving girl and the tensions around her growing presence.



Figure 13: Lizzie Sylvester, *Puck*, 2 June 1886.

The Tale of the Hat

Accompanying the above image (Figure 13) is a poem dedicated to the matinee girl's hat. Both the poem and the image reveal the ways in which the matinee girl was displacing men in theatres. "She sat before me at the mat./ Beneath a monstrous nightmare hat,/ So tall, it hid from

¹⁶⁹ Lizzie Sylvester, *Puck*, 2 June 1886, 211.

view, I'm certain,/ A space not smaller than the curtain./ And all around was a brim so wide,/ The foot-lights were covered from side to side."¹⁷⁰ The matinee girl's hat becomes a spectacle with its wide brim that obstructed the view for others. "I growled with rage/ As I craned my neck to see the stage" the author says of the man sitting behind her in the above image.¹⁷¹ The hat in this poem (and the matinee girl in general) occupied not only her own physical space but also took up the space of others, specifically men, keeping them from enjoying the performance they had paid to watch. This is crucial to understanding the politics of the matinee girls' identity. In the examples published in *The Sunday Times* as well as *Puck*, these articles highlight the fear of girls re-gendering and becoming part of the urban fabric of New York.

Concluding Thoughts

The journalistic accounts discussed in this chapter demonstrate how the matinee girl became both a product who was shaped by the cultural and social constraints of the city and a producer of urban experience, feminizing and girlifying the theatre, confectioners' shops, and the cityscape. More importantly, her exposure in particular neighbourhoods in New York City as well as in the popular press allowed new opportunities for girls and women to reshape notions of adolescence and gender, playing with conventions of youthful femininity as well as defining characteristics of older female celebrities like Bernhardt and Terry. It is through this public consumption of pleasure that matinee girls disrupted popular ideologies of girls. Piepmeier proposes that "the female body destabilizes binary oppositions through such disruptive energies

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

as pleasure, which are impossible to read and interpret through familiar dichotomies.”¹⁷² In this way the matinee girl’s pleasurable habits become acts of resistance for the young female body.

The disruption of the matinee girl, either through her dress, the sounds she made, or her presence in the city raised questions on the ways in which she disrupted social and public spaces. The theatre, in particular, rapidly became a popular space for young single women to spend an afternoon with their female friends. For critics, the theatre became “a feminized space for affirming established codes of gender appearance and behaviour, both on and off stage, while simultaneously controlling strenuous, potentially uncontrollable threats to those very models of gender propriety,” claims Catherine Burroughs.¹⁷³ While Burroughs, like Butsch, argue that the theatre was maintaining and affirming gender behaviour for women, my research indicates that American matinee girls defied these expectations imposed on them.

Helen Ward, a journalist for the *The Morning Times* in 1896, highlights an attempt to control the matinee girl’s access to the city. “She may continue to be a matinee girl but she must be careful to remain only a matinee girl. She may attend afternoon performances, but not evening ones. And the theaters, to reward her for the stand she has made to maintain her title of ‘matinee girl,’ are vying with each other to give matinee girls a good time [sic].”¹⁷⁴ In other words, while she was allowed to spend time at the theatre, it was *always* controlled, from how to behave inside the theatre, the time of day in which she was allowed to be seen in and outside of the theatre, and

¹⁷² Piepmeier, 9.

¹⁷³ Catherine Burroughs, *Closet Stages: Joanna Baillie and the Theater Theory of British Romantic Women Writers* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), 56.

¹⁷⁴ Helen Ward, *The Morning Times*, 21.

where she could consume. Spatial and temporal restrictions were placed on these modern girls roaming the city.

In challenging proposed female codes of gender, the matinee girl became subject to a national backlash due to her *disruptive* behaviour both in and out of the theatre. As Schweitzer points out, critics took issue with the “matinee girl’s failure to watch theatre in a manner they deemed appropriate for engaging with serious (read: legitimate) theatre.”¹⁷⁵ The concern around young women’s agency and the criticism of her continued presence was becoming prevalent in the press as more girls were accessing public spaces. Critics not only pointed to her physical disruption but also to the how she made noise in all the wrong places.

The sounds coming from the matinee girl were always considered inappropriate and out of place. She was criticized by the media for giggling or chewing gum too loudly, or clapping until her gloves burst open. Both the sound and visual disruptions she was criticized for are deeply intertwined. Her disruption through the sounds she made were synonymous with the visual disruptions of her puffy sleeves, hats, and shabby gloves. This becomes clear when journalists and critics respond to the matinee girl’s presence in the urban environment by focusing on how their own experiences in the theatre or the public streets are disrupted by this modern girl. In other words, matinee girls became a threat because they did not fit into the urban environment, particularly public spaces that had been established in the absence of women. Thus, her presence or “noise,” both in the visual cues and sounds, suggests that she does not fit in.

In addition, matinee girls were transgressive figures; they gained access to the public world by disrupting and destabilizing Victorian notions of girlhood by indulging in sites of

¹⁷⁵ Schweitzer, *When Broadway*, 42.

pleasure in public spaces. John F. Kasson in *Rudeness and Civility: Manners in Nineteenth-Century Urban America* discusses the increased etiquette books during the period. He examines James Smiley's *Modern Manners and Social Forms* in 1889 where he suggests that "quiet should be maintained during the performance and the attention should be fixed on stage. To whisper or do anything during the entertainment to disturb or distract the attention of others is rude in the extreme."¹⁷⁶ In addition, Kasson states that etiquette advisors denounced those who were disruptive in public spaces. He claims, "What had earlier been customary audience behaviour was now branded as a crime against decent society and against art."¹⁷⁷ This explains the backlash and frustration in popular media around the matinee girls' disruptive behaviour. She challenged these etiquette advisors and defied *proper* female behaviour in public spaces.

The increasing articles on etiquette provide a lens into the growing female urban culture in New York City. There was a need to address their behaviour by experts who attempted to control these young women. In fact, the act of purchasing theatre tickets, memorabilia, and chocolates with the money earned in their jobs as factory workers or shop girls was a progressive act for these modern girls. I argue that the matinee girl was helping to reshape and reconstruct cultural ideas of gender while destabilizing fixed notions of class identity. In the following chapter I examine contradictory ways in which matinee girls were synonymous with ideologies of sweetness and purity, or at times sexual figures as indicated by the language used to sell confectionaries.

¹⁷⁶ John F. Kasson, *Rudeness and Civility: Manners in Nineteenth-Century Urban America* (New York: Hill and Wang), 1990, 242.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

Chapter Two

“Candy Mania” and Oral Pleasures: Female Consumption and the Act of Chewing in Public

If a matinee girl five feet high and weighing 110 pounds can chew 11,000,000 pounds of gum in 85, 616 years, what would be the height and weight of a matinee girl who could chew the lot in one year?

-Omaha Daily Bee (16 Dec 1905)¹⁷⁸

At the turn of the twentieth century, the fascination with the sweet matinee girl and her consumption of candy, chocolate and gum was at its peak. As the matinee girl became a more prominent figure in popular media, so did her consumption of sweets. According to a journalist, “When the matinee girl has listened to the biting sarcasms on morals and manners as depicted by Mansfield, the amusements of la grande passion as charmingly enacted by the only Ada, or has sat in envious adoration while Lillian Russell turns the heads of her adorers, she needs something to fortify her, something which cheers but does not inebriate, something which is dainty, something which is sweet,” says *The Saint Paul Daily Globe* in 1892.¹⁷⁹ A journalist from the same paper writes in 1891, “I used to wonder where all the candy the matinee girl munches Wednesdays and Saturdays came from.”¹⁸⁰ The full-length feature follows the journalist’s experience at a candy factory, “where the cream candies that melt in one’s mouth with the soft sweetness of a summer flirtation are made.”¹⁸¹ As seen in these two examples, the relationship between the matinee girl and “the soft sweetness of a summer flirtation” became intertwined.

¹⁷⁸ Omaha Daily Bee, *Energy and Gum Wasted*, 16 December 1905.

¹⁷⁹ St. Paul’s Daily Globe, *The Matinee Girl: What she Drinks and Why and Where She Drinks it*, 15 May 1892, 11.

¹⁸⁰ St. Paul’s Globe, *How Gum is Made*, 13, September 1891.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

In this chapter, I question how the matinee girl challenged Victorian notions of the “sweet,” and overly emotional young woman by playing with and manipulating the categories to which she was assigned. The destabilization of gender conventions can be seen in such things as the way she carried her chocolate bonbons in cigarette boxes, her loud chewing, her public consumption of both food and pleasure, and the purchase of her own boxes of bonbons during a period when chocolate was symbolically linked to heterosexual romance and courtship. Through a close reading of newspapers, advertisements, playbills and postcards, I examine the language and images used to construct ideologies about matinee girls and their relationship with food.

It was during my research at the Harry Ransom Center that I spent time combing through playbills in the 1880s. I noticed an increase in chocolate and candy advertisements published during this period. Beginning in the 1880s, the promotional material began to shift from tobacco to perfume, hats, and sweets, including candy, chocolate, biscuits, and ice-cream. This shift indicates that the target audience in commercial theatres was changing from a predominantly male audience to a female one. This significant shift in advertising reveals that more girls and women were attending performances, and making up a large part of audiences.

Despite historical links between women and food, the matinee girl’s relationship to confectionaries reveals that there is something different going on with the way she was positioned within popular discourse. The language used to describe her in relation to what she consumed is complicated; it reflects both the lingering fears of young women’s public consumption of pleasure during this period as well as the desirability of the matinee girl. She was both an active agent in purchasing and publicly consuming candy and, according to one concerned critic, she was also a victim of the “candy mania” that affected this innocent theatre fan.

The growing narratives of the matinee girl's over-consumption of confectionaries and leisure that were raised in articles were cloaked by concerns that she was too vulnerable and naïve to make responsible choices. They reveal the tensions of the period while also providing insight into the ways in which the media attempted to control the modern girl's behaviour. By the 1910s some critics questioned the popularity of the matinee girl, as she was being replaced by her successor the movie-struck girl. However, the image of the matinee girl as an over-consumer who was a sweet treat to be consumed continued to be part of publicity narratives and journalistic accounts well into the twentieth century. In 1908, the *Washington Herald* stated, "[t]he matinee girl—that airy, chocolate loving bit of femininity—is either passing or has passed. One thing is certain—the adoring, emotional type that makes a Cupid of the stage-door watchmen and uses reams of pink violet-scented writing paper on the hero of the play is gone."¹⁸² The language used to describe her “femininity” and “adoring, emotional type” provides insight into the ways matinee girls, and in general early female fans, were being shaped by the media.

Finally, I build on both food and cultural historian's understanding of female culture at the turn of the twentieth century, including the work of Susan Glenn, Lewis A. Erenberg, Linda Mizejewski, and Wendy Woloson, to examine the intersection between the female body, age, food, public spaces, and the ways in which each of these categories are closely tied to consumption. I am interested in the language used to define the matinee girl in relation to food: the symbolism, representations, and meanings that are linked, not only to gender but also to age. By providing a brief history of women's relationship to food, and how confectionaries emerged and became popular among matinee girls, this chapter provides a deeper understanding of the

¹⁸² “Men with Matinee Habit,” *Washington Herald*, 19 January 1914, 1.

ways in which the matinee girl assumed symbolic meanings related to specific food items, like chocolate bonbons and sugar. I highlight the ways in which she became a key figure in the feminization of chocolate, and how the fears of this new type of girl who openly consumed were tied to her desire for self-pleasure.

Food and Sex

At the turn of the twentieth century, matinee girls were the target audience for the pleasures derived from chocolates. Their enjoyment of confectionaries appealed to all of the senses simultaneously, making it a source of gratification and desire. The oral pleasure of sugar and chocolate merging together as they melted in her mouth excited her and she publicly displayed her desire to be pleased. She was responsible for exciting her senses. It is not surprising, then, that the matinee girl was linked to chocolate; women have been historically linked to items of consumption and the topic of women's relationship to food has been of great interest for contemporary cultural theorists and historians.

The relationship between women and the idea of oral consumption has been tied to sexual pleasure. Kyla Wazana Tompkins suggests that the mouth is a space that has a cultural and erotic history, one that offers a glimpse of “presexological mapping” of desire, appetite, and vice. Eating is often a site of pleasure, one that, as Tompkins suggests, signals an alignment between oral pleasure and other forms of non-normative desire. In her research, she examines eating as a metalanguage for genital pleasure and erotic desire.¹⁸³ The language used for sexual pleasure and food is interchangeable. Scholar Carole Counihan, in *The Anthropology of Food and Body:*

¹⁸³ Kyla Wazana Tompkins, *Racial Indigestion: Eating Bodies in the 19th Century* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 5.

Gender, Meaning, and Power uses Freudian theory to claim, “Food and sex are analogous instinctive needs ... and there is a lifelong connection between oral pleasure and sexual pleasure ... Food and sex are metaphorically overlapping.”¹⁸⁴ Counihan traces this idea back to Freud’s early work in “Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality” where he argues that one’s earliest development of sexual instinct is formed during an infant’s eating experience. “The satisfaction of the erotogenic zone is associated, in the first instance, with the satisfaction of the need for nourishment.”¹⁸⁵ He suggests that the early experience of receiving nourishment from the mothers’ breast and falling asleep with flushed cheeks and a “blissful” smile is parallel to the later experiences and feelings of sexual fulfilment. Thus, the act of eating and the pleasures associated with it combined with symbolic representations of chocolate as an aphrodisiac positions the consumption of chocolate as equal to actively seeking sexual gratification.

Therefore, the act of eating chocolate is, at the very least, a form of pleasure that is often associated with sex. According to cultural theorist Elspeth Probyn, “representations of sexuality are often paired with food as a way of exploring different modes of sensuality [...] It could even be said that we live with a scarcity of pleasure, rendering our explorations of the senses both exhilarating and problematic. Certainly, pleasure now comes in an explosion of tastes.”¹⁸⁶ Therefore, if the act of eating is considered to be a source of pleasure, the matinee girl’s public

¹⁸⁴ Carole M. Counihan, *The Anthropology of Food and Body: Gender, Meaning and Power* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 63.

¹⁸⁵ qtd. in Sarah Sceats, *Food, Consumption and the Body in Contemporary Women's Fiction* (Cambridge University Press, 2000), 24.

¹⁸⁶ Elspeth Probyn, *Carnal Appetites: Food Sex Identities* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 7.

displays of consumption were her way of revealing to the world that she relishes in pleasure and desire, both visually through the theatre, and orally in the form of sweets.

Women as Edible Objects

I introduce the relationship between women and edible objects because it helps to understand women's social environment at the turn of the century. This period, in New York City, was considered to be the "age of food."¹⁸⁷ By the late 1890s, the nightlife rapidly grew along Broadway. Lewis A. Erenberg states, "From the late 1890s through 1910, a number of new and spectacularly designed restaurants opened above and in the vicinity of Broadway and Forty-Second Street, later to be known as Times Square."¹⁸⁸ Restaurants catered to theatre patrons who left evening performances in search of an after-theatre snack, or in most cases, dinner.¹⁸⁹ "Broadway was the place to celebrate," states Erenberg, "and theatrical success[es] ... were often toasted with popping champagne corks. The lobster palaces, as they were called because of their glided interiors and gay late-night lobster suppers, merchandised an opulent experience of material pleasure and hoped-for naughtiness for prosperous urban dwellers of varied backgrounds, many of who lived in luxurious but not exclusive apartments of the upper West Side."¹⁹⁰ A number of popular stars or matinee idols, including Maude Adams and Lillian Russell, were associated with the Lobster palaces. "All over the theatrical district, new and

¹⁸⁷ Lewis A. Erenberg, *Steppin' Out: New York Nightlife and the Transformation of American Culture* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), 49.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 40.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

sumptuous theatres decorated with gilded interiors were going up,” Erenberg writes.¹⁹¹ “It was but a short step from the fantasy on stage to the fantasies portrayed by the restaurants themselves. Both patrons and players utilized the lobster palaces as stages of a more sumptuous and indulgent life.”¹⁹² Like the theatre, which provided the same idea of fantasy, restaurants also catered to those looking for an extravagant experience.

As such, both the theatre and the restaurant industry worked together to create a culture of pleasure, enjoyment and consumption. The cabaret, for example, “also expanded the lobster palaces’ role as celebrity gathering spots and made stars even more accessible to the public in an atmosphere dominated by the theatrical world.”¹⁹³ Sophie Tucker was one of many stars of the period who was instrumental in redefining the image of cafés; as the host she greeted patrons, chatted with them as she walked up and down the platform, and joked with other performers. “*I know it’s good business*” claimed Tucker.¹⁹⁴ “Patrons enjoyed the friendly feeling which performers conveyed in cafés. Someone visiting town on business, she wrote, liked to be able to return home to tell his friends at the local fraternal organization that he had met her.”¹⁹⁵ While these actresses’ relationship to the food industry was of a different nature than the matinee girl (even the chorus girl), the culture of food has historically been linked to women.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Ibid., 41.

¹⁹³ Ibid., 182.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 183.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

From the lobster palaces to using edible items for publicity, the female body and food were closely tied to a culture of pleasure and consumption. Actress Anna Held's milk bath scandal, which shaped her public persona and provided her with celebrity status, is another example of the importance of food and gender to theatrical consumption. Held, who performed in numerous farces, comedies, and musicals, is known for her common-law marriage to Florenz Ziegfeld. While she never performed in the Ziegfeld Follies, she is said to have been behind the Ziegfeld name and reputation.¹⁹⁶ She performed at the Lyric Theatre, New York Casino, Knickerbocker Theatre and Broadway Theatre but was perhaps most noted for her reputation of bathing in milk. Although this was a publicity stunt, it became a signature part of Held's life and has been included in almost all of her biographies, as well as foregrounded in the film *the Great Ziegfeld* (1936).¹⁹⁷ In 1904, it is said that Ziegfeld arranged the "news" that Held took daily baths in fresh milk.¹⁹⁸ Schweitzer explains that the New York dailies reported a scandalous lawsuit by the milkman against Held for her refusal to pay for her daily purchase of 40 gallons of milk.¹⁹⁹ This fascinating scandal produced speculation and questions on Held's need for so much milk. Linda Mizejewski stipulates that Ziegfeld choreographed the "media event" by timing the deliveries of milk so that they coincided with the arrival of reporters in order to provide

¹⁹⁶ According to Linda Mizejewski, Anna Held had suggested the format for annual revues, which made the Ziegfeld name and garnered them a reputation. Mizejewski, Linda, *Ziegfeld Girl: Image and Icon in Culture and Cinema* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1999).

¹⁹⁷ Mizejewski, *Ziegfeld Girl*; Marlis Schweitzer, "Surviving the City: Press Agents, Publicity Stunts and the Spectacle of the Urban Female Body" in *Performance and the City*, D.J. Hopkins, Shelley Orr and Kim Solga (eds.) (Houndmills; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.)

¹⁹⁸ Schweitzer, "Surviving the City," 143.

¹⁹⁹ Mizejewski, *Ziegfeld Girl*.

“evidence.”²⁰⁰ After much encouraged gossip of what the milk was used for, it was finally exposed that Held used to bathe in the milk.

According to Mizejewski, reporters—and by extension the public—were invited into Held’s suite for a glimpse of the naked, curvy-figured actress in her creamy white bath. Images of the actress were published all over newspapers. Schweitzer suggests that “it is the erotically absent presence of Held’s milk-submerged body, conjured by countless newspaper accounts and artists’ imagined renderings, that makes this story so scintillating.”²⁰¹ This image of Held positioned her body as a tease between sexual knowledge and secrecy, and visibility and imagination.²⁰² In this particular case, milk symbolized both purity and female sexuality.

Among many historians writing about women and food, Susan Glenn examines the ways that chorus girls were often represented as chickens.²⁰³ I use her examples of chorus girls to provide context to how women were often considered consumable objects intended for the enjoyment of men. As such, Glenn states that theatre slang, such as “broilers” meaning chickens, and “squabs” meaning very young/or very small chorus girls” became so popular and ingrained in the language of the era that theatre audiences did not need any explanation when these terms

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 144. According to Schweitzer, the press agent, Melville Stoltz orchestrated the milk bath stunt.

²⁰² Mizejewski, 43.

²⁰³ Susan A. Glenn, *Female Spectacle: The Theatrical Roots of Modern Feminism* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2000), 192. Glen further states that there are challenges in documenting the origins of the vocabulary. She states, “In Western culture, poultry symbolism is multifaceted. There are fighting cocks and fiercely protective ‘mother hens’ as well as hen-pecked husbands. But in the North American vernacular, to call someone a “chicken” is to stress their essential weakness (cowardess, for men) and to imply their stupidity,” 192.

were used in playbills.²⁰⁴ For example, in the cast of Ned Wayburn's 1912 musical program, *The Producers*, the chorus girls were listed as "The Boiler" and "The Squab," while other characters were listed as, "The Producer," "The Star," "The Composer," and, "The Costume Designer."²⁰⁵ Glenn suggests that the image of chickens expressed the fear of female transgression by associating chorus girls with a creature that was both domesticated and consumable. These terms became so popular that the general public understood and used them, both in slang and in ordinary language, to refer to chorus girls as chickens (or sometimes as birds).

The costumes worn on stage were soon inspired by these images of the chorus girls as chickens (or birds), and eventually they wore feathered costumes. Glenn suggests that from head to feet, female bodies were covered in beautiful and colourful feathers, providing both a visual and literal representation of chorus girls as chickens or chicks on stage. In time, the wider culture absorbed the language of the stage to characterize a new type of urban young woman. The symbolic meanings that emerged from women's associations to objects were used by consumers and producers to sell products, and were eventually adopted into popular media. In tracing the lineage of the term chick and its relationship to women, it can be understood that these symbolic and cultural meanings continue to be reproduced over time.²⁰⁶ By the 1980s, the term was reproduced in hip hop culture as "chickenheads," a misogynistic term still used today to refer to

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Glenn, *Female Spectacle*, 191. Glenn suggests that theatre slang as well as ordinary speech associated chorus girls with animals.

²⁰⁶ Joan Morgan, *When Chickenheads Come Home to Roost: A Hip Hop Feminist Breaks It Down*, (Simon and Schuster) 2000.

women who perform fellatio.²⁰⁷ The term is also commonly used today in female-inspired literature as “chick lit.” These examples illustrate the ways in which the usage of the term has been proliferated in different cultural contexts to refer to women.

In returning to Ned Wayburn’s 1912 production, the image of a young woman or girl as a “chick” was literally produced on stage and in popular media in the early twentieth century. Glenn examines the 1913 *Judge* magazine, an upscale humor magazine that published an issue on May 31, 1913 called “The Poultry Number,” which featured an illustration of a woman on a diving board, or “A Spring Chicken.”²⁰⁸ Inside was “*Judge’s* Revue of Poultry” which included a montage of caricatures of young fashionable women from Manhattan’s neighborhoods with a caption that read, “Squabs, chickens, and broilers. Drawn from life in the world’s greatest poultry yard, New York.”²⁰⁹ The fantasy of the edible woman that was deeply entrenched in theatrical and popular culture was taken further, and the analogy between the chorus girl and consumable fowl was executed in a number of Broadway revues between 1910 and 1925. I will discuss two in particular, *The Ziegfeld Follies* of 1914 and the 1925 Shubert edition of *Artists and Models*, both of which I draw from Glenn’s research on chorus girls as chickens to provide the necessary context to understand the ways in which women have historically been linked to edible forms of consumption.²¹⁰

²⁰⁸ Glenn, *Female Spectacle*, 192. The lithography was illustrated by James Montgomery Flagg and was published in colour.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ See Glenn, *Female Spectacle*, 195-96 for other performances of chorus girls as chickens on Broadway.

In the *Follies* performance, a song entitled “I Like to Broil My Chicken” was sung by one of the comedians. As audience members listened to this tune, theatre critic Acton Davies claimed, “a pretty little girl on a real broiler, ready to be applied to the fire,” a visceral image of young women being broiled was not considered to be problematic.²¹¹ Instead, as one critic claimed, this number was “a refreshing and deserved compliment ... to the female sex.”²¹² The imagery of girls as consumable was becoming naturalized. In the second revue, in 1925, the images were even more graphic. Glenn explains that chorus girls were dressed as chickens and were being roasted on a spit on stage. The skit, the “*Rotisserie*” featured a male singer and a group of chorus girls called “The Winter Garden Broilers,” was “[a] giant rotisserie, complete with a revolving spit upon which four trussed chorus girls ‘chickens’ could be roasted at one time, formed the centerpiece of the scene. Two men in chef’s hats operated the spit, while the head chef stood by showing a menu to two girls dressed as chickens. The chef piled up the ‘cooked’ broilers on both sides of the rotisserie when they were done, and a line of girl chickens sat at the foot of the rotisserie, awaiting their turn on the spit.”²¹³ While this spectacle was being performed on stage, Teddy Claire, the male singer, invited male customers to:

Take a little broiler home with you
 Take a little broiler do.

 Ev’ry one will fill you with delight
 Tickle up your appetite ...
 The chorus followed with:
 We’ve fat chicks and tender chicks

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 195.

²¹² Glenn claims that although the critics enjoyed this number, audience members “refused to laugh” and did not see the humour in this piece, 193.

²¹³ *Ibid.*

And tough chicks and tender chicks
 And chicks that are nice enough to eat
 We've chicks that cost a lot
 And chicks that are rather hot ...
 We've shy chicks and haughty chicks...
 And chicks that can show you something new
 So try a little tender thing
 How about a leg or wing
 We've ev'ry kind of chick for you.²¹⁴

The revue received positive reviews, for the most part, and went on the road after it opened in New York City. According to Glenn, these performances were “symbols of silenced women, as creatures, so vulnerable and defenseless they could be captured, trussed, cooked, and eaten,” but between these images were real concerns on the crises of masculinity during the period of the New Woman.²¹⁵ The performance could be considered to be a way to establish power and authority over women who were taking over and dominating public and leisure spaces.²¹⁶ It can be argued that these fears, by extension, were also dominated by the surge of the girl fad phenomenon. As more and more girls were entering the public domain and occupying, even dominating, specific public spaces, serious fears of being displaced by these modern young women became a real concern. Moreover, the reference to different types of chicks, from tender to tough, to fat and thin, hot, shy or haughty, and the correlation to women as chicks reflects the fears of the different types of girls and women that were emerging in popular media. However, in

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Glenn examines this in more detail. The “Rôtisserie” scene, which depicted the chorus girl as “fowl prepared for sacrifice,” suggested that men needed to eat their broilers before they were eaten by them. She mentions that the representations of women as squabs, chickens, and broilers can be read as “a psychological wish, a symbolic attempt to assert male prerogatives and to master the perceived threat of dangerous feminine ambitions,” 194.

suggesting that the chorus girls were chicks that could be devoured or taken home by men, the revue number diminished the threat that these *types* of “chicks” or modern girls represented.

The Feminization of Chocolate and Bonbons

While milk and poultry were linked to female sexuality in the late nineteenth century, today, a century later, chocolate continues to have similar symbolic meanings linked to women’s sexual drive. The image of chocolate as an object of intense sexual desire has become both visceral and graphic beginning in the latter part of the nineteenth century to today. Magazines suggest, “Eat Chocolate for Better Sex” overtly suggests that the consumption of chocolate equates with sexual pleasure.²¹⁷ As such, advertisements sexualize chocolate and depict women seductively biting into the confectionary. The following images are from a compilation of Cadbury Flake advertisements between 1959 and 1999 where women’s desire to consume chocolate is both suggestive and erotic.



²¹⁷ Lauren Green, “Eat Chocolate for Better Sex” in *Women’s Health Magazine*, February 13, 2012, <http://www.womenshealthmag.com/sex-and-love/chocolate-for-better-sex/slide/2>



Figure 14: Cadbury's Flake (In order by year: 1958, 1965, 1971, 1973, 1983, 1987, 1999)

For forty years, the Cadbury chocolate, *Flake*, was advertised as providing women with oral pleasure, a narrative that both creates and reinforces natural associations between chocolate and sex.²¹⁸ The advertising strategies depict the idea that women have a biological need for

²¹⁸ "Cadbury's Flake '99 (1999, UK)," Accessed, October 2017.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q2SR_3NSqic.

pleasure, hence their desire for chocolate.²¹⁹ Women are seen eating the Flake bar naked in bathtubs, or sprawled out and almost naked in a public park in Paris, or sitting at home, again, nude. The depiction of the female body and her experience of eating the chocolate bar establishes not only an objectification of the female body as sensual and sexual, but her desire to consume chocolate becomes equated with an appetite for oral sex. In fact, the produced images closely resemble women performing fellatio, as the camera focuses on the ways in which each woman seductively bites into the chocolate bar.

In addition to the sexual undertones of eating chocolate, commercials depict women—who are desperate to get their hands on a piece of chocolate—breaking down doors and rioting on the streets, all for the taste of a little chocolate, suggesting that these women *need* chocolate.²²⁰ Chocolate creates hysteria in women. “Once the women take their first bite, a chocolate-induced euphoria invariably follows, barely disguising the association of female sexual pleasure with the candy.”²²¹ It is clearly implied in advertisements that the subject of the consumer is always female. Thus, chocolate is a gendered product. According to Judith Williamson, “Advertisements are selling us something else besides consumer goods: in providing us with a structure in which we, and those goods, are interchangeable, they are selling us ourselves.”²²² With this in mind, the idea that women are irrational and easily lured into consuming luxurious items that arouse

²¹⁹ Judith Williamson, *Decoding Advertisements: Ideology and Meaning in Advertising* (London: Marion Boyars Chicago, 2002), 71.

²²⁰ Dove Chocolate Commercial. Accessed October 2017.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6FEaDY1BMus>.

²²¹ Kawash, Samira, “Sex and Candy,” *New York Times*, 13 February 2014.

²²² Williamson, *Decoding Advertisements*, 70.

pleasure is exemplified through the various advertisements for the decadent confectionary. In addition to these advertisements, the language used for chocolate desserts implies a sense of seduction and sin; some examples include, *Chocolate Decadence*, *Devil's Food Cake*, and *Chocolate Sin*.²²³

The relationship between chocolate and female sexuality extends far beyond the last forty years. The matinee girl was one of the early female figures who was shown as publicly consuming and deriving pleasures from chocolate. A 1913 example from a local Ohio paper, *The Celita Democratic*, suggests,

Candy is a perquisite of theater ushers seldom taken into account. After a Saturday matinee, the enterprising usher can secure enough bonbons and chocolates to last a week. The more absorbing the play the larger the supply. At an interesting climax the emotional matinee girl forgets her candy box and lets it slide to the floor with several pieces sticking in the corners. Immediately after the performance all enterprising ushers search the house for discarded sweets.²²⁴

The narrative surrounding the “emotional matinee girl” who uses chocolate for emotional relief and comfort, chews loudly, and is eroticized, is highlighted in this article. The journalist suggests that the ushers are preying on the intense emotions of the matinee girls, whose main focus is not on the young men but on the stage, and the bonbons swirling around their mouths. The language used to discuss matinee girls can be read as sensual. The article suggests that the girls lose sense of their surroundings during climactic moments in the performance. That is when they consume the most candy. Their candy boxes, with remaining bonbons, slide to the floor as they revel in

²²³ *Ibid.*, 69.

²²⁴ “Sweet Perquisite,” *Celina Democratic*, January 24, 1913.

their own emotional ecstasy. The article suggests that the more pleasurable the play, the bigger the box of chocolates, and the greater their climactic response.

Another way of examining this excerpt and the eroticism in the language used to describe the girls' reaction to what they are seeing is by examining the chocolate as an extension of the stage. Rebecca Schneider suggests that the viewer possesses desire for the viewed. The object held by the viewer acts as a property of mimesis. Therefore, the matinee girls' reaction to the consumption of chocolate can be seen as the sensuous contact between the viewer and viewed. In other words, her response to what she is watching becomes both explicit and literal in her consumption of the sweet treats.²²⁵ The box of bonbons becomes an extension of her desire towards the actor or actress on stage. Her relationship to the theatre and her identity, as reflected back at her from the cover of the chocolate box, is purely based on pleasure and desirability.

A Sweet History: Sugar and Confectionaries

The history of sugar and confectionaries is both long and murky as it pertains to the cultural meanings of sugar and sweets. Today terms such as “home sweet home” and “sweet as sugar and spice” are understood to mean something pleasant.²²⁶ However, the cultural meanings of these terms have undergone significant shifts over time. Until the nineteenth century, sugar was considered a luxury and was eaten in very small amounts by upper class society. It was held in high esteem because it was expensive and also hard to come by; not everyone had access to the pleasures of sugar and it soon became a status symbol. The American elite often served it at

²²⁵ Rebecca Schneider, *The Explicit Body*, 88-90.

²²⁶ Wendy A. Woloson, *Refined Tastes: Sugar, Confectionery, and Consumerism in Nineteenth-Century America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 8.

important dinner parties and purchased the treats from confectioners who specialized in providing the wealthy with expensive goods imported from England and France.²²⁷

Due to its elite status symbol, sugar came to be a signifier of male economic power in America until the nineteenth century when it shifted to symbolize ideologies of femininity. Historian Wendy Woloson states, “Methods of production and distribution also defined sugar as a masculine good because these processes were directly manifestations of male political and economic power.”²²⁸ She further examines the ways in which sugarcane was grown and cultivated, stating that the ways in which men had to first conquer the territory lead to sugarcane being synonymous with masculinity. While the popularity of sugar increased in the eighteenth century, it wasn’t until the nineteenth century that the consumption of sugar rose significantly and sugar become cheaper and easier to come by in America, becoming linked with femininity, white femininity to be exact. Woloson suggests, “Only when refined sugar started losing its position as a status object did its properties come to mesh psychologically with nineteenth-century ideologies regarding the feminine sphere.”²²⁹ She discloses the ways in which chocolate and confectionaries became linked to ideas of “genteel feminine lives.”²³⁰ This historical context provides an understand of the ways the chocolate and candy industries were catering to young women at the end of the nineteenth century. Chocolate, and other sugary treats like candy,

²²⁷ Not all sweets were purchased from confectioners. Some were made at home from ingredients purchased from urban fruiterers.

²²⁸ Woloson, 224.

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Ibid.

became popular among women and children.²³¹ Advertisements catered to women and children's desire of sweet treats, and they also linked confectionaries to courtship and romance between men and women.

In examining how confectionaries took on symbolic understandings of femininity, it is critical to examine how advertisements perpetuated symbolism around femininity and confectionaries. By the end of the nineteenth century, confectionaries took on many guises, from "hard, crunchy rock candy, churned and frozen as ice cream, whipped with butter and made pliant for cake frosting, and molded into soft, creamy bonbons," and their many forms became appealing and accessible.²³² The increase in advertisements for sweets is indicative of the popularity of both candy and chocolate at the turn of the century as well as the rise of the young theatre-loving girl. As such, sugar had "specific cultural connotations from associations based on appearance, packaging, concrete economic value, and its frequent comparison to people."²³³ From their association to masculine power to its feminization at the turn of the century, sugary treats were synonymous with terms like "refinement, gentility, piety, and weakness."²³⁴ From creamy chocolate bonbon boxes wrapped in pretty ribbons to the emergence of ice-cream saloons

²³¹ It was also believed, during this period, that sugar provided energy. The U.S sent chocolate to military camps abroad. Some conversations emerged in articles on the benefits of chocolate consumption for soldiers, however this was contested.

²³² Woloson, *Refined Tastes: Sugar, Confectionery, and Consumerism in Nineteenth-Century America*, 9.

²³³ *Ibid.*, 10.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*

as a woman's domain, the language used to describe these pleasant delicacies became linked to qualities of class, gender, and age.

The bonbon was a popular treat for the matinee girl. A French delicacy, the bonbon was "made of fine ingredients like delicate creams, subtle flavorings, and fragile coatings of hand-dipped sugar, and required boxes for protection."²³⁵ The French bonbon was individually handmade; thus, it was a more expensive delicacy. However, by the 1890s, bonbons were mass produced. Girls could purchase an assortment of different kinds of chocolate from mint patties to chocolate buds, caramels, and chocolate covered almonds. They were either sold by the box or by weight, costing as low as five cents to fifty cents a pound.²³⁶

Despite American manufacturers making their own chocolate rather than importing them from France, the name bonbon continued to identify the chocolate as a fine candy. According to Woloson, "Bonbons and other fine confectionaries came to be the focus of many entries because they were luxurious, ephemeral, and fancy items that like gratuitous sex, masturbation, and novel reading had no purpose other than to take up time and to gratify indulgences."²³⁷ Bonbons were carefully packaged in boxes and were tied with a ribbon that matched the colour of the candy. The following images are boxes of bonbons that were sold in confectioners. The images of girls on the boxes reveal the target consumer for this delicacy. Girls who saw themselves on the cover of each box were the main consumers of bonbons.

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ According to advertisements published in newspapers during this period.

²³⁷ Ibid.



Figure 15: Beckman's Sweets, Broadway Chocolates and Bishop's Chocolates are examples of chocolate boxes sold during the period. All of the boxes highlight the target consumer: young fashionable girls. All images found on Etsy

The little box of assorted bonbons reveals the way each company branded pleasure-seeking girls. While the matinee girl consumes the image of herself on the box, she is exemplifying a sort of autoeroticism, taking pleasure in and consuming her own image. The desire to take pleasure in these sweet treats exemplifies the eroticism that is by nature a part of the matinee girls' identity. She goes to the theatre to be pleased, not only by the stage actors, but from the chocolate and candy she consumes.

The consumption of chocolate became a fad for girls at the turn of the century. More and more girls were purchasing boxes of chocolate, so much so that it became a national phenomenon and journalists took to the paper to discuss it. For example, *The Minneapolis Journal* in 1906 wrote about the "latest fad" in confectionary. This article was crafted as an *important study* on the matinee girl and a significant article for confectioners all over the country. The article, "Candies to Match Dresses," explains an incident that occurred in New York City when a "matinee girl complained to a New York candy merchant that the box of sweets he had just sold her formed a

contrast with her dress, which was perfectly awful.”²³⁸ The candy merchant immediately returned to his assortment of chocolates and selected the colors of candy that would match the matinee girl’s colour scheme; he choose “pink, mauve and brown shades of candies in a box to match, which the matinee girl can allow to repose in her lap, happy in the knowledge that it is another item in her color scheme.”²³⁹ This event, and the publication of the article suggest two things: first, that confectionaries of all sorts were positioned as integral—along with her hat, matching outfit, and lorgnette—to the identity of the matinee girl, and second that the matinee girl was a major consumer within this market. Thus, while this article may have been commissioned by a confectioner or the chocolate industry to appeal to young women who may have been persuaded to purchase chocolates that matched their outfit, it also indicates that the relationship between a matinee girl and a box of bonbons was being shaped and constructed in the media.

While chocolate bonbons were a popular treat for matinee girls during this period, chocolate only became an edible snack towards the end of the nineteenth century. As early as the fourteenth century, the Spanish declared chocolate to be a type of medical drug. It was not edible, but drinking chocolate in the West was understood to be both a wholesome supplement and a healthy drink. Because of the protein and fat content in the drink, it was considered to have better effects on the nervous system than coffee or tea.²⁴⁰ In the short war with Spain in 1898, the U.S supplied tons of chocolate to its troops, as did the British during the Boer War of 1899-1902.²⁴¹

²³⁸ “Candies to Match Dresses,” *The Minneapolis Journal*, March 26, 1905, 12.

²³⁹ Woloson, 10.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*

By the latter part of the nineteenth-century in England, chocolate bars became a weekly treat in proletarian homes and a wrapped chocolate confectionary was considered to be a special treat, or an exceptional gift.²⁴² It was only after 1879 that chocolate received recognition as an edible snack when Roderich Lindt of Switzerland invented ‘melting chocolate.’²⁴³ Chocolate filled with cocoa butter became a common ingredient in a variety of baking and confectionary products, which exploded in New York City in the late 1880s.²⁴⁴ As both the melting chocolate and the matinee girl emerged into New York’s urban culture, they both made a significant impact on the city’s fabric.

As young women began to emerge in public spaces at the turn of the century, confectioners began to target girls who had disposable money to spend. The matinee girl’s emergence into American culture shifted the way chocolate was sold and advertised in New York City. According to Woloson in *Refined Tastes*, the “saturations of references to sweetness and refinement” and images of women and children in advertisements during the period lead to the feminization of chocolate and candy.²⁴⁵ Both men and women accepted the gendered association of sugar as “natural.”²⁴⁶ In fact, “economic depreciation coincided with its cultural devaluation

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ Ibid., 50.

²⁴⁴ According to my research findings at the Harry Ransom Center, chocolate confectionaries became a popular treat in the late 1880s in New York City and targeted theatre patrons as potential customers. My research indicates that advertisements for chocolate bonbons, chocolate powder and drinks began being published in playbills by 1890.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Ibid., 11.

and reemergence as a ‘feminine’ substance. But even as a socially demoted product, sugar and the confections made from it adhered to a familiar hierarchy based on appearance that equated purity and gentility.”²⁴⁷ Those who consumed sweet things had refined palates, making consumers even more sweeter and refined.²⁴⁸ Woloson states that there were a number of reasons why the transformation of sugar went from being a male-gendered commodity to a female-gendered one. However, the desire for economic empowerment was conflated with social empowerment and shifted the understanding of sugar. It went from being “highly prized” into “an ephemeral material used to make things that were sweet, delicate, refined and feminine.”²⁴⁹ The quality of sugar as sweet became linked with specific human traits. “Advertising played a large role in animating commodities at once influencing and articulating the meanings consumers derived from material goods,” suggests Woloson.²⁵⁰ The meanings of confectionaries and sweet tasting treats quickly became synonymous with qualities of young female theatre-fans. Bonbons were sweet. Matinee girls were sweet.

²⁴⁷ Ibid., 13-4.

²⁴⁸ Ibid., 14.

²⁴⁹ Ibid., 12.

²⁵⁰ Ibid., 11.

Marketing the Fan Girl as *Sweet*



Figure 16: From the Museum of the City of New York online archive of Castle Square Opera Co. (Date unknown).

The Museum of the City of New York's online archives collection is home to this black and white photograph of the popular Broadway theatre, Castle Square Opera Co. The photograph reveals the way in which matinee girls were a prime market audience for chocolate. The words on the large advertisement reads "Chocolate for Matinee Girls" in large font with an image of a matinee girl. The girl that is being branded as a matinee girl is young and Anglo-looking. The following words written just beneath the image read: "A Sweet Sweet." The play on words promotes the idea that the matinee girl is, like chocolate, both a sweet and a treat: a consumable object that is packaged as a pretty ribbon-wrapped box of chocolate bonbons. The financial investment of this advertisement, its large size, and its position on the busy corner of Broadway

and 41st Street in New York City suggests that the matinee girl was marketable. It also suggests that modern girls were spending a significant amount of money on chocolate.

With an increase in the options of sweets made as well as their quantity, as a result of their mass production, advertisements for confectionaries were seen all over urban spaces, from large street advertisements to newspapers. Confectioners opened shops next to theatres as did drug stores who sold Lowney's and Milford's, popular brands of candy and chocolate of the period. The use of sugar became so prevalent among the people in the West that it was combined with ice, and chocolate or vanilla, in the form of ice cream soda. This was another kind of sweet treat that matinee girls took pleasure in. In fact, journalists often noted matinee girls' desire for the treat when they congregated after the performance at drug stores to gossip over their soda.

Chocolate: A Gift of Romance

By the end of the nineteenth century, a box of chocolates was a popular gift for young men to give to their sweethearts. Woloson's research indicates that in the 1700s Valentine's Day gifts included lace and paper cards; however, by 1894 the *Confectioners Journal* reported that paper cards were being replaced with chocolate and candy.²⁵¹ However, chocolate and candy weren't limited to Valentine's Day. An advertisement for Shandal's chocolate, for example, found in a New York playbill asserts, "If you have a quarrelsome wife, or a cross sweetheart, sweeten her thoughts with a box of Bon-Bons, Delicious Creams or any of our Confections."²⁵² The idea of giving a sweet treat to a "quarrelsome" sweetheart was presumably appealing to men. The underlying message could suggest that appealing to his sweetheart's desires would result in

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² New York playbill, *Harry Ransom Center*, date unknown.

some reciprocal generosity being returned in his favor for his thoughtful gesture. In addition, Tompkins and Counihan's discussion of eating and sex being metaphorically linked to one another suggest that giving a gift in the form of food is similar to offering sexual pleasures. In fact, Woloson, suggests that "... eating something like a chocolate-covered cherry supposedly approximated the sensations of passionate kissing, it constituted a form of oral play," a metaphor that appeared in trade journals and in packaging of candies, where they appeared to look like chocolate lips.²⁵³ Therefore, giving a lover a box of chocolates as a gift could imply that the chocolate was foreplay and that sexual favours were expected in return.

The implication that chocolate is a signifier for romance and courtship is exemplified in a number of articles published in newspapers across the country. For example, an article in the *St. Paul's Daily Globe* in 1895, the writer suggests, "the nice young man who wishes to centre the hitherto wandering affections of any young woman on himself need only to send her a box of these sugary dainties. This new candy, which has newly appeared on Broadway, is the latest trend."²⁵⁴ Chocolate can be seen as a token of desire and a source for sensuous pleasures. According to Samira Kawash, "It is a long-standing tradition: men give women chocolates with the implication that they will be given reciprocal pleasures in turn. But increasingly in the post-feminist era, chocolate is being marketed directly to women, as an easy indulgence and escape from everyday pressures and worries."²⁵⁵ Although gifting a box of chocolates was considered a romantic gesture, matinee girls defied this and purchased their own box of assorted bonbons.

²⁵³Woloson, 131.

²⁵⁴ "Newest Bonbon," *St. Paul's Daily Globe*, 27 October 1895, 11.

²⁵⁵ Samira Kawash, *Candy: A Century of Panic and Pleasure* (New York: MacMillan, 2013), 19.

Within this context, the matinee girl's behaviour serves as a precursor to the contemporary practice of buying one's own chocolate.



Figure 17: Raphael Tuck & Son's Valentine Post Card, Series "B" (found on eBay).

Despite articles published in newspapers that promoted the idea of chocolate with courtship and romance, postcards and advertisements, on the other hand, presented chocolates to matinee girls as singular and detached from the narrative that men buy women chocolates. There were two scripted narratives associated with chocolates: heterosexual love for women and men and independence for young modern girls. In the postcard above, the box of chocolates symbolically stands in for the matinee girl's male companion. The box provides her with pleasure, which can be interpreted in the following images of the matinee girl. The first example is the Valentine Greeting comic postcard printed in c. 1910 (Figure 17) in which the matinee girl is walking to the theatre with her arms wrapped around a very large box that reads chocolate bonbons. She also carries a handbag with the words "Opera Glasses," illustrating that she is on

her way to the theatre.²⁵⁶ She walks alone with her large box of pleasurable sweets, dressed in her colourful gown, and a veil that is tied around her head, maintaining her anonymity. She has taken full responsibility for her own pleasures.



Figure 18: The Matinee Girl Postcard

Another postcard sold during the period is an image of a matinee girl sitting in the theatre, also alone, watching the performance through her lorgnette, or opera glasses; her little box of chocolates sits on her lap as she enjoys the performance on stage. Across from the row that she sits in, men and women fill the seats, some turning back to watch her in all her glory. The matinee girl is accustomed to being on display and is not fazed by the eyes looking her way. The woman who stares back at the matinee girl can be read in juxtaposition to the modern matinee girl. The woman who attends the theatre with a male companion, either her husband or brother, gazes intently at the independent modern girl, who is not only lavishly dressed but presumably enjoying the performance with her lorgnette and a box of chocolate bonbons. In other words,

²⁵⁶ eBay, c.1910.

these postcards reveal a narrative of the modern girl who is independent, loves to consume, and is the provider of her own pleasure. The short poem below the image reads: “Always looking for a pass/ For any sort of show, From matinee to matinee/You’re always on the go.” Her only care in the world is to enjoy her new life of leisure. The implication that the matinee girl is consumed by her desire for pleasure is insinuated in the postcards and poem. She is represented as having agency and mobility.



Figure 19: “At the Matinee,” 1906 and the Gibson Girls at the beach, 1900

In addition to the postcards, in 1906, the famous Charles Dana Gibson, known for his iconic Gibson Girl at the turn of the century, was selected by *Collier’s Weekly* as one of the top ten drawings —out of one hundred—granting him a prize \$100,000. The drawing was called, “At the Matinee,” and depicted four matinee girls at the theatre. *The Sunday World* published images of this drawing to give to readers “for purposes of home decoration.” It was printed in “artistic

fashion, upon art paper, the sheet measuring 10x15 inches.”²⁵⁷ The image of the matinee girl indulging in her box of chocolates and the drama onstage was presumably framed on the wall of many American homes. This particular image is of interest because unlike his earlier, iconic image of the Gibson Girl, whose “striking profile draws attention to the prominence and angularity of her nose and cheekbones,”²⁵⁸ the four matinee girls look somewhat plain. As such, these four matinee girls are dressed conservatively and they lack the beauty of the original Gibson Girl. Their bodies disappear from our gaze and instead the focus is on what they are doing. They sit on the edge of their seat, nibbling nervously on bonbons and/or the playbill; entirely lost in their experiences. Their behaviour and posture is different from the Gibson girl who sits up straight, is polished and has a pleasing demeanor. While Gibson, and others (see Introduction) of the period depicted modern girls who challenged gender roles, they also promoted a hyper and sexualized type of femininity. Matinee girls, on the other hand, challenged conventions of hyper femininity by chewing and eating in public and having female crushes on actresses. These girls were reinventing what it meant to be a modern girl at the turn of the century.

The (not so) Sweet and over-Indulgent Matinee Girl

Modern girls challenged traditional feminine roles and the matinee girl in particular defied gender norms. As such, the growing concerns about matinee girls’ active participation in consumption were cloaked by narratives that presented them as too vulnerable and naïve to make

²⁵⁷ Advertisement, *Sunday World*, 31 March 1906, 10.

²⁵⁸ Maria Elena Buszek, *Pin-Up Grrrls: Feminism, Sexuality, Popular Culture* (Duke University Press Durham and London 2006), 92.

responsible choices. The infamous Edward Bok, editor of *The Ladies Home Journal*, wrote a full-length feature on his concern over what young matinee girls were exposed to in the theatre. He states, “A young girl, before she reaches years of discretion, should have her amusements carefully selected for her.”²⁵⁹ In a 1903 editorial note to parents called, “The Young Girl at the Matinee,” Bok argues, “The girls must not be blamed for their presence at these matinees. We cannot expect judgment from them.”²⁶⁰ Instead he urges parents to take responsibility for the pleasures and desires of young girls.²⁶¹ His argument that teenage girls cannot make their own sound decisions is an example of the fears of the newfound freedom that modern girls exhibited. Bok articulately explains, “But to let our young girls attend the matinees, as apparently they do nowadays, without any discrimination, is sowing a mighty dangerous seed.”²⁶² Bok established the ways in which girls are too naive to make intelligent choices, thus, he argues that their presence at matinees will only cause damage to girls’ way of thinking.

Journalists and so-called matinee girl experts were also weighing in and revealing their concerns. In 1895, the *St. Paul’s Daily Globe* published a syndicated article on “Newest Bonbons” with a focus on the latest bonbons being sold on Broadway.²⁶³ The writer suggests, “Pralines are the very latest article of diet in which the matinee girl rejoices.”²⁶⁴ The “praline is

²⁵⁹ Edward Bok, “The Young Girl at the Matinée,” *The Ladies Home Journal*, 1903.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

²⁶² Ibid.

²⁶³ “Newest Bonbons,” *The Saint Paul Daily Globe: Sunday Morning*, 27 October 1895, 11.

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

literally only a sugar cake, about as large and thick as the palm of one's hand and richly strewed with pecan nuts."²⁶⁵ In fact, "[i]t required just one week to establish praline as the leading bonbon of the season, and the nice young man who wishes to center the hitherto wandering affections of any young woman on himself need only send her a box of these sugary dainties."²⁶⁶ The way to make a matinee girl happy is to give her a box of something sweet. However, "[t]hey will probably make her ill, for of all confections know a praline is the most indigestible; but what is a headache or two in comparison with the sensation one has while eating this sweetmeat? That experience among matinee girls is similarly known as the 'happy dispatch.'"²⁶⁷ In this example, the author suggests that the matinee girl was the target consumer for sugary sweets because she was incapable of making good decisions. Despite knowing she will be sick if she consumes this unhealthy snack, she prefers to feel the pleasures associated with the product. The narrative around the girl who subjects herself to physical pain—headaches and indigestion—in order to experience a sugar rush supports dominant stereotypes about the irrational behaviour that women are susceptible to, a stereotype still apparent in chocolate ads today. This article also suggests that too much of something is a bad thing; therefore, the matinee girl's increased public visibility can only lead to an unfavorable outcome.

More specifically, some critics considered it too dangerous to the matinee girl's health and beauty to consume so much sugar. For example, *The World: Saturday Evening* published an article on 12 December 1891 on "The Ways of Woman Fair: Fads, Fancies, and Fashions that

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

Delight the Gentler Sex.” The article suggests that “When the matinee girl or the woman of the world wants to get up ‘a quiet still’ she pops a lump of loaf sugar in her mouth and at the end her eyes are as bright as head lights, she can make her tongue work like a rattle and she feels as buoyant as a feather.”²⁶⁸ In the nineteenth century, a loaf of sugar was a large lump of solid cane sugar, rather than the granulated form that is sold today. Kitchen tools, called sugar nips, were required to cut smaller pieces of the large loaf for baking or for use in sweetening tea. The reference by the journalist to the matinee girl popping a sugar loaf into her mouth is an exaggeration and adds to the discourse around girls defying the conventions placed on her during the period.



Figure 20: Sugar Nips: A tool required to cut chunks of sugar from a large sugar loaf

Not only were critics highlighting the negative effects of sugar on girls but *experts* added to this conversation. “The matinee girl on her ‘chocolate drunk’ was described by Dr. J.C. Mitchell of Louisville, Ky., addressing the National Eclectic Medical Ass’n, in session here today.” He said the matinee girl who eats a pound of chocolates and goes to a doctor the next day with a severe headache was merely getting over the effects of a “drunk.” The uneasiness of

²⁶⁸ “The Ways of Woman Fair: Fads, Fancies, and Fashions that Delight the Gentler Sex,” *The World: Saturday Evening*, 12 December 1891, 2.

having young women consuming chocolate until she was physically ill was a reflection of the fears around adolescents making their own choices without parental or male supervision. Their access to sites of pleasure only meant one thing: danger to their well-being.

In another example, Dr. William Brady added to concerns in *The Richmond Times-Dispatch*, with an article called “Health Talks by Dr. Wm. Brady: The Fat Folks at the Matinee.” The article specifically focuses on the matinee girl’s weight gain. Dr. Brady suggests that “[t]hese matinee followers are a very busy lot. They use their muscles vigorously—their temporal and masseter [sic] muscles at least. And that is why they grow fat. If they would only rest those overworking masticating muscles one might occasionally see a beautiful woman who is not fat.”²⁶⁹ This article on women’s bodies is fueled with complexities. He criticizes girls who consume too much sugar and gain weight from it, and also highlights their susceptibility to masculine traits from their constant chewing. The image of this young woman taking on masculine traits may have been a direct response to the ways in which girls were taking up public spaces. In this particular article, Dr. Brady provides a detailed “table” on calories consumed by this young girl. He suggests:

Now, then, our matinee girl nibbles a bar of milk chocolate or sweet chocolate [...] during the first act, assimilating about 250 calories, for 6 cents. This is equivalent to about one and one-third pints of milk. During the second act she just chews gum – 5 cents, and a nary a calory [sic]. In the third act, she comes through with a dozen salted almonds—150 calories. After the show, she feels thirsty and shakes her thirst with an ice-cream soda – 400 calories, 10 cents. This stimulates her appetite, so on the way home she invests in a quarter of peanuts—but that is another story.

²⁶⁹ “Health Talks by Dr. Wm. Brady: The Fat Folks at the Matinée,” *Richmond Dispatch*, 2 June 1919, 2.

The matinee girl “grow(s) fat” because she “requires 2,800 calories per day and consumes about 4,000 calories on Wednesdays and Saturdays.” Not only is this specialist seemingly concerned with the number of calories consumed by the matinee girl but he also highlights the amount of money she spends on her weekly consumption of these delicacies. This article suggests a larger issue with these young girls who were thought to be spending frivolously and consuming unlimited calories. These girls were independently using their own money to participate in and consume pleasure. This progressive act for girls during the period helped to establish a sense of agency for this new category of girls. It also caused tensions with those who expected women to live up to traditional gender roles.

These articles provide insight into the tensions surrounding the modern girls who actively participated in consumer culture. Through consumption they threatened conservative and patriarchal expectations of gender. While Dr. Brady could provide a genuine concern for the increased consumption of sugar by this group of girls, in critiquing the different ways in which the matinee girl consumes, he also attempts to maintain order among the sexes. A young working-class woman who earned her own money, took up the city streets of New York, dominated the commercial theatre, announced to the world that she was visible and full of desire. She indulged in the pleasures that the city offered, simply suggested that matinee girls were contesting the conventions of gender and class expectation by reinventing a new image for modern girls.

To further exemplify the concerns around the over indulgent matinee girl, an article written to the matinee girl in the *Evening World*, on June 1904 entitled “The Matinee Girl Who Raves About Pretty Actresses May Make Herself Charming” begins by establishing a correlation between the matinee girl and her extensive consumption of sweet treats. As the matinee girl pouts “above her glass of chocolate soda,” wanting to look as charming as her matinee idol, the critic

suggests that the matinee girl could never look as charmingly as a stage actress unless she stops her bad habit. According to the article, “some girls would rather have a diet of sweets than a peach-blow complexion”²⁷⁰ The open dialogue of women’s beauty standards by men was typical of the period. From Dr. William Brady’s concern about the matinee girls’ weight to Professor Quakenbonds’ claims that the matinee girls’ “pure and sweet” breath was being spoiled by confectionaries, the discussion by male critics, or “experts,” reflects the tensions that emerged with the rise of the modern girl.

The discourse of matinee girls consuming chocolate and sweets the wrong way became a popular narrative in newspaper articles. In a theatre review published by the *Dramatic Mirror*, the review-turned-analysis of the matinee girl recalls the conversation inside the theatre between a group of matinee girls.²⁷¹ The article reads:

One girl I know passed around a gun metal case the other afternoon. We all declined raising our eyebrows. One girl looked at it through a lorgnette and asked what it was.

“Cigarettes,” said the one with the case.

“Smoking has been prohibited here,” said the girl with the lorgnette, while we all colored deeply.

“Oh-la-la!” said the one with the case, winking at me, “they’re only chocolate. What did you think?”

The comic tale of girls with a cigarette box reveals the contradictory relationship between girls and chocolate. Just as smoking was associated with a performance of masculinity, the consumption of chocolate was a way for girls to assert masculine characteristics by replacing cigarettes for chocolates. Nevertheless, while consuming chocolate was being gendered as a feminine activity, smoking had been historically understood to be a predominantly male activity.

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

²⁷¹ “Under Reviews Nell Gwen,” *Dramatic Mirror*, 29 Oct 1900, 2.

In fact, “in the early twentieth century, most smokers were men; smoking tobacco continued to be viewed as immoral and a sign of especially bad character among women.”²⁷² While women did smoke during this period, it was generally frowned upon and deemed improper for young girls to participate in the masculine culture of smoking.²⁷³ Just like chewing candy and chocolate would increase girls’ facial muscles, the chocolate in a cigarette box also challenged ideologies of Victorian femininity.

The concern of the matinee girl losing her feminine features is seen again in the *New York Sun*’s 1895 article, “The Types of Matinee Girls,” where the journalist indicates that matinee girls were becoming aggressive due to their severe hunger for sweet cream soda.²⁷⁴ The journalist who positions himself as an observer states, “after the matinee the matinee girls ebb in a body down Broadway to a confectioner’s, where they eat ice-cream soda water with long silver spoons and discuss the merits and demerits of the drama they have witnessed.”²⁷⁵ The girls

²⁷² Gina Misiroglu (ed.), *American Countercultures: An Encyclopedia of Nonconformists, Alternative Lifestyles and Radical Ideas in US History* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe Inc. 2009), 671.

²⁷³ Jarette Rudy, *Freedom to Smoke: Tobacco Consumption and Identity*, (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press), 2005. Rudy explains that Montreal’s Madame Sauvalle’s 1907 etiquette book discusses women’s smoking habits. While a complex topic, Rudy explains “smoking cigarettes was widespread among Europe’s elite women, she was adamant that this aristocratic decadence would not be tolerated in other classes, informing her readers that ‘it is considered in be very bad form unless one is close to the steps of a throne. Elegance was clearly incompatible with smoking for those not born into aristocracy” 263.

²⁷⁴ “Types of Matinee Girls, *New York Sun*, 14 April 1895, 4.

²⁷⁵ Ibid. The first soda fountains in America, in the 1810s, disposed carbonated water. They were mounted on the wall of the local apothecary’s or drugstore. By the 1830s, drug store owners added flavorings and sweeteners to carbonated water, making it a more suitable drink. By the late nineteenth century, soda fountains dominated drugstores. The soda fountain “was an important public space that fostered a sense of belonging,” Woloson, 2. The soda fountain had a marble

“wedge themselves in a perfumed inextricable mass and push and shove one another good-naturedly in their endeavors to obtain a place at the marble-topped counter where they are served their favourite tippie.”²⁷⁶ As the journalist continues to watch these girls enter the soda shop, he advises that “[f]ew men dare enter this place on Saturday after the matinee.”²⁷⁷ Instead, anxious men stand outside the soda shop “without portals, gazing in at the struggling man and wondering if they were ever to see the fair creatures who had insisted on venturing in.”²⁷⁸ The article suggests that these young women are taking over public spaces and men were feeling displaced. The article suggests that this culture of girlhood was taking over the city and keeping men away. As the writer suggests, there is no place for men inside these same spaces, and those who do wander inside are not guaranteed to “ever [...] see the fair creatures” again. This description of the matinee girl’s hunger for sweet treats implicitly crafts her as challenging masculinity and taking over masculine spaces. These girls are depicted as aggressive and physical at the marble counters, eager to order their chocolate soda. They are framed in such a way that warns bystanders of the disruption and disarray caused by these groups of new girls.

In addition to the previous “concerns” was that the matinee girl was not only losing her femininity but human traits in general as she took over the city and threatened to displace men. In a 22 March 1903 article in *The New York Daily Tribune*, “Spring, Soda, Violets, Asphalt, and

base, a wooden or marble canopy, one or more glass mirrors, and pillars. All of these touches were meant to create an attractive space that would attract customers, Woloson, 88.

²⁷⁶ “Types of Matinee Girls: Best Studied in Broadway on Saturday Afternoon,” *New York Sun*, 14 April 1895, 4.

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

Good Intentions—Three Novelties,” the article describes the performance of matinee girls’ post-theatre. “It was a matinee day and the performances were just over, back to the shop, their heads bent over glasses of foaming soda, elbow to elbow close as in an elevated car at rush hours, stood a line of women and girls, while at the counter across the way the haughty cashier exchanged checks like poker chips for dimes of the realm with mechanical fingers, her brain, meantime busy, so it seemed, with far-away creative thoughts, but whether of millinery or metaphysics it was impossible to say.”²⁷⁹ Again, the language used here to discuss the matinee girls’ consumption in public is machine-like. They sit “close as in an elevated car at rush hour, their fingers are “mechanical” and her brain “far-away” possibly thinking of “millinery or metaphysics,” says the journalist. In choosing to use mechanical language to describe these young women the writer insinuates that they lack human qualities. The journalist continues, “[i]f the Idler had come for soda, he saw no chance of getting it till the matinee rush was over, so he leaned against the counter at the far end of the store and watched the scene.”²⁸⁰ Thus, matinee girls became a site of spectacle as they consumed and expressed themselves through their love for pleasure and indulgence, all while keeping men from “venturing in” to their space. As such, the fears of the young matinee girl taking over the city as well as the ways in which they themselves became spectacles, or “scenes” to be “watched,” by journalists and critics alike is established, not only because they were girls but because they defied the perceived *natural*.

The Act of Chewing in Public

²⁷⁹ “Spring, Soda, Violets, Asphalt, and Good Intentions—Three Novelties,” *New York Daily Tribune*, 22 March 1903, 9.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

The act of eating, and specifically chewing in public, was considered degrading for the female sex. This caused an association or club to be formed at the turn of the century by women who believed that chewing gum was “becoming a vulgar fad, especially among young girls at matinees at the opera house, at entertainments, and social functions. They believe that it is at all times a transgression on good taste and that in time the person chewing gum in public places will be stamped as vulgar by people of refinement,” recounts Kerry Segrave.²⁸¹ In fact, the contempt of women’s public chewing raised a number of concerns leading to the formation of a group who wanted to ban females from chewing gum in public. According to Segrave, one of the women present at the meeting said she counted 14 women chewing gum at the opera house one evening. There was a vote “and it was unanimously agreed that gum chewing in public places was obnoxious and beneath the dignity of all well-bred women and that some movement ought to be made to stop it.”²⁸² Segrave’s research in *Chewing Gum in America, 1850-1920* suggests that there was a national uproar in the chewing of gum by women in the early twentieth century. Jane Dusselier confirms that, “Although to the modern reader these images do not appear provocative, for nineteenth century women any acknowledgement or display of appetite was a sign of unbridled sexuality. Portrayals of white middle-class women publicly satisfying their passion for candy signaled that a new social order was on the horizon.”²⁸³ Responding to concerns that

²⁸¹ qtd. In Kerry Segrave, *Chewing Gum in America 1850-1920: The Rise of an Industry* (U.S.: McFarland & Co., 2015), 115. See John F. Kasson in *Rudeness and Civility Manners in Nineteenth-Century Urban America* for more on women chewing in public.

²⁸² Ibid.

²⁸³ Jane Dusselier, “Bonbons, Lemon Drops, and Oh Henry! Bars Candy, Consumer Culture, and the Construction of Gender, 1895-1920” in *Kitchen Culture in America: Popular Representations of Food, Gender, and Race*, Sherry A. Innes (ed.) (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 18.

women were making noise in all the wrong places, clubs aimed to prohibit women from chewing loudly, thereby seeking to maintain and control girls' public behaviour.

As such, in a Wisconsin local paper, a journalist lambastes the matinee girl for chewing in the theatre. The article, "The Horrors of Gum Chewing," notes:

She wags her jaws at the rate of about forty miles an hour ... She will cough and give every excuse for opening and closing her mouth, and when it closes the delightful expression of satisfaction shows the pleasure she experiences. ... You see a bevy of girls at a matinee. They are chewing during the whole performance and swallowing gum act by act.²⁸⁴

The sexual tone of this criticism of her "opening and closing her mouth" and revealing the "delightful expression of satisfaction" that clearly reveals the "pleasure she experiences" as she swallows multiple pieces of gum, is suggestive of her sexual appetite. In challenging the expectations placed on women during the period, the matinee girl was pushing and creating new roles for the modern girl.

In addition, the act of eating in public defied conventions of "genteel" femininity. Dusselier suggests that the image of women chewing in public spaces defied the strict moral expectations for women. She states, "In a nation undergoing profound change, rigidly defined and tightly scripted dining behaviour provided a sense of tranquility among an increasingly anxious middle class. A woman eating in public was a tantalizing image during the late nineteenth century, with one etiquette manual warning that such activity indicated a lack of refinement and propriety. Reflecting a new dialogue surrounding sexual mores, these candy advertisements broke with Victorian images of women as passionless and sexually restrained."²⁸⁵

²⁸⁴ "The Horrors of Gum Chewing," *Wood County Reporter (Wisconsin)*, 22 April 1886, np.

²⁸⁵ Dusselier, "Bonbons," 20.

Girls and women helped to construct new notions of female sexuality for themselves by the turn of the century by pushing the boundaries of gender identity, including the ways in which girls cultivated homosocial relationships, as well as the economic, demographic, and social shifts that were happening.²⁸⁶ In thinking about these new roles that women were creating, and comparing them to journalistic accounts of matinee girls, it can be concluded that young matinee-adoring girls were actively disrupting conventions that were placed on them. Therefore, matinee girls were pushing boundaries and creating new roles for female fan groups.

Concluding Thoughts

In conclusion, the impact girls had as they emerged into American culture was noteworthy. In using chocolate to control and maintain Victorian expectations of behaviour in public, journalists and critics attempted to regulate the public behaviour of these modern girls. In addition, the matinee girl was part of a larger conversation that linked women to edible objects. Although the matinee girl's relationship to food was different from other women during the period (Chorus Girls, for example), her symbolic link reveals the shifts in the social environment and cultural changes that were occurring at the turn of the twentieth century.

In thinking about the theatre then and now, eating sweets has been a part of the theatre-going experience. The conversation around food and eating during a performance continues to be relevant today as it has surfaced in 2007. *The New York Times* published an article informing readers of some changes in the theatre regarding snack choices. According to Cara Joy David, “[w]hile eating at your seat at a Broadway theater used to be universally forbidden, “theaters are increasingly allowing patrons to take their drinks, candy and even crunchy munchies to their seats

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

during a show. This let-them-eat-snacks philosophy has been embraced at the Helen Hayes, Hilton, New Amsterdam, Eugene O'Neill and Walter Kerr Theaters" (as well as nine others).²⁸⁷ According to Vice-President Jim Boese, these changes are "a reflection of changing audience habits."²⁸⁸ In addition, "[t]here are also plans to create cafe areas with tables and chairs and higher-end products, like high-quality chocolates, in some theaters (similar to soda shops). In fact, one has just been constructed at the Minskoff."²⁸⁹ Food has become an important topic of investigation and continues to be essential to some audiences who enjoy having their snacks while watching a movie or attending the theatre. Despite the time frame, similarities between the matinee girl's taste for sugary sweets and audiences today who similarly enjoy candy and chocolate during a show or intermission continues to be seen today.

The idea of the theatre as a luxurious outing, one that can be similarly identified with today, was culturally carved by the emerging matinee girl who played an integral role in the changing culture of Broadway theatre in New York City. The concerning tone in which (predominantly male) journalists wrote about these young theatre-loving girls was challenged when two self-identified matinee girls published weekly columns called "The Matinee Girl." One of the columns was published in Winnipeg's *Town Topics* (Manitoba, Canada) while the other was written in the *New York Dramatic Mirror*. As such, chapter three interrogates the ways in which female writers were responding to and reframing not only modern girlhood but specifically matinee girls.

²⁸⁷ Cara Joy David, "Noises Off: Playgoers Sip, Munch and Crunch," *New York Times*, 5 January 2007.

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

Chapter Three

Dear Matinee Girl: Reinventing the Modern Girl

Writing under the guise of young matinee girls, I examine how two journalists fought against stereotypes and assumptions that girls were incapable of having intellectual thoughts and conversations about the theatre. They wrote successful columns that presented intelligent, outspoken, culturally engaged theatre-loving girls. Thus, this chapter examines how “The Matinee Girl” columns, in both Winnipeg’s *Town Topics* (1898 - 1913) and the *New York Dramatic Mirror* (1899 - 1908), helped to reshape notions of the modern girl and particularly matinee girls at the turn of the twentieth century. Both authors, who wrote under pseudonyms and kept their identities anonymous, asserted their agency, political agenda and demonstrated their connections to the theatre industry. Their long-lasting columns, each spanning approximately a decade, offer evidence of the growing popularity and fascination with the matinee girl figure, as well as the influence of the columns in two highly established theatre magazines. Most importantly, these columns foreground the importance of female voices.

While the focus of my dissertation has been on the New York matinee girl, this chapter looks across the border to include the voice of a Canadian self-identified matinee girl: Harriet Walker. What fascinates me about both columns is their shared title, the way both writers document life as a matinee girl, and how they each explored topics specific to their locations. These columns are vital to understanding the influence matinee girls had on popular culture during the period. They also suggest that matinee girls had a shared identity across borders. In *Town Topic*, for example, Harriet Walker sheds light on the ways young women in Canada were cultivating a life of leisure outside of the home. It provides insight into what young women in Winnipeg were watching on stage, and how fan culture was shaped and cultivated in similar ways as in New York City.

My reasons for introducing Winnipeg's *Town Topics* are twofold. First, the matinee girl was much more than an American phenomenon; she existed outside New York and beyond national borders. Winnipeg's *Town Topics* provides insight into what Canadian girls were watching at the theatre, how they behaved in public, the ways in which the public space of the theatre became a private and intimate place that motivated disruptive behaviour, from throwing caramels at one another during a performance to orally disrupting the space and other audiences' experience. Harriet Walker's column draws us into the performative nature of young women who attended the Walker Theatre.

Second, I was captivated by the uncanny similarities in the column's tone, language, and structure. In providing a comparative analysis of the two columns, my aim in this chapter is to demonstrate the importance of commercial theatre to the performative identity and lives of *North American* young women during the period. Such an analysis reveals the perspectives of girls from two very different cities, highlighting the ways in which girls were shaped by place. Winnipeg's programming and interest in cultivating a Canadian presence in the theatre shaped the national pride of the Canadian matinee girl. In returning back to Taylor's question about thinking about performance in historical terms, I contend that these articles offer into how young women "transmit[ed] memories, [made] political claims, and helped to manifest a group's sense of identity."²⁹⁰ In addition, by comparing both columns, which were significantly popular and successful, the differences in how each writer shapes the matinee girl reveals the ways in which the girls were responding to the political changes that were occurring during the period and challenging the expectations placed on their gender.

²⁹⁰ Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire*, xvii.

Winnipeg's *Town Topics*, written by Harriet Walker under the pseudonym Rosa Subs, was published weekly for approximately thirteen years; the *Dramatic Mirror's* "The Matinee Girl," written by an anonymous author and published weekly during a nine-year span. Although I did not find information on the latter author's real identity, through my research, I presume she was a professional woman who had close ties to the theatre industry in New York City. My conclusion is based on the consistency of the voice, diction and tone throughout each column, which is similar, indicating that it was likely only one-person writing. The subjects in the columns focus on women's labour conditions in the theatre, the challenging housing and rentals market that girls living in New York City faced, and the encouragement for girls to support one another suggests that she had insight into the lived experiences and conditions girls and female theatre professionals faced. The author also refers to herself as a matinee girl who regularly attends matinee shows, she critiques plays and actors, and provides personal anecdotes of life in New York as a young single woman. Despite the author's gender, the issues that are highlighted and the column's intent in providing girls with a voice to write to the paper and create a sense of female community offers insight into how this author was reshaping ideologies of the new girl for public consumption while also providing girls with a space and place to write in to the paper or to generally feel a shared sense of community with other girls.

In using primary sources from *Winnipeg Town Topics* and *The New York Dramatic Mirror*, my aim is to identify how both columns of the "The Matinee Girl" established a space for young women to create homosocial communities, and to experiment with the politics of fan and girl culture. While the voices in these columns are not representative of actual matinee girls during the period, they shed light on the range of issues that young women, including those who were educated or worked for a living, were thinking about, exposed to, or perhaps experiencing.

While chapters one and two provide insight into how journalists and critics in popular media shaped ideologies of the matinee girl, and possibly girls in general, by positioning them as frivolous youth who desired to be pleased in public spaces, “The Matinee Girl” columns complicate this. In examining the weekly columns of “The Matinee Girl” the narrative of matinee girls were shifting and changing. For one, it included their own voices and concerns. In addition, through these (presumably) female-written columns, the matinee girl becomes empowered and gains a voice. She is represented by these journalists as intelligent and aware of real issues and concerns on the gendered politics of the theatre, the problematic labour conditions of the period, and issues around rental opportunities for girls.

This chapter builds on the important work of historians such as Kathy Peiss, who offers an in-depth analysis of working-class and immigrant girls’ love for the dance hall; Shelly Stamp who examines how girls complicated and shaped motion picture culture in the 1910s; Jane Hunter’s interrogation of diaries written by girls; and Melissa R. Klapper’s discussion of Jewish immigrant girls in an attempt to understand how they identified themselves and negotiated their place in American society. These scholars have provided the context and research to understand what it meant to be a girl at the turn-of-the-twentieth-century in American culture. They reveal the different public platforms that allowed for girls’ participation in culture and the reimagining of American female identity.

I wish to build on these scholars by particularly looking at how “The Matinee Girl” columns—despite being written by an older married woman in *Town Topics* and an anonymous writer in *The Dramatic Mirror*—provided and established a community and a space for girls to criticize plays they were seeing while also discussing issues important to them. As seen throughout my first few chapters, matinee girls cultivated a strong sense of community through their shared theatre-going experiences. These theatre-loving girls attended shows together and

congregated after the theatre to discuss their thoughts on plays. As these “Matinee Girl” columns emerged at the same time as the matinee girl phenomenon, it is difficult to estimate the influence of the columns; however, I suggest that “The Matinee Girl” columns helped to reshape and re-imagine a culture for girls and women. Particularly the columns’ lengthy publications illustrate their popularity.

Both authors of “The Matinee Girl” suggest that the columns appealed to male and female readers, which leads me to believe that there was a growing interest in what matinee girls were thinking and saying. Both men and women of all ages sought insight into the lived experiences of the modern girl who took interest in the theatre. This chapter builds on the others by providing a different perspective of matinee girls: a female perspective of the modern girl who entered a society that had historically been male dominated. The following questions drive this chapter: what does the representation of “The Matinee Girl” say about girls who enjoyed going to the theatre? How can these writers provide insight into the culture of fandom and girlhood? To which issues are these writers highlighting?

The Diary Fad at the turn-of-the-century

Both “The Matinee Girl” columns read as diary entries. Each of the authors document their lives, highlight events or moments that happened to each of the authors, and provide accounts of the plays they watch. As such, Harriet Walker/Rosa Subs always begins her entries with “Dear Town Topics” (similar to the “Dear Diary” structure) and both sign off as The Matinee Girl or M.G. (which I will use to refer to the authors from now on). Meanwhile, *The Dramatic Mirror*’s M.G. provides personal anecdotes and uses colloquial language to express her reaction to situations. For example, on 23 February 1907, she writes about being cheated out of a dollar by a newsboy on Broadway who had run away with her change. “HA! HA!” she writes and moves on to discuss other highlights of her week. In using the colloquial structure of diary

writing, “The Matinee Girl” column evoked a sense of familiarity to appeal to a young female audience. This stylistic choice to write as a diary by beginning with “Dear ...,” ending with “Sincerely,” and revealing a matinee girl’s intimate thoughts, desires, and her experiences of exploring the city was likely used in order to appeal to girls who were familiar with the practice of diary writing.

Historically, white Anglo-American women and girls were encouraged from an early age to write in diaries and journals.²⁹¹ Jane Hunter’s article, “Inscribing the Self in the Heart of the Family: Diaries and Girlhood in Late-Victorian America,” explores the ways that American Victorian girls were “...avid readers—of romances, biographies, histories, and serials. A rich scholarly literature now debates the significance of their reading to their own aspirations, the publishing industry and turn-of-the-century culture.”²⁹² She suggests that they were also devoted writers who spent hours writing letters, poetry, diary and/or journal entries as well as re-writing their favourite passages found in books.²⁹³ The practice of writing, therefore, became closely tied to Victorian girlhood.

The increase in girls’ writing was in response to the new leisure afforded to them at the end of the nineteenth century. Writing allowed an experimentation with “a voice that they could call their own” and the use of a diary “initiated a discourse about the self rather than establishing a definition of what the self was or ought to be.”²⁹⁴ In quoting Peter Gay who claims that the

²⁹¹ Jane Hunter, “Inscribing the Self in the Heart of the Family: Diaries and Girlhood in Late-Victorian America,” *American Quarterly*, 44. 1 (March 1992), 52.

²⁹² Ibid.

²⁹³ Ibid.

²⁹⁴ Ibid.

nineteenth century is considered to be “the golden age of the diary,” Hunter establishes that diary writing was associated with gender, class, and region.²⁹⁵ She explains that girls who belonged to middle and upper class families were afforded the time to write in their diaries. It was part of female youth culture, and was considered to be both an independent activity as well as a social one where girls would gather and read each other’s diaries. It was an activity that girls in urban settings, particularly in the Northeast part of the U.S. were encouraged to do. Upper class girls “came to use their diaries not as an escape from the Victorian family, but as a way of discovering—or constructing—the self *within* it.”²⁹⁶ This context helps to understand the popularity and significance of diaries in the lives of middle and upper-class girls at the turn of the century and further explains why this mode of writing was adopted by the M.G. columnists.

The Rise of the Female Journalist

Women’s and girls’ writing practices extended outside of a social setting and into a professional one. By the turn of the century, there were far more female journalists than before, including a rapid growth in female reporters and press agents between 1880 and 1920. Jean Marie Lutes suggests, “The newspaperwoman was a conspicuous anomaly, hard to ignore even by those who wished she would go away.”²⁹⁷ She states, “newspapers were taking new roles in this era, spurred by advances in printing technology and the expanding, diversifying readership of fast growing cities.”²⁹⁸ Given the industry’s efforts to reach new readers, it’s not surprising that more

²⁹⁵ Peter Gay qtd. in Hunter, “Inscribing,” 52.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 53.

²⁹⁷ Jean Marie Lutes, *Front-Page Girls. Women Journalists in American Culture and Fiction, 1880–1930* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 2.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

and more women were becoming journalists at the turn of the century. In fact, Lutes argues that many female journalists were nicknamed “‘sob sisters,’ assigned to provide the so-called woman’s angle by reporting on their own sympathetic reactions to news events. Their reports were expected to express the conventionally emotional responses of women, documenting not just the news but the femininity of its tellers.”²⁹⁹ In reading “The Matinee Girl” columns, an emotional response emerges throughout the articles. These columns will often offer advice on public behaviour, dress, and girls’ physical presentation in public spaces. Rosa Subs, for example, reveals her annoyance at contemporary critics, audience tardiness, and people who attend the theatre to gossip. These annoyances become personal attacks and Subs scolds her readers for their disruptive behaviour.

As such, Lutes reveals in her research on the female reporter in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century, “Newspaperwomen renovated conventions of nineteenth century sentimentality to suit the rapidly evolving mass media and developed controversial new models of self-reflexive authorship.”³⁰⁰ Despite this, however, while the newspaperwomen “emerged as an icon of American culture, a figure of modernity that promised to alleviate some of the alienating effects of the mass media that made possible her very existence,” the industry continued to be male dominated.³⁰¹ The influence of the newspaperwoman provided opportunities to recreate gender roles for women. Thus, the role of authors of “The Matinee Girl” column used their position to open up spaces and opportunities for young women to openly voice

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

³⁰⁰ Ibid., 7.

³⁰¹ Ibid., 10.

their opinions. They also fought back against the stereotypical notions placed on young women by actively reshaping the voice of a matinee girl in their columns.

Along with the newspaperwoman, the increase in the female press agent and her influence in the theatre industry was prominent, as seen in Schweitzer's research in "Singing Her Own Song: Writing the Female Press Agent Back into History." She suggests that they "transformed naïve young girls into sophisticated beauty experts and promoted an increasingly narrow ideal."³⁰² In addition, Schweitzer claims, "Whereas early-twentieth-century actresses had to tread carefully around feminist issues lest they alienate conservative audiences, female press agents seemed to have had fewer qualms about expressing feminist political perspectives and advocating for others."³⁰³ This is particularly true for "The Matinee Girl" in the *Dramatic Mirror* who raises concerns about labour practices and female housing in New York City. She uses her position and column in the popular *Dramatic Mirror* to advocate for young women.

"Rosa's Remarks: The Entertaining Chatter of a Matinee Girl" in *Town Topics*

The "Matinee Girl," written anonymously by Harriet Walker, first appeared as "Rosa's Remarks: The Entertaining Chatter of a Matinee Girl" (1898-1900) and then "The Matinee Girl" (1900-1913) in *Town Topics*. Walker (born Harriet Anderson) was born in New York in 1865 and was a child actress with A.M. Palmer's Union Square Company and later became a successful Broadway star, performing in musical comedies alongside Lillian Russell and Marie Dressler. While living in New York City she also wrote music and comedy-sketches for Witmark and Sons

³⁰² Schweitzer, "Singing Her Own Song: Writing the Female Press Agent Back into History," *Journal of American Drama and Theatre* 20.2 (Spring 2008), 89.

³⁰³ Ibid.

who were prominent New York publishers.³⁰⁴ In the early 1890s, she married Corliss Powers (C.P) Walker, a theatre manager. He was the manager of Fargo Opera House (North Dakota) and by the late 1890s he established the Red River Valley Circuit of theatres, with its headquarters in Winnipeg. The Walkers moved to Winnipeg, Manitoba in 1897 and Harriet became the press agent of the entire chain of theatres, writing much of the theatre's publicity material.³⁰⁵ Walker was prolific in promoting music and theatre in Winnipeg. She was an award-winning director, a feminist, educator, and a drama critic. She directed the Winnipeg Amateur Operatic Society's production of *The Chimes of Normandy* in 1908, and in her 1911 remount of the play she won the Earl Grey Musical trophy.³⁰⁶ In addition to this, Walker directed several operettas as well as several plays at the University of Manitoba, taught basic theatrical skills, and supervised costuming and make-up. Her cultural and artistic participation was instrumental in the development of Winnipeg's theatre culture and she was involved with the founding of the University of Manitoba Dramatic Society from 1914-1921. Walker had both a personal and professional investment in the theatre and had the ability to provide insight for her readers.

Walker's work in the public extended beyond her theatrical contributions; she was also involved in a number of organizations, including the Women's Musical Club and the Canadian Women's Press Club, where she met other women who believed in the same causes. She met the

³⁰⁴ Harriet Walker, *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, accessed June 2, 2017, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/harriet-walker/>

³⁰⁵ Douglas Arrell, "Harriet Walker, Charles W. Handscomb, and Charles H. Wheeler, in Winnipeg, 1898-1906," *Establishing Our Boundaries: English-Canadian Theatre Criticism*, Anton Wagner (ed.) (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 110.

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

Beynon sisters and Nellie McClung who were part of The Political Equality League, with which Walker became involved and campaigned for women's emancipation. She also appeared in the satirical Mock Parliaments presented at the Walker Theatre on 28 January 1914 to protest women's right to vote.³⁰⁷ Walker was both active and engaged in women's issues at the time. She was one of several women who made strides for the advancement of women and girls during this period.

During 1898 and 1913, Walker wrote a regular theatre column under the pseudonym Rosa Subs in the form of a letter to the editor, Charles Handscomb. She begins each of her weekly letters with "Dear Town Topics" and signs it Rosa Subs, R.A. and later Matinee Girl or M.G. According to the Manitoba Historical Society's write-up on Walker, neither her husband nor the paper's editor, Handscomb, knew that she was the mysterious author until years after she began writing. The Manitoba Historical Society maintains that it wasn't until 1906, after eight years of regularly writing for Winnipeg's weekly entertainment paper, that it became "an open secret." The column was often as long as two or three full-length pages. As such, the *Canadian Encyclopedia* notes that "her style was sharp and racy, her opinions civilized and well-informed, and her commentary intelligent and biting. She championed such socially progressive playwrights as Ibsen and Tolstoy at a period when male critics in Winnipeg dismissed them as obscene."³⁰⁸ Historian Douglas Arrell states that Walker's motivation for starting "The Matinee Girl," according to her column in 1898, "was that she 'did not believe our critics to be

³⁰⁷ "Memorable Manitobans Harriet Anderson "Hattie" Walker," *Manitoba Historical Society*, http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/people/walker_ha.shtml, accessed June 2, 2017.

³⁰⁸ The Canadian Encyclopedia, accessed June 6, 2017, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/harriet-walker/>.

unbiased.”³⁰⁹ She felt that the critics, specifically Wheeler, were unfair to local artists and thus began her own dramatic criticism of theatrical entertainment in Winnipeg. She flagged gender inequality and bias that she saw in the theatre community.

Walker was known as a critic of other critics. At times, she refers to what other critics wrote and also makes her own commentaries on performances or actors. On 13 May 1899, she writes,

Since criticizing the critics appears to be the fashion I want to have my little say in the matter. I think they all were by far too lenient with the quartette that recently rendered ‘In a Persian Garden.’ It was a very uneven combination of voices. The contralto and bass completely covered the soprano and tenor. Mrs. Verner has a lovely voice, which she uses like an artist, but she lacks the volume and dramatic quality necessary for most of the soprano solos in a song cycle.³¹⁰

In addition to criticizing and providing an analysis on the performance, she notes her openness to challenging theatrical critics on their opinions of current performances. Her tone positions her as an authority on matters of Winnipeg’s theatrical scene; she also suggests that she is on par with all the other male critics. On 19 November 1898 she states, “In my opinion—but then my opinion does not count, as I am only a giddy matinee girl—Mr. Mayo’s acting was the least artistic of the performance [...] But then, this is only the opinion of a frivolous matinee girl.”³¹¹ Her references to being a “giddy” and “frivolous” and then providing a sharp-witted and outspoken account of theatrical musings in Winnipeg denounces the terms that are meant to belittle the matinee girl and instead provides an intellectually engaged voice of a matinee girl.

³⁰⁹ Douglas Arrell, “The Cosmopolitan, the Cultural Nationalist, and the Egocentric Critic,” 126.

³¹⁰ “Rosa’s Remarks,” *Winnipeg Town Topics*, 13 May 1899.

³¹¹ “Rosa’s Remarks,” *Winnipeg Town Topics*, 19 Nov 1898.

Walker (in her guise as Rosa) is quick to criticize and diminish what other writers were saying about her. For example, on 1 April 1899, she responds to the column written by Lounger,

Thank you, Lounger, for your cordial welcome of last week...So you think you saw me alight from an N.P. train a week ago! Your description of me is so accurate and kindly. I must acknowledge that you are indeed a “wiz.” I am very pleased to know that you are able to distinguish real gold from the imitation article, and thank you for pointing out to the public—who may also sometimes recognize me—that my blonde locks are not the result of a peroxide of hydrogen shampoo. I’m pleased to hear that my beauty is not spoiled by the wearing of eye-glasses, which have been only recently prescribed by an oculist to strengthen my poor eyes. Which had become weakened by my writing too long letters to *Town Topics*.
See here, Mr. Lounger, I think it most ungallant for you to single out a particular young lady from the many charmers who saunter down Main Street.³¹²

Walker/Subs begins her letter to Lounger, in what seems to be a cordial response to his “kind” acknowledgement is actually her mocking him. She calls Lounger a “wiz” and challenges him for focusing on her physical appearance. In taking into consideration that Harriet Walker used the pseudonym Rosa Subs and kept her real identity secret for many years, Lounger creates an image of a fictional matinee girl: one who dyes her hair blonde, wears eye-glasses, and is attractive. However, when Harriet Walker was writing under the pseudonym Rosa Subs, she was in her early thirties, a brunette, and working as a press agent for the Walker Theatre.

Walker/Subs makes a point of establishing that she herself was like Lounger, both critics writing for the same paper. She is quick to reject the suggestion that women weaken themselves by using their brains and responds to his reference to her needing to wear eye-glasses. She clarifies that her eyes have weakened due to her extensive writing for the local paper. Most importantly, Lounger’s comments reflect the anxieties that men often expressed about the

³¹² “Rosa’s Remarks,” *Winnipeg Town Topics*, 1 April 1899.

negative effects education had on young women. Like Bok, the male writer points to the criticism around girls' exposure to theatre. Walker/Subs, on the other hand, refutes his commentary.

Later that month, on 15 April 1899, Walker/Subs addresses Lounger for his discussion of modern girls, writing: "The Lounger regrets that when it becomes his duty to write about theatrical performances he is unable to describe the feminine stage toilettes. I would suggest that he take the little dress-maker friend along who keeps him so well posted on all feminine fashions...Since Lounger is directing his attention to feminine fashions, I have turned mine to the correct thing in masculine attire this spring."³¹³ She goes on to mock Lounger, "The suspender garter is out-of-date for the male sex. The proper thing now is the circular garter of fancy silk elastic, closed with a large silver or gold buckle containing a tiny photograph of the best girl."³¹⁴ In her satirical letter addressed to Lounger, her wit and intellect are highlighted in how she uses similar tactics to make a point of her colleague's disingenuous approach in discussing female matters.

Walker's/Sub's outspoken nature is further established in the following column in which she directs to her editor on 22 March 1902: "(Mr. Editor, you will please let the foregoing stand exactly as I have written it. On former occasions when I have reviewed a concert in which Mr. Handscomb took part, you have deliberately omitted all the mention of that gentleman. If you insist on doing likewise with this review, or otherwise altering it, please cut the whole letter and consider yourself discharged as my "Matinee Girl" editor.)"³¹⁵ Walker's fictional character of Rosa Subs is not only direct but establishes a sense of agency and authority. She openly and

³¹³ "Rosa's Remarks," *Winnipeg Town Topics*, 15 April 1899.

³¹⁴ Ibid.

³¹⁵ "The Matinee Girl," *Winnipeg Town Topics*, 22 March 1902.

publicly criticizes male journalists and editors who overstep their position. As a representation and voice of a matinee girl, she asserts her right to speak out on important matters. Not only does she provide her insights and criticism on theatrical matters but she also addresses issues or people who dishonor her position as a matinee girl.

According to the Manitoba Historical Society's website, a significant number of the paper's 10,000 estimated readers were women.³¹⁶ The large female readership provides insight into what young women in Winnipeg were reading during the period and the ways in which they may have admired Walker. It also provides a lens into the ways in which Walker influenced women's roles and was an advocate for women in Winnipeg. In addition, the Manitoba Historical Society's website also establishes that *Town Topics* was directed at middle to upper class women who could afford to participate in consumer culture, presumably Anglo women. For example, "In her column, writing as a woman for other women, Mrs. Walker was able to depict theatre-going as an important part of a fashionable woman's social life."³¹⁷ In using the identity of a matinee girl, Walker paves a path for young theatre-loving girls who could afford to spend their afternoons at matinees and participated in the same culture in which she was an expert.

In addition, she encourages girls to be open to criticizing performances that don't suit their interests and cultivates a space for open dialogue. She often references the letters written to her by her readers. For example, on 8 February 1902, she addresses the young women who wrote in to correct the photo in her column. "I do so much enjoy the matinee girls' letters—I mean the letters your matinee girl receives. This week two or three friends have written pointing out that a

³¹⁶ The Manitoba Historical Society claims this was the number *Town Topics* gave for advertising purposes.

³¹⁷ Manitoba Historical Society.

portrait of Julia Arthur printed on my page last week, was labeled Blanche Walsh. I assure my agitated friends that I was not responsible for the error ... For Julia, our Canuck Julia, is a handsomer woman. Don't you think?" Walker encourages national pride. What this column also reveals is that matinee girls were actively responding to these columns and felt comfortable writing into the paper to correct any misinformation. Like Walker/Subs, matinee girls asserted their authority on matters they were well versed in. This example also illustrates the ways in which Walker cultivates a space where girls' voices were heard, and at times published. As a result, in the rise of female journalists and female press agents, young women were inspired to be part of the dialogue on matters pertaining to their interests.

While women were primarily the intended audience for each of the columns, men also read and discussed the criticism that Walker provided. In her column published on 06 May 1899, she states:

I heard myself roasted last Saturday afternoon in a manner that set my ears tingling. It was at the Clay Clement matinee and I sat right behind two young gentlemen who were discussing my review of the "Princess Bonnie" performance. They called me all kinds of names for daring to say that my charming friend, Rose Murray and that clever amateur, Stanley Adams, introduced too much business. One of them, who certainly must be an ardent admirer of Miss Murray, declared that he would rather see any other part of the show cut out than dispense with any of "Kitty's" interpolations and the other not only acquiesced in this, but cruelly added: I'll bet that girl Rosa Sub, whoever she is, is jealous of Miss Murray's success. That's what's troubling a whole lot of them." Now just you fancy your Rosa being jealous of Rose Murray.³¹⁸

This particular passage reveals the way Walker reasserts her right as a critic to assess talent on the basis of talent alone and not on perceived jealousy.

In addition, Walker also takes the opportunity to educate and comment on the behaviour of matinee girls. On 1 April 1899, she writes,

³¹⁸ "The Matinee Girl," *Winnipeg Town Topics*, 06 May 1899.

I suppose that hats will be very much in evidence in the theatres from now until the newness of them has worn off. I wish I could convince the matinee girls—and the evening girls, too—that the prettiest millinery creation fails to elicit an admiring glance or comment when it obstructs one’s view of the stage. I wish to goodness we had a law making it a misdemeanor for anyone to wear headgear in the theatre, church or at any public entertainment indoors.³¹⁹

The criticism around matinee girls disrupting a patron’s views of the stage was a popular discussion during this period and was written in newspapers across Canada and the U.S. Walker often commented on matinee girls arriving late and disrupting the performance and urged them to attend the theatre on time. On 25 January 1902 she states, “We shall have to prepare a manual of etiquette for some of our matinee girls, I am thinking.”³²⁰ She accuses some matinee girls as being a “source of annoyance at the Frawley matinee last Saturday. They chattered and laughed through the acts, pelted friends with caramels, and otherwise annoyed people who were intent on witnessing the play. It wasn’t funny, girls. It was bad manners,” she scolds her readers, as if disciplining them.³²¹ While this points to the ways matinee girls were forming female fan culture, reshaping their public identities, and highlighting the ways in which they were making themselves both seen and heard in public, it also reflects that Walker also participated in the same monitoring of matinee girls’ behaviour in the theatre. As much as Walker aims to open up a space for matinee girls to express themselves, she is also concerned about how they disrupt performances with their conduct.

As such, “The Matinee Girl” column gave Walker the platform from which to speak her mind on matters in and out of the theatre. While Walker had direct connections to both the

³¹⁹ Rosa’s Remarks, *Winnipeg Town Topics*, 1 April 1899.

³²⁰ Rosa’s Remarks, *Winnipeg Town Topics*, 25 January 1902.

³²¹ Ibid.

Winnipeg theatre community and the Walker theatre, it seems through her articles that she did not use her position to influence the theatre but instead provided an honest account of theatrical musings in Winnipeg. Her anonymity allowed her to speak openly about behaviour in the theatre, to criticize other critics, as well as performances and performers. On 14 January 1899, she assures her readers that her identity must remain a secret if she is to continue writing. She states,

Of course, I noticed the editor's explanation in last week's issue re Rosa Sub's identity. I am very sorry that my letters have placed Mr. Handscomb in such an awkward position with the readers of *Town Topics*. It is really too bad to have him accused of throwing bouquets at himself, and then to leave him practically defenseless—but were my identity revealed I should not care to write. In fact, I would not dare—for I should certainly collapse beneath the crowns of local artists whose performances I criticize adversely. However, I again beg to assure the good readers of topics that they know just as much regarding the personality of Rosa Sub as does the editor.³²²

This quote exemplifies Walker's popularity and influence on her readership while also providing what seems to be a sincere explanation for her anonymity. It is through this fictional character of Rosa Sub that she is able to provide impartial insight into the political and social dynamics in Winnipeg during this period. It also suggests that there was a lot at stake for women writing for newspapers. It was common in the period for male critics to comment on the theatre (or matinee girls) openly; however, women's voices continued to be censored. Maintaining anonymity was therefore critical to Walker.

Although there has been limited research conducted on the matinee girl in Canada, this column tells us that girls in Winnipeg were also purchasing matinee tickets and filling seats in theatres. Arrell notes that Walker was inspired to write the column as a way to increase “Winnipeg's understanding and appreciation of theatrical art” suggesting that the theatre was

³²² “Rosa's Remarks,” *Winnipeg Town Topics*, 14 January 1899.

possibly undervalued than it was in the U.S.³²³ Despite this, girls and women were still attending performances and were just as loud and disruptive in the theatre as the matinee girls across the border. According to Walker, girls arrived late and gossiped throughout the performance, disrupting those around them. The column is at times complicated as it encourages girls' voices but also attempts to impart social etiquette.

While these adoring Canadian fans were exposed to the same types of dramas, operas and musicals that American girls were witnessing, including the support of local artists, there are a number of differences in the columns. These include Walker's focus on the theatre, from referencing biased critics who dared to criticize local artists to providing her own criticism on the lack of operas in Winnipeg. Walker's tone in endorsing Canadian actresses with references to "our Canuck" actress is another type of difference in *The Matinee Girl* column. In examining both of these columns, which shared the same title, they suggest that the matinee girl as a historical figure was instrumental in creating female fan culture in Winnipeg, just as she was in New York City. It also suggests that young women were cultivating a life of leisure, attending performances with female friends instead of relying on male companions. Essentially, girls were taking up more space, both publicly and also in popular print.

The New York Matinee Girl

Emerging in 1899, "The Matinee Girl" column—also a weekly column written by an anonymous matinee girl—featured interviews with actresses, celebrity gossip, tips on the latest

³²³ Arrell, 110.

fashion styles, politics, and dramatic criticism in the *New York Dramatic Mirror*.³²⁴ Like Walker, the author also writes about her personal experiences living in the city, paying rent, and of summer vacations. While the author doesn't provide a name, she does claim to be female and writes about women's issues that affected the lives of single women living in New York, particularly chorus girls' labour conditions in the early 1900s and the lack of housing opportunities for single wage-earning girls. This column, while providing dramatic criticism, also educated the public and raised awareness on issues affecting the lives of single wage-earning women and girls. Also dispersed between the columns are snippets of letters received from female readers who endorse her writing. Thus, she provides support and encouragement to girls to continue to write letters into the paper. The column established a sense of community for girls and women who felt alone in the city. At other moments, she, like Walker, condemns critics who insult her in an attempt to highlight the ways in which women's voices are often criticized and undervalued.

The Growing Fear of Girls' Public Visibility

As a result of the criticism around young women and girls' behaviour in public, cultivating and creating a supportive space and place for girls, and essentially by girls, became paramount during this period. Girls' public visibility was closely tied to the growing tensions around the rapid gender transformations during this period in North America. "Experts" expressed their concerns for these young women who, they believed, had too much freedom to make choices. For instance, in 1903, Edward Bok—the editor of the *Ladies Home Journal*—

³²⁴ *The New York Dramatic Mirror* was a theatrical trade paper founded in 1897 as *The New York Mirror*, changing its name in 1899—the same year the matinee girl started her column—to *The New York Dramatic Mirror*.

strongly argued that "...the independence of the American girl does not mean that she has a license to go where she will, see what she chooses to see, or listen to what she should not listen. At sixteen she must be denied what she does not understand ..."³²⁵ He condemns mothers for allowing their daughters to go see any play, "There is no legitimate excuse on the part of any mother for allowing her young daughter to see any portrayal of life that makes light of the marriage tie or sets the married relation at defiance."³²⁶ Bok, like many other male critics, revealed the "fears that women were usurping the rights and privileges of respectable, white, middle-class men."³²⁷ The accessibility afforded to girls became a national fear by male journalists and critics, with many articles warning the public about the naiveté of modern girls. It is through the analysis of these concerned critics that the real issues around girls' agency is revealed.

In 1901, the *Milwaukee Sentinel* published an article titled, "Matinee Girls not dismayed by Dr. Dewey's Note of Warning."³²⁸ Dr. Dewey, a neurologist in Wauwatosa, Milwaukee, warns girls against attending matinee shows, arguing that it causes nerve problems. The article suggests that girls dismissed the doctor and continued to attend the matinee shows; some had even reserved their seats for the season. In response to this claim one girl replies, "Matinees bad for our nerves! Humph! What does he take us for? We aren't qualifying for the sanitarium." The article establishes that "[n]ot a girl gave the famous neurologist a good working and they plainly intimated that being the class in question they set out to know more about their nerves than

³²⁵ Edward Bok, "The Young Girl at the Matinee," *Ladies Home Journal*, June 1903, 16.

³²⁶ Ibid.

³²⁷ Ibid.

³²⁸ "Matinee Girls not Dismayed by Dr. Dewey's Note of Warning," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, 1901.

anyone else.” Another girl exclaims, “I don’t see what Dewey knows about matinee girls anyway.” Meanwhile, one girl states that the only nerve related instance at the theatre is the young man at the box office. “I’m always scared to death for fear I’m not going to get a good seat.” While another girl states, “I guess I’ll wait until I notice any symptoms in myself before I give up going to matinees for some old doctor.” The fear of girls’ access to public spaces was a real concern by many, in particular was the fear of being displaced by modern girls. Therefore, in positioning these young consuming girls as a real concern, critics attempted to control and maintain girls’ influence and role in American culture.

As such, both M.G.s addressed the criticism they received because of their gender. For example, on 30 April 1898, *The Matinee Girl* in the *Dramatic Mirror* writes, “[s]ome months ago an unappreciative and evidently uncultured reader in *The Mirror* wrote to the paper to say that she objected to the Matinee Girl when she “thought aloud.” I feel quite sure that it was some friend of the Callboy’s who was trying to give him a boom. I don’t know the Callboy myself, I think it is an old gentleman who wears spectacles that I see sometimes when I go in with my copy. Perhaps he wrote it himself. I don’t know.”³²⁹ In another article, written on 31 December 1898, she writes,

...one of the letters I received last week among the many kind ones was rather scathing in tone. I have puzzled over it, and have been unable to decide if it was written by a man or a woman. If it’s a woman, she’s very manly, and if it’s a man, he’s womanly. I am inclined to the latter belief. But then, that is just what he thinks of me. He writes:

To the Matinee Girl (Man):

By pursuing the pages of the ‘Encyclopedia Britannica’ a man may still inform himself on all subjects which are already known to him and learn much concerning

³²⁹ “The Matinee Girl,” *The Dramatic Mirror*, 30 April 1898, 2.

everything else in God's world that are unknown to him, polo, and amazons not excepted. DUACAP.

Wouldn't that chill one?" It is so stately and formal! Beginning with the doubt about my sex, and ending up with: "Everything else in God's world that are unknown to him.

Poor, dear "Duacap—" "Duacap" –isn't that a pretty name? I feel quite certain that the Encyclopedia Britannica could never hold everything that is unknown to you."³³⁰

This "scathing" letter begins by questioning the M.G.'s identity and implies that she may in fact be a man. His inclination to question her identity is an example of the ways in which girls' and women's public opinions were devalued. His claim on having access to all knowledge through the encyclopedia diminishes her article and thoughts. Duacap insists that she reference the encyclopedia for her own understanding of "everything else in God's world." The M.G. responds by mocking Duacap's style of writing, calling it "stately and formal." Using a satiric tone, she asks, "Duacap'— isn't that a pretty name?" and implies that his lack of knowledge is so profound that even the encyclopedia can't help him.

Theatrical Criticism

The tone of the *Dramatic Mirror's* "Matinee Girl" column differs from Walker's in that this writer provides personal anecdotes and touches on more political issues that significantly impact women's livelihoods. In using the diary-like structure, however, she documents her weekly experiences of life in New York City from the perspective of a single, modern girl, making it personable. On 23 February 1907, she writes about her visit to the Turkish bath house, which was "filled with women reclining on couches."³³¹ This evokes harem fantasies of the

³³⁰ "The Matinee Girl," *The Dramatic Mirror*, 31 December 1898, 2.

³³¹ "The Matinee Girl," *Dramatic Mirror*, 23 February 1907, 2.

period and may possibly provide insight into turn-of-the-century female desires. The M.G. was flirting with harem and Orientalist fantasies by describing her experience at the Turkish bathhouse. Her participation in this harem fantasy reveals her access and insight to places that are not accessible to all, in particular men. In other words, she becomes the eyes of someone who has access, a sort of ethnographer who provides insight. While these columns may be fictionalized, they do provide valuable insight into what young women at the turn-of-the-century were reading and relating to in these series of weekly columns. These columns also demonstrate the ways in which the M.G. girl reframed what it meant to be a young theatre-loving girl living in New York City.

The M.G. creates a persona of a young charming matinee girl who has access to the city streets of New York. In this particular column, dated 23 February 1907, she documents her experience of that week, ending with her discussion on learning to cycle. She explains that while she was riding in Central Park, she bumped into her “rival” the Knickerbocker Girl. She writes the following poem, “[t]here are haughty girls by Gibson, and naughty ones by Gunn,” she wears a costume that is shocking to “a maiden old and prim,” her hair is “a trifle out of curl” as she “flashes through the park” on her bicycle.³³² These moments of autonomy and public accessibility were important to highlight for young girls. However, in evoking a sense of agency for girls, she also criticizes Gibson’s “haughty” girls and Gunn’s “naughty” ones, both male-created fictional girls who were famous for their over-sexualization. Unlike these other fictional-male-created girls, the matinee girl, on the other hand, was sharp, witty, and actively engaged in social and at times political matters. She had access to the Turkish bath house, Central Park and

³³² Ibid.

Broadway. Thus, these snippets of documentation craft an image of a young woman who was accessing public spaces that have been historically explored through the male gaze.

The liberty to speak her mind is evidenced in the way M.G. openly discusses her dislike for the Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw. On 21 October 1905 she says, “Come, let us be honest. Aren’t we secretly getting a little tired of Shaw lectures in the guise of plays? Wouldn’t it be cheaper and save some precious hours to take our Shaw from a phonograph record?”³³³ Also on 09 March 1907 she states,

Shawism is to visit us again [...] Shaw and Spring seem to have become dramatic synonyms ... Now that the censors of the bench have decided that Mrs. Warren’s Profession is a highly moral play, the quality of the acting will probably be diluted to prevent further butting in by the inquisitive roundsmen. Also these tickets might read: To be used only by persons over thirty years old.’ But the management tells me it has not designed this for an exclusively man’s play.³³⁴

She comments on the lack of entertainment in the plays which, she argues, are more like pedagogical tools than drama. She references “the censors” referring to impresarios who believe his work, in particular *Mrs. Warren’s Profession*, to be “a highly moral play.” She believes the plays appeal to a much older audience and refers to it as “an exclusively man’s play.” She further notes, “Of course we have thought that to prove ourselves clever we must admire the cleverness of Shaw. He himself has urged that truth upon us. And we have tried. He should have rewarded us instead of giving us John Bull’s Other Island.”³³⁵ On 30 September 1905 she states, “[u]nless the next actor who attempts to go a-string in Shaw plays be an Arnold Daly, set a Celt to catch a Celt, a Hibernian to interpret a Hibernian, he would do well to make himself up as George

³³³ “The Matinee Girl,” *Dramatic Mirror*, 21 October 1905, 2.

³³⁴ “The Matinee Girl,” *Dramatic Mirror*, 09 March 1907, 2.

³³⁵ *Dramatic Mirror*, 21 October 1905, 2.

Bernard Shaw. For every one knows that the hero of every play is Shaw himself, that he is merely a spout to pour over Shawisms.”³³⁶ The Matinee Girl is vocal in her dislike for Shaw’s self-promotion and use of male heroes, who she claims to be “Shaw himself.” She may feel that these didactic plays lack the necessary entertainment that matinee girls enjoyed from attending performances.

The lack of connection to Shaw’s plays may indicate that the M.G.’s values were challenged by the topics and themes he explored. The M.G. reveals her dislike for the playwright and his “Shawisms.” Many feminist critics have argued that his plays did not help to emancipate the voices of women. This sentiment is shared Norbert Greiner, in *Socialism and Superior Brains*, who suggests that “Shaw perceived woman’s position a product of male, middle-class society and, as such, her ‘position as well as that of the proletariat is a mirror of the nineteenth century social situation in general.”³³⁷ In addition, Elsie Adams says that, “Shaw operated without assumptions or in keeping with an androgynous principle when dealing dramatically with women. What we find, Adams says, ‘are permutations of basic literary types: temptress, mother, goddess,’” synthesizes Gareth Griffith.³³⁸ Germaine Greer, who has publicly expressed her criticism of Shaw agrees, “Shaw could get no nearer the correct etymology of whoredom than the feeble Fabian diagnosis that women were overworked and undervalued and underpaid.”³³⁹ Greer

³³⁶ *Dramatic Mirror*, 30 September 1905, 2.

³³⁷ Gareth Griffith, *Socialism and Superior Brains: The Political Thought of George Bernard Shaw*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), np.

³³⁸ *Ibid.*

³³⁹ *Ibid.*

concludes, “Shaw understood neither capitalism nor the sexism it engenders.”³⁴⁰ While these sentiments are published later by scholars and theorists, the M.G.’s similar beliefs highlight her progressive views for the period in which she was writing. As a self-described young matinee girl, she encouraged young girls to vocally participate in theatrical criticism.

In this same article, the M.G. moves on from her criticism of Shaw to provide some insight into The Professional Woman’s League, which will be hosting a “pow wow at the Waldorf.” There will be a sale with cushions, sofa pillows and “embroidered frivols with lace and bow on them,” all sold at the bazaar.³⁴¹ The Professional Woman’s League was a women’s social club at the turn of the century where actresses or dramatists would often be invited to speak at meetings.³⁴² Additionally, Engle notes, “[w]omen’s clubs served as social arenas for women in all professions but attending a club meeting or event might very well have provided these dramatists opportunities for important social interaction.”³⁴³ In the 1890s, women’s clubs throughout the U.S. aided women in “rebuild[ing] their intellectual powers” and the opportunity to “feel entitled to self-expression.”³⁴⁴ The Professional Women’s League was one of the few prominent women’s clubs to produce plays that “help[ed] the unemployed actor and actress.”³⁴⁵ *The New York Tribune* states, “The Professional Women’s League gave the first of their series of

³⁴⁰ Ibid.98

³⁴¹ “The Matinee Girl,” *Dramatic Mirror*, 23 February 1907, 2.

³⁴² Sherry Engle, *New Women Dramatists in America, 1890-1920* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 5.

³⁴³ Ibid.

³⁴⁴ qtd. by Karen J. Blair in S Engle, *New Women Dramatists in America, 1890-1920*, 5.

³⁴⁵ Hector Turnbull, “The Miser” Given by the Professional Women’s League—Other Notes,” *The New York Tribune*, 05 February 1915, 9.

productions last night at its own auditorium, 1999 Broadway. The play presented was Moliere's delightful satirical comedy, 'The Miser,' which is seldom seen in this city in English, although it is one of the most amusing of the author's plays."³⁴⁶ The translation used was by Lady Gregory, and was noted as "successful."³⁴⁷ While the Professional Women's League began to produce plays around 1915, approximately a decade after the M.G. makes reference to the women's social club, the M.G. could likely have been a member of the small club during their initial formation. At the end of the column she states, "I shall hope to see you there" and signs off.³⁴⁸ While she may have been teasing her readership to attend the event and even guess at who she was, her insight to these female-run fundraisers and events suggests that had some connection to the organization. At the very least, she was supportive of the club and encouraged her readers to attend and to participate in women's organizations.

Chorus Girls and Women's Working Conditions in New York City

The Dramatic Mirror's M.G. was an avid advocate for girls and young women in the workforce. On 24 November 1900, she writes, "The women who work are the most interesting lot of people on earth, from the girl who moulds great statues in her studio to the little chorus girl skipping a new step before a mirror."³⁴⁹ *The Dramatic Mirror* allows the M.G. to discuss the importance of women's work while acknowledging the tremendous effort of girls and women who work outside of the home. The M.G. exclaims, "[s]ince the day when the pretty typewriter

³⁴⁶ Ibid.

³⁴⁷ Ibid.

³⁴⁸ *Dramatic Mirror*, 30 September 1905, 2.

³⁴⁹ *Dramatic Mirror*, 24 November 1900, 2.

put on her ruffled apron and took her place in the business world she has been gaining steadily as an important factor in all that goes on in the hives of Wall Street, the studies of authors, the deals of railroad magnates, in fact in everything that takes place of interest she has part.”³⁵⁰ Additionally, “Take these girls who write some of the most devilishly racy literature that was ever turned out in this town—stuff that would positively make a district messenger boy blush—was written by a pale little anæmic girl, who carried off a bag full of sandwiches and a bottle of milk on which she lunched in the corner of a big office.”³⁵¹ The significant talent that female writers have is highlighted, “Marcella is a writer and she comes to me with her troubles. She says that editors are very trying and some day she is going to put them all in a book for revenge. But the other day she came in to see me in tears with a magazine in her hands. She waved my paper knife (an Italian stiletto) in the air. ‘I’m going to kill this man,’ she said, simply. I’ve heard you say that before,’ I said lightly but affectedly, for she’s so simple when she says it that I know she will someday.”³⁵² Her reference to her friend Marcella points to the talent and hard work of many women who go unacknowledged, revealing this as a real concern and annoyance of women’s hard work being underappreciated and undervalued. Marcella’s frustration and possible violence points to the challenges and roadblocks that women were faced with when trying to get work published in magazines. While the writer may be a fictional matinee girl, she nonetheless establishes a progressive stance on young women’s roles, and the opportunities and challenges she faces.

³⁵⁰ Ibid.

³⁵¹ Ibid.

³⁵² Ibid.

In one of the columns, she discusses the hardships of chorus girls on stage and highlights the working conditions that affect the chorus girls' performance. She states,

The Matinee Girl witnessed a rehearsal the other day and found out that a chorus girl must know how to sing—at least a little bit—and must know how to dance. She has to attend morning rehearsals every day, and must be in her place every night in the week for two matinees. Not much fun in that, is there?

And yet how many persons think that the chorus girl is a frivolous young creature to whom life is a succession of lobster suppers, champagne and violets. Then of course, there are others who think of the chorus girl as a pale, half-starved creature who is ill-treated, sworn at and generally abused by every one in authority. This is also a mistake. Chorus girls are like the women in every other profession. They are working for a living, and grouped together they are a neatly dressed, well-behaved set of lighthearted young women who are treated with courtesy and whose manners are the best.

The pay which they receive is more than that paid in shops, more than many typewriters receive, and the work has its charm, for nearly every girl in the chorus cherishes an idea that one day she will be able to cultivate her voice and show the public what she can do besides hailing the bride and announcing the villagers.³⁵³

This article educates the public on the hard work of chorus girls and the respect they deserve for their contributions to the entertainment industry. The time requirement for chorus girls is extensive yet undervalued. Chorus girls provide a service for patrons in return for a paycheck, like a shop girl or any other job. She is no different than other wage-earning girls and men and deserves the same respect. Thus, the M.G.'s advocacy on behalf of girls in the work force is noteworthy during this period.

Throughout her writing she returns to the chorus girl's working conditions. On 7 January 1899, the Matinee Girl writes about being at a Weber and Fields production when a fellow audience member said "I know that young lady," as he pointed out the "pretty girl, blonde and

³⁵³ *Dramatic Mirror*, 23 April 1898, 2.

smiling, and wearing stunning yellow tights and high heeled golden slippers.”³⁵⁴ He explained to the Matinee Girl, while they were both at the theatre, that the chorus girl deemed her work dangerous.³⁵⁵ Although the matinee girl is reluctant to believe that tights could be a subject of concern for the girls, she then publishes a letter she received by a chorus girl who dances in *The Sorrows of Satan*. The letter says:

My Dear Matinee Girl:

I know you are at all times interested in the hardships and dangers to which is causing many of us considerable alarm. If you witnessed the performance of The Sorrows of Satan you may have noticed that in the scene where we dance wearing white satin trousers we moved stiffly and ungracefully. It was all owing to the fact that we were extremely uncomfortable and in danger.”³⁵⁶

The letter suggests, “there can be no spontaneity in our movements when we feel afraid that at any moment something may go wrong with the mechanism of the batteries...”³⁵⁷ The chorus girls claim that they wear some contraption that make their tights light up. They’re concerned that the batteries will malfunction and injure them in the process. Their work situation is precarious, to say the least, and it’s affecting the quality of their performances.

In taking into consideration the insight the M.G. has on the labour conditions that chorus girls face, the M.G. was likely not a young girl but someone (likely a woman) who was trusted by female performers, chorus girls, and other theatre practitioners of the period. Like Walker, she may have also been a press agent. Nonetheless, the M.G. had positioned herself as an advocate for women and girls’ rights. In this particular instance, she is speaking up about the terrible

³⁵⁴ *Dramatic Mirror*, 7 January 1899, 2.

³⁵⁵ Ibid.

³⁵⁶ Ibid.

³⁵⁷ Ibid.

labour practices and conditions in the theatre at the turn of the century, an issue that became a chronic problem for women in the theatre and one that led to the Actor's Equity strike in 1919.

While the Actor's Equity strike occurred almost twenty years after the M.G. published on chorus girls' working conditions, she was writing about these issues years before there was an association to protect actors. It wasn't until 1912 that the Actors' Equity Association was formed to protect actors from exploitation in the workforce. According to Ken Bloom, "At the turn-of-the-century, the exploitation of actors was rife throughout the theatre industry. Poor working and traveling conditions, as well as exploitative employers, made actors' professional lives difficult and precarious."³⁵⁸ Chorus girls and actors wouldn't get paid for rehearsals, and were expected to work around the clock without pay. Actress and matinee idol Marie Dressler helped bring the chorus girls into the strike. She became the first President of the Chorus Association, which later partnered with the Actors' Equity. Before her recognition as an actress, Dressler was a chorus girl who earned a meagre \$8 dollars a week and dedicated herself to fight for better working conditions for chorus girls.³⁵⁹ The 1919 strike led to the first victory of the Actors' Equity, which was won by chorus girls.³⁶⁰ The strike was estimated to have cost the theatre industry \$3 million dollars by closing thirty-seven plays in eight cities across the U.S., and prevented sixteen from opening.³⁶¹ The demands of actors, actresses, and chorus girls for better wages and working conditions were met by management. They became recognized as an official trade union of the

³⁵⁸ Ken Bloom, *The Routledge Guide to Broadway* (New York and London: Routledge, 2007), 3.

³⁵⁹ Ibid.

³⁶⁰ Foner, Philip S., *History of the Labor Movement in the United States: Postwar Struggles, 1918-1920 (Vol. 8)* (New York: International Publishers, 1988), 11.

³⁶¹ Ibid.

acting profession. As such, the M.G. was speaking about the horrible working conditions in 1899, twenty years before the strike happened. She opened up dialogue and raised awareness of the poor conditions that chorus girls faced at a time when these issues were only surfacing.

The Housing Market and Single Wage-earning Girls

In addition to the terrible labour practices that women in the theatre experienced, the M.G. also spoke to the challenges of single women living in the city. On 12 January 1900 she writes, “When I read last week that May Irwin intended to build another apartment house for bachelors, I felt as though it were time to take up arms against the condition of things that we bachelor girls are up against in the way of the need of a roof for our defenseless heads. There is not a desirable side street on the blocks between Broadway and Sixth, and Sixth and Fifth avenues, but is fairly speckled with these bachelor apartment houses.”³⁶² The underlying tone is one of frustration. She declares that the women’s rights organizations including the Professional Woman’s League and the Daughters of the Revolution will gather for “ameliorating the condition of the merely woman bachelor—which is the only way in which we can describe the unattached girl.” She continues to suggest, “with the beginning of this century the world is full of wage-earning women—women in the professions being those who are mostly in need of some habitation besides the apartment hotel and the boarding house.”³⁶³ She explains that women are charged for two people in apartment hotels and only in boarding houses can she pay rent for one. In her work on Chorus Girls during this period, Monica Stufft discusses the “shared living quarters” that female workers had available. She states, “Mills and factories, for instance, often provided housing opportunities

³⁶² *Dramatic Mirror*, 12 January 1900, 2.

³⁶³ *Ibid.*

for women workers. Cloaked under the guise of “welfare work,” this did allow for more regulation of the women’s after-hour activities and smacked of corporate paternalism.”³⁶⁴ The living conditions were broadly similar to girls who moved to the city for employment and the “shared living quarters” was the most economic choice for girls.

In addition, the M.G. became a spokesperson for young women who were faced with limited housing options. She established her position on May Irwin’s decision to build housing for men despite the difficulties that young women faced in social settings. She states, “... a home is impossible to single women except at a price far in excess of what it costs most couples to live.”³⁶⁵ Her disapproval is clearly articulated, “May Irwin is the last person one would expect to go back on us that way, now isn’t she?”³⁶⁶ She discusses the opportunities that this house could provide for women, such as getting “dinner after six o’clock without being regarded by the head-waiter with a glassy eye which said plainer than words that women without escorts were suspected after six,” and establishes that this “strange rule which condemns women to go dinnerless after six is a relic of the blue laws and a disgrace to the greatest city in the world.”³⁶⁷ This “strange” and unfair rule that “requires some nineteenth century knight to venture forth and correct” limits women’s opportunities to have the same privileges as men.³⁶⁸ She advocates for girls and women who “are interested in the affairs of their sex [to] speak to urbane hotel

³⁶⁴ Monica Stufft, *Chorus Girl Collective: Century American Performance Communities and Urban Networking* (University of Berkeley PhD Dissertation, 2000).

³⁶⁵ Ibid.

³⁶⁶ Ibid.

³⁶⁷ Ibid.

³⁶⁸ Ibid.

proprietors about this insane rule.”³⁶⁹ As such, she endorses and encourages her readers to stand up for equality and speak to hotel proprietors about women’s access to public spaces in the evenings. While matinee girls, and girls in general, were free to roam the urban streets during the day, the rules changed once the day came to an end. Both Peiss and Robinowitz explore women’s access to public spaces and the limitations placed on them (see Introduction). According to the M.G., women who went to dinner without a male escort were considered by *moralists* to be in danger of being sex workers. These “strange” and “insane” rules continued to displace women and girls in social contexts.

A few weeks later, in an article published on 26 January 1901, the M.G. states “The attack which the Matinee Girl made upon May Irwin for not choosing to build a woman’s apartment house instead of a man’s, as it was announced she intended to do, has brought a lot of letters commending the criticism.”³⁷⁰ This statement implies that young women and matinee girls were actively reading and responding to the M.G. She provides insight into the response she receives from her readers, “I am getting patted on the back by girls all over the country for twitting May Irwin about her new bachelor hotel. Women’s rights girls and higher educated girls and Expansionists and Adventists and sociologists have become interested. It has created a perfect furor.”³⁷¹ She publishes the words of one of her readers, “The earnest truths you write are helpful and consoling, and your suggestion proves your good heart. I wish you had the opportunity May Irwin has” and responds with “But what is opportunity after all? It’s real estate and a cheerful

³⁶⁹ Ibid.

³⁷⁰ *Dramatic Mirror*, 26 January 1901, 2.

³⁷¹ Ibid.

disposition that count!”³⁷² This column reads both as the M.G. being a representative for the advancement of modern girls, as well as an attempt to encourage girls to become active participants and to fight for equal rights and privileges. The column is used as a tool to raise awareness of the inequality urban girls faced.

The real estate challenges in the city were ones of gender and class. While married women could legally own property, they were unable to rent property on their own without a husband’s permission. According to Mary Lyndon Shanley, the “Married Women’s Property Act of 1882 was arguably the single most important change in the legal status of women in the nineteenth century.”³⁷³ While this was a stride in women’s advancements, women were still bound by their husbands and unable to make any decisions on the property. Single women, however, had economic independence, and could buy property in New York City that was expensive and almost impossible for young women to purchase or rent on their own. The M.G. was speaking on behalf of all those girls who couldn’t afford to live in the city, pay their rent, food, and living expenses.

In writing about the rental situation throughout her columns, the M.G. demonstrates the importance of having a platform to educate girls on issues happening in the city that had an effect on their lives, while also providing a space for girls to respond to these issues. The M.G. played the role of a big sister or a mentor and often offered advice to young women during this period: “A well-known critic once said: ‘The only way to become noticed in the world of literature is to keep jumping on something all the time. Find fault with everything. Cultivate the sneer. Don’t ever

³⁷² Ibid.

³⁷³ Mary Lyndon Shanley, *Feminism, Marriage, and the Victorian England*, (Princeton University Press, 1989), 103. See also Anne Lorene Chambers, *Married Women and Properties in Victorian Ontario*, (Osgood Society for Canadian Legal History, 1997).

drop the attitude of aggression. Even though you can't do anything yourself but find fault with others who are trying to kick, through mud, object on some ground or other to all endeavor.'" While she claims to not employ this tactic, she confides, "there must be some truth to it." With this discussion of pushing on and fighting for what one believes in, she encourages her readership to never give up while demonstrating her own way of fighting for (low income) housing for girls and young women.

A Female-Centric Community

Additionally, cultivating a community for young women was critical to the column's success. Just like the *Dramatic Mirror's* M.G., Walker, in *Town Topics*, often referenced her readers by highlighting the letters she received from them. Both M.G.'s encouraged their readers' to write letters by writing about them in their columns. For example, on 31 December 1898, the *Dramatic Mirror's* M.G. writes, "[t]wo weeks ago I wrote something about the difficulty I had in getting certain books, and since then I have been told just where I can find them by many kindly-disposed friends who have taken the trouble to write me. And I am very, very grateful."³⁷⁴ A few years later, on 13 July 1901, she writes "The Matinee Girl has had a lot of mail this week. Several of the letters speak lovingly and admiringly of Georgia Cayvan, whom The Matinee Girl wrote about a week or two ago, and provides some commentary on the actress by the readers of the column,"³⁷⁵ and on 9 September 1905 she says:

We are glad to reproduce this letter, to which need be added no further word, so simply and strongly does it tell its own story: Dear Matinee Girl—Times past in your columns, you have written on behalf of the unfortunate members of the profession

³⁷⁴ *Dramatic Mirror*, 31 December 1898, 2.

³⁷⁵ *Dramatic Mirror*, 13 July 1901, 2.

who, through illness or for other reasons have been reduced to covert, and your charitable words, testifying to a big humane heart.³⁷⁶

These letters attest to the importance of community and the sense of belonging for girls. It suggests that the individual girl reading the column is not alone. It also implied that girls in the profession made up a significant portion of her readership. In this previous note, the reader highlights her efforts to the “unfortunate members of the profession” which could signal that she herself belonged to that profession. In publishing parts of letters that she received, the M.G. promoted the practice of girls’ writing into the paper, and provided a space for developing a sense of community where girls support one another, whether it was to suggest where to purchase a book or to share anecdotes and commentary on stars.

Final Thoughts

Although girls did not write the columns themselves, snippets of their letters and voices can be heard throughout the columns in both *Town Topics* and the *Dramatic Mirror*. These authors encouraged girls to take up space and gain agency by participating in public conversation. On 6 January 1906, the *Dramatic Mirror’s* M.G. tells her readers, “Paste this inside your trunk lid if you are traveling, or on your mirror frame if you are not.” She narrates her experience of finding a quote “framed above a successful business man’s desk [...]” that she wishes to share with her readers.³⁷⁷

Genius is only the power of making continuous effort. The line between failure and success is so fine that we scarcely know when we pass it—so fine that we are often on the line and do not know it. How many a man has thrown up his hands at a time when a little more effort, a little more patience, would have achieved success. As the tide goes clear out, so the tide comes clear in. In business sometimes prospects seem

³⁷⁶ *Dramatic Mirror*, 9 September 1905, 2.

³⁷⁷ *Dramatic Mirror*, 06 January 1906, 2.

darkest when they are really on the turn. A little more effort, a little more persistence, and what seemed failure may turn to glorious success. There is no failure except in no longer trying. There is no defeat except from within insurmountable barrier save our own inherent weakness.³⁷⁸

This message educates girls on the limitations placed on girls and women and encourages them to continue pushing the boundaries and to fight even when their “prospects seem darkest.”³⁷⁹ The conversations and topics they discuss provide a different, more nuanced narrative of young women during the period. One where despite the challenges and hardships that confronted wage-earning girls, they cultivated communities and lives outside of the workplace and pushed boundaries that were placed on them.

As such, both columns that were written by established “Matinee Girls” (whether or not they actually were) challenge the way girls were being depicted in popular culture. In using the identity of a matinee girl, the columns demonstrate this modern girl’s intellectual ability to criticize plays, politics, and to note the gender inequalities during the period. Both authors are sharp and outspoken, and quick to respond to their critics by using satire and mockery to address them. Also, these columns encouraged girls to be both active and engaged in social matters that affected their lives. Thus, both of the M.G.s gave value to female voices, thoughts, and concerns.

These columns become tools for understanding the social and political issues that young urban women faced. While in *Town Topics* Walker used the column to address the limitations of entertainment that audiences were receiving, she also attempts to educate Winnipeg audiences on theatre etiquette. Despite this, she provides a space to publish girls’ voices and encourages them to write to the column. The *Dramatic Mirror*, on the other hand, provides insight into more

³⁷⁸ Ibid.

³⁷⁹ Ibid.

serious matters including the terrible working conditions of women in the theatre and the challenging conditions single and wage-earning women faced when looking for apartments in New York City.

Thus, this chapter provides female perspectives of the struggles young women face in urban settings, as opposed to the narratives of matinee girls from presumably male critics in the first two chapters. While there has been significant mention of the matinee girl from critics and journalists who published often on these modern girls, there continues to be a lack of actual voices by these young women. While this is hard to obtain, the next chapter provides insight into how scrapbooks allowed girls to continue interacting with performances after they left the theatre.

Chapter Four

Renegotiating Identities through Scrapbooks and Fan Art

The matinee girl helped to create and shape a culture of early female fandom at the turn of the twentieth century. The souvenirs purchased, the postcards sent to friends, the flower petals saved and safely kept in drawers or scrapbooks, and finally the snippets of newspaper articles and images that were carefully chosen and collected over a period of time, and thoughtfully glued or taped onto notebooks or scrapbooks, reveal the ways that matinee girls responded to and participated in fan culture. While the first three chapters of this dissertation provide narratives around the matinee girl in popular media, this final chapter focuses on the lived experiences of girls by examining how they documented their theatergoing experiences and expressed their admiration for Broadway stars. My aim is to understand how the theatre-loving modern girl at the turn of the twentieth century cultivated a culture of leisure and fandom - one that continues to be renegotiated and shaped by girls today.

What is a fan? In order to examine the matinee girl as a fan, it is crucial to examine theoretical understandings of fan culture and fandom. Despite the term being a contemporary one, it provides insight into how the matinee girl helped to shape this culture at the turn of the twentieth-century. Joli Jenson states that a fan is “a result of celebrity—the fan is defined as a response to the star system.”³⁸⁰ According to Matthew Hills in *Fan Cultures*, “Everybody knows what a ‘fan’ is. It’s somebody who is obsessed with a particular star, celebrity, film, TV

³⁸⁰ Jolie Jenson, “Fandom as Pathology: The Consequences of Characterization,” in *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media*, Lisa A. Lewis (ed.) (London and New York: Routledge 1992), 10.

programme, band; somebody who can produce reams of information on their object of fandom, and can quote their favourite lines or lyrics, chapter and verse.”³⁸¹ In this context, the matinee girl emerged out of the celebrity star system on Broadway in the late nineteenth-century. Actresses including Sarah Bernhardt, Ellen Terry, Ethel Barrymore, and Maude Adams had large followings of adoring girls who dressed and imitated them. Rooted in their love for specific actresses, matinee girls created communities of young women that attended the theatre and circulated memorabilia; much like the Bachelor Girls’ Club (see Introduction), girls were attending the theatre in groups. Thus, if fan culture is conceptualized as a spectrum of beliefs and practices that are engaged by a particular group of people at a particular time, the matinee girl can be considered a fan using today’s terminology. In fact, my research estimates that she was an early producer of female fan culture. Therefore, in considering this theoretical framework, the matinee girl, despite her economic status, participated in similar practices.

To further understand the matinee girl as a fan, I examine the contemporary term “fan,” which commonly refers to a person who admires a particular celebrity or subject, however, female fandom at the turn of the century was not identified in the terms understood today. Instead groups of fans, like the matinee girl, raised concerns and questions about their participation in urban culture, and more importantly their cultivation of leisure, as discussed in chapters one and two. Their ability to imitate stars, change their look, and behaviour helped shape modern girlhood. The idea of a female fan was not recognized during the period, in fact this was a period when women and girls’ public roles and access to urban spaces were new.

By examining the matinee girl through the lens of fan studies scholars, I am able to

³⁸¹ Matthew Hills, *Fan Cultures* (London and New York: Routledge 2002), 1.

interpret the matinee girl scrapbooks and fan art as forms of textual production that circulated among matinee girl fans. According to fan studies scholar John Fiske, “All popular audiences engage in varying degrees of semiotic productivity, producing meanings and pleasures that pertain to their social situation out of the products of the culture industries. But fans often turn this semiotic productivity into some form of textual production that can circulate among –and thus help to define—fan community.”³⁸² Fiske’s defining features of fandom can be applied to the matinee girl culture, as these girls produced forms of textual material that was circulated among them. It is through the examination of these material artifacts, in the form of scrapbooks, postcards, and fan art, that the historian and scholar can gain insight into the early practices of theatre audiences.

In examining the matinee girl’s fan practices, this chapter historicizes the “textual production” that was carefully created by adoring theatre-loving girls and circulated among their communities. Theatre historian Sharon Marcus notes that while the audience is the most elusive in theatre history, by examining early female fan practices by matinee girls, I highlight how young audiences were engaging with and participating in popular culture. More importantly, this chapter aims to identify one of the earliest platforms used by female fans at the turn of the century to engage with performances, and in doing so they documented their lived experiences.

While today girls frequently use social media platforms to share their experiences, from blogging and tweeting to live streaming on Instagram Stories and Snapchat—where friends can upload and watch friends/celebrities live at performances—matinee girls at the turn of the century were participating in the documentation of these special moments in similar ways, albeit

³⁸² John Fiske, “The Cultural Economy of Fandom,” in *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media*, Lisa A. Lewis (ed) (London; New York: Routledge) 1992, 30.

through different mediums. The main medium used by girls at the turn of the century was the scrapbook. I aim to establish scrapbooking as more than just a female hobby. It was an important aspect of matinee girl fan culture and allowed girls to engage with the performance well after it went off stage. This practice became instrumental to the matinee girl community, and showcases her active participation in American culture as well as establishes what Fiske refers to as “textual production.” Therefore, this chapter argues that the matinee girl was one of the first visible female fans in North America to cultivate a culture of documentation, engagement and creation, paving the road for female fan cultures including her predecessor, the movie-struck girl who emerged in the 1910s.³⁸³ It is through looking at historical moments like the matinee girl phenomenon that a better understanding of the emerging culture of female fandom can be established.

This chapter emerged while on a research trip to the Houghton Library at Harvard University in 2015, where I had the privilege of sifting through an array of scrapbooks created in the late 1890s and the early 1900s by young dedicated fans of the matinee idol sensation Maude Adams. The Houghton Library has one of the largest surviving archives dedicated to this star.³⁸⁴ In addition to the scrapbooks that are held in the Maude Adams collection, I provide some other examples of mixed scrapbooks (scrapbooks that focus on multiple actors and actresses), and one on Sarah Bernhardt, all from the Theatre Collection at the Harry Ransom Center.³⁸⁵

³⁸³ Shelly Stamp, *Movie-Struck Girls*; and Diana Anselmo, “Screen-Struck: The Invention of the Movie Girl Fan,” *Cinema Journal*, 55. 1 (Fall 215), 1-28.

³⁸⁴ Thanks to Dr. Roberta Barker for pointing me to the Maude Adams collections.

³⁸⁵ Thanks to Dr. Marlis Schweitzer the opportunity to research at the Harry Ransom Center.

Recently, there has been an increased surge in scrapbooking as a social practice in scholarship with notable research in Ellen Gruber Garvey's *Writing with Scissors: American Scrapbooks from the Civil War to the Harlem Renaissance*, *The Scrapbook in American Life*, edited by Susan Tucker, Katherine Ott, and Patricia Buckler, and Sharon Marcus' *Theatre Survey* article "Theatrical Scrapbooks," which attempts to close the gap on the historicization of theatrical scrapbooking.³⁸⁶ Marcus suggests that the theatrical scrapbook acts as both "an archive and a medium."³⁸⁷ They become valuable artifacts that provide the researcher or historian with significant information. She notes, "As an archive, the theatrical scrapbook is a repository for performance ephemera. As a medium, scrapbooks record how past theatre aficionados merged the stage and the page, image and print, the mechanical and the handmade."³⁸⁸ The theatrical scrapbook was a popular form of documenting audiences' theatre-going experiences. Commercial scrapbooks and postcards, were sold for this purpose, they encouraged audience members to document the plays they saw and to be critics. This rich research provides the basis for my understanding of theatrical scrapbooks. Thus, my work on the matinee girls' scrapbooking practices, as an example of early female fan culture, aims to build on the work of these scholars by providing insight into how these significant artifacts, "mediums," and "archives" provide a lens into the lives of female theatre audiences and more specifically, Broadway fans. It asserts that scrapbooking was more than just a female hobby; it was a part of the identity of early fans.

³⁸⁶ Sharon Marcus, "Theatrical Scrapbooks," *Theatre Survey*, 54.2 (2013), 283–307. Marcus argues that there has been limited scholarly study of theatrical scrapbooks. She also terms them theatrical albums, 284.

³⁸⁷ Marcus, "Theatrical Scrapbooks," 283.

³⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

Fandom and Fan Handcrafting or Fan Art

I am particularly interested in examining the scrapbook and the items found within these books—including postcards, bookmarks, drawings—as a form of fan art. Scholar Brigid Cherry uses the term fan art, or fan handcrafting, to explore knitting in *Cult Media, Fandom and Textiles: Handcrafting as Fan Art* as a form of fan culture production. She notes, “Fan handcrafting is framed in terms of participatory future within which fans can be seen as playing with the text, extending it, reworking it to suit their own desires and interests, and building communities around their fan production.”³⁸⁹ Her research focuses on “classifying fan handcrafting as art and specifically a form of fan art.”³⁹⁰ To this end, practices such as scrapbooking can also be understood as a type of fan art, or fan handicraft: a creative exploration of plays, celebrities, and girls’ experiences of watching performances.

From Scrapbooking to Social Media

In 1895, Clifton Johnson suggested in his article, “The Scrap-Book Habit,” published in *The Outlook*, a weekly New York magazine, that the scrapbook is “a stepping-stone to culture. Taste is cultivated in part by individual thought and decisions on the quality of what the scrapbook maker reads ... To get the most out of the scrapbook habit, it is well that what one saves should be not simply good things, but more than that – they should be best things.”³⁹¹ Johnson explains that looking back at old scrapbooks reveals how “taste changes” and offers suggestions

³⁸⁹ Cherry, *Cult Media, Fandom, and Textiles: Handicrafting as Fan Art*, 11.

³⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 33.

³⁹¹ Clifton Johnson, “The Scrap-Book Habit,” *The Outlook*, 1895.

on making a scrapbook “beautiful” and “interesting.” This article not only highlights the importance of scrapbooking during this period but also points to the ways in which these artifacts reveal the cultural tastes and passions of social groups and the shifts that occur over time. Scrapbooking was an activity that was both encouraged and supported in the media as a healthy female habit or hobby. Gruber Garvey notes that scrapbooks were used to create a space for the scrapbooker by documenting things that were important to them.³⁹² “Such scrapbooks open a window into the lives and thoughts of people who did not respond to their world with their own writing. As they saved and printed matter and arranged it in ways that expressed their own ideas, they created value from their reading for themselves and their communities.”³⁹³ This is particularly the case for young women whose voices were almost always dismissed by popular media, and have been excluded from history.

Scrapbooking allowed girls to explore and create their identities. According to Susan Tucker in *Reading and Re-Reading: The Scrapbooks of Girls Growing into Women: 1900-1930*, a study of scrapbooking practices between 1900 to 1940 reveals that there were three types of albums used during this period: “The first scrapbook commercially or handmade from cheap paper and bound with a shoestring. The second was the scrapbook transformed from an album or ledger, also usually made by a local printer or stationer. The third, and the one whose conventions show most vividly the world of the girl in this period, was that of a blank book, with

³⁹² Ellen Gruber Garvey, *Writing with Scissors*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012) 4.

³⁹³ *Ibid.*

printed headings created, by major publishing houses.”³⁹⁴ While the focus of scrapbooks changed from girl to girl, the type of book used by girls can reveal details about her socio-economic class, which I discuss further in this chapter.³⁹⁵

In addition, scrapbooking was considered to be a social activity that encouraged girls and women with similar interests to exchange newspapers, magazines, and postcards. This practice continues today, particularly in social media platforms (i.e. blogs, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat) which are populated by girls documenting and sharing their experiences with others. Although I am not interested in a lengthy comparison of early twentieth century fan culture with that of female practices today, I nevertheless want to note that the desire to share and document lived experiences are similar among female communities. For example, at the turn of the century, matinee girls used scrapbooks to showcase the performances they saw by keeping programs, or pasting an image of the performance with a date next to it, or their ticket stub. They preserved flower petals to highlight the exchange between celebrity and fan. They sent postcards to friends, writing notes behind the image of their hero or heroine. All of these insightful ways of collecting, pasting, and sharing are crucial to early female fan culture and particularly to the matinee girl.

As such, recent Girlhood Studies scholars have taken a particular interest in highlighting the similarities between scrapbooking and contemporary female practices. From diaries to girls’ digital media practices today, Mary Celeste Kearney notes that these activities “focus on self-

³⁹⁴ Susan Tucker, “Reading and Rereading: The Scrapbooks of Girls Growing into Women: 1900-1930,” in *Defining Print Culture for Youth: The Cultural Work of Children’s Literature*, eds. Anne H. Lundin and Wayne A. Wiegand, (London: Libraries Unlimited, 2003), 5.

³⁹⁵ Marcus, “Theatrical Scrapbooks.”

expression and personal narrative.”³⁹⁶ According to Katie Day Good in *From Scrapbook to Facebook: A History of Personal Media Assemblage and Archives*, “flipping through a scrapbook is not unlike clicking through the features of a Facebook user’s profile. Both provide a unique window into people’s thoughts and personal lives.”³⁹⁷ Bringing recent scholarship into dialogue about the importance of nineteenth-and- early-twentieth century scrapbooks helps to situate the theatre as an important social activity for girls during this early period. In making connections between scrapbooks and Facebook, Good suggests that today’s media platforms “are entrenched in a long history of habits and hobbies by which people interacted with media texts to both express themselves socially and, simultaneously, to document their lives.”³⁹⁸ In other words, by contextualizing the scrapbook as an important medium in the lives of female fans, the aim of this chapter is to bring attention to the influence and importance of live theatre as an important leisure activity that helped form the identities of matinee girls.

Fan Scrapbooking

Scrapbooks created by matinee girls provides insight into the personal experiences of each fan, from the article or photo chosen to where the fan sat or who accompanied her to the theatre. Marcus suggests, “each clipping or photograph in an album is contextualized by the hundreds of others that the compiler placed alongside it, thus adding layers of meaning that each

³⁹⁶ Mary Celeste Kearney, “Historicize This! Contextualism in Youth Media Studies,” *Youth Cultures in the Age of Global Media*, eds. Sara Bragg and Mary Jane Kehily (Palgrave MacMillon, 2014) 65.

³⁹⁷ Katie Day Good, “From Scrapbook to Facebook: A History of Personal Media Assemblage and Archives,” *New Media & Society*, 15.4 (2013), 558.

³⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

item would lack if encountered in its original source or in isolation.”³⁹⁹ As such, each item is unique and provides personal information about the creator. For example, the type of books used as a scrapbook can reveal a girl’s age and/or class status. If a school notebook was re-used, then the creator was presumably a school girl, which indicates that she could be from a middle-class background. Among the several reasons theatrical scrapbooks are important, Marcus notes, “... [they] complicate our understanding of what counted as performance because they suggest that theatre-goers treated representations of performances as extensions of the theatrical experience.”⁴⁰⁰ The exchange of postcards and fan art reveals this extension of their post-theatre experience. In addition, the value in the creation of scrapbooks is that it “can help better understand that most elusive element in theatre history—the audience—in its interactions with performance in general and with specific plays and performers in particular.”⁴⁰¹ While very little is known about the experiences of theatre audiences at the turn of the century, these scrapbooks, which were designed and created by young fans, reveal the thoughts, desires, and practices of young female audiences, who were, to reiterate Marcus, some of the most “elusive” figures in theatre history.

The scrapbooks found at the Houghton Library and the Harry Ransom Center exemplify the different types that were created: from highlighting one actress’ career to that of multiple matinee idols (John Drew Jr. to Sarah Bernhardt). Fiske argues that “Fans discriminate fiercely: the boundaries between what falls within their fandom and what does not are sharply drawn. And

³⁹⁹ Marcus, 285.

⁴⁰⁰ Marcus, 285.

⁴⁰¹ Ibid.

this discrimination in the cultural sphere is mapped into distinctions in the social—the boundaries between the community of fans and the rest of the world are just as strongly marked and patrolled.”⁴⁰² If applying this theoretical frame to the types of scrapbooks created by matinee girls, the different types of scrapbooks may mark the discrimination and boundaries that Fiske notes. In other words, matinee girl fandom can fall into two categories: the first where the matinee girl was dedicated to only one celebrity, tracing and following the life and career of the actor; and the second, where the matinee girl demonstrates a general interest in matinee idols of the season/period, without focusing on just one celebrity. While my focus is on Maude Adams’ fans, I provide an example of a general scrapbook, stipulating an overview of the most popular idols of the period.

In addition to the collected and carefully pasted articles that document the lives and careers of idols, the “handmade artifacts,” or fan art “reflect the multifarious passions, habits and quirks of ordinary theatre-goers rather than the views of professional nineteenth-century drama critics or choices of present-day archivists.”⁴⁰³ From drawings of Maude Adams to bookmarks that replicate the marquee, these items reflect the ways in which fans engaged with their idols and/or performances. While the individual voices of the theatre-goer are seldom heard, these items reveal the active participation of girls, their habits, quirks and interests. According to Patricia P. Buckler and C. Kay Leeper, “Reading the scrapbook is like reading an autobiography, less linear and more visual, yet the self emerges just as clearly and authentically as it would in a wholly verbal narrative. In fact, the scrapbook’s composition exceeds the written word as a

⁴⁰² Fiske, 34-5.

⁴⁰³ Ibid.

vehicle for individual self-expression.”⁴⁰⁴ The images suggest more than the creator’s adoration of the star; it points to their interest in the star’s onstage persona, as a fashion icon, or a genuine interest in the star’s life off-stage.

Case Study: Maude Adams Scrapbooks

Maude Adams was arguably one of the most adored stage-actresses in the United States at the turn of the century. Born in Salt Lake City, Utah in 1872, she started performing at the age of five at the San Francisco Theatre. She was the daughter of actress Anne Adams who encouraged her theatre pursuits. In 1879, at the age of six Adams was cast as Adrienne in *A Celebrated Case* with her mother. The opening was postponed a week because Adams was sick and ordered to be in bed by the theatre physician; however, two thirds of tickets had been sold well before the first performance.⁴⁰⁵ Her manager, who had spent a significant amount of time promoting the performance, was profoundly disappointed with the delay. Newspapers published the following: “The postponement is chiefly to be regretted on Little Maudie’s account, and the news of her speedy recovery will be gladly received by everyone.”⁴⁰⁶ While he did not know, this delay was useful as it allowed more people to purchase tickets, selling out all four shows by the time it was staged. Finally, the four-night performance received high praise and Adams’s performance was considered “outstanding.”⁴⁰⁷ She was said to be “‘most excellent’ and was singled out for having ‘carried the audience with her.’” The matinee audience was reported as having been the largest

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁵ Armond Fields, *Maude Adams: Idol of American Theatre, 1872-1953*, 35.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid.

ever in theater's history."⁴⁰⁸ This was only the beginning of the star's long career.



Figure 21: Miss Maudie Adams, at the age of six, in *A Celebrated Case*⁴⁰⁹

At the age of sixteen, in 1888, Adams went to New York as part of E.H. Sothern's company in *The Paymaster*. As her popularity rapidly grew she was picked up by Charles Frohman's management and appeared for the first time in *All the Comforts of Home*, which opened in New York on 8 September 1890. She became John Drew's leading lady for five years after he joined Frohman's theatre company in 1892. By the end of the nineteenth century, Adams had become Frohman's star actress, and became particularly successful in *The Little Minister*, *Peter Pan*, *What Every Woman Knows*, *Quality Street*, and *A Kiss for Cinderella*. She also performed a number of Shakespearean roles—Juliet, Viola, and Rosalind—as well as Joan of Arc.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid.

Not only was Adams selling tickets, but playwrights were commissioning plays with Adams as the lead actress. Both Clyde Fitch (1865-1909) and James Matthew Barrie (1860-1937), two playwrights who aided Frohman in his shaping of the star's image, wrote plays that starred Adams. According to a republished article from *Cosmopolitan Magazine*, "The Life of Charles Frohman" the *South Bend News-Times* states, Barrie claims of his work for Adams, *What Every Woman Knows* was written because "there was a Maude Adams in the World," he states, "I could see her dancing through every page of my manuscript. The play was really written around Miss Adams. It was a dramatization of the roguish humor and exquisite womanliness that are her peculiar gifts."⁴¹⁰ According to Kim Marra, "Adams enchanted audiences with an appeal entirely unlike that of the deceptive femme fatale, or even the coquette. She kept the entertainment 'clean, bright, and wholesome' by projecting an image 'of an innocent and lovely girl, artless, buoyant, piquant, brisk.'⁴¹¹ Adams was appealing to girls because she provided them with a new and fresh representation of modern femininity.

Images of Adams in postcards, programs, and fan memorabilia idealized her for her youthful demeanor. A critic on 08 June 1907 in *Goodwin's Weekly* suggested that her talent was "immeasurable by comparison with any other star of the stage. There is something, called personality, about her that draws you to her ..."⁴¹² Another article, for the same paper, on 22 May 1915, claims that Adams "is a woman's woman and that she can portray every emotion that every

⁴¹⁰ Daniel Frohman and Isaac F. Marcossan, "The Life of Charles Frohman," *Cosmopolitan Magazine*, reprinted in *South Bend News-Times*, 18 May 1916, 12.

⁴¹¹ Kim Marra, *Strange Duets: Impresarios and Actresses in the American Theatre, 1865-1914* (University of Iowa Press, 2006).

⁴¹² *Ibid.*

woman feels-not what every woman knows, is her greatest asset as an actress.”⁴¹³ Adams was celebrated for her talent and dedication to the art of the stage. Yvonne Shafer, in her article, “If You Love Me, Leave Me Alone: The Life of Actress Maude Adams,” writes that Adams was selected as the most admired actress by the public in an 1899 contest held to distinguish the most popular actress in the United States. She was awarded a new car and a life-size gold statue, which was displayed at the Paris Exposition in 1899.⁴¹⁴ By this time Adams was 27 years old and had already spent a significant amount of her life on the stage. Women of all ages idolized and admired her. By 1906, at the age of thirty-four, Adams was also considered the richest actress in North America.⁴¹⁵

Adams appealed to the matinee girl for her youthful identity both on and off stage, her talent and dedication to her art, which was often described in theatre magazines, but more importantly, girls felt that they could connect with Adams. During a performance on 11 November 1899, at the Newark Theatre, Management presented Adams with a silver service to celebrate her birthday, “‘How old are you?’ the audience shouted. ‘I’m twenty-seven years old,’ Maude shouted back and the audience cheered her for several minutes.”⁴¹⁶ Armond Field provides another example of a reviewer who declared, “The house was packed to the doors ...she is a prime favourite here, which was evident by the spontaneous outburst of applause and the

⁴¹³ Qtd. in Marra, 115.

⁴¹⁴ Yvonne Shafer, *The Changing American Theatre: Mainstream and Marginal, Past and Present* (Valencia: University of Valencia, 2002), 169.

⁴¹⁵ Ibid.

⁴¹⁶ Fields, *Maude Adams*, 142.

many curtain calls she received.”⁴¹⁷ Adams often performed to sold out performances, her dedicated fans were said to mouth some of her most famous lines during shows. She recognized their efforts and made them feel special.

These examples offer some context to explain why Adams was popular with matinee girls. She acknowledged them during performances by responding to what critics would call “outbursts,” instead of celebrating and showing approval of their comments by responding and encouraging dialogue. Although Adams was considered a private person, even shy, she showed a genuine appreciation for her fan club.⁴¹⁸ Some actors of the period waited until their fans left to exit the theatre; however, it was noted that during her performance of *Peter Pan* Adams exited the theatre, where she knew her fans would be eagerly awaiting her, wearing “conventional street dress, except for a green Peter Pan cap, its saucy feather pointing skyward.”⁴¹⁹ In one of the scrapbooks I came across at the Houghton Library, created by matinee girl Christine Houghton, was a small white envelope with an inscription that read: “A violet from a bunch given to Miss Adams Feb 27-09-by me” (Figure 22). Although the violet has presumably disintegrated over time, this envelope suggests that Christine met Adams and had an exchange with her. This is significant in revealing the relationship between Adams and her fans. Adams made herself accessible to meet them and even accepted their bouquets of flowers.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid.

⁴¹⁸ Shafer, 52.

⁴¹⁹ qtd. in Shafer, 172.

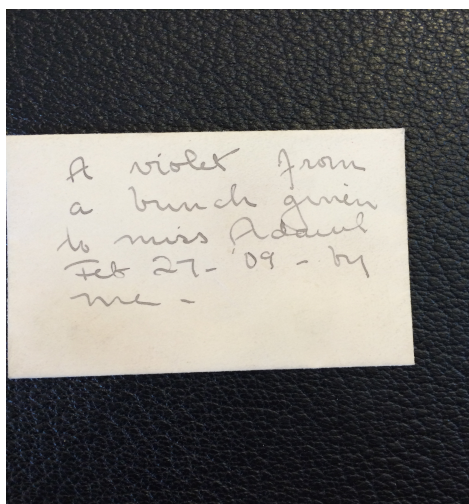


Figure 22: Violet in Envelope. Houghton Library. Author photo.

Adams often made time to appreciate her fan club. For example, when Adams performed *Joan of Arc* at Harvard University she took time from her demanding schedule to meet and have tea with the Dramatic Club.⁴²⁰ When she visited Bloomington, Indiana, she agreed to add a matinee performance to the regular performance dates to allow students and the faculty of the University of Indiana to attend. On a different occasion, when Adams toured *Peter Pan*—which was one of the most successful performances in the U.S.—she requested a matinee be played in addition to the evening performances.⁴²¹ According to Bruce Hanson, Frohman did not like his actors, who were on tour, to perform in matinees, especially Adams, and did not include a matinee in Pennsylvania. When Frohman received a telegram notifying his New York office that a matinee had been added, he responded, “I’ll discharge whoever is responsible for this

⁴²⁰ Ibid.

⁴²¹ Bruce Hanson, *Peter Pan on Stage and Screen, 1904 – 2010* (North Carolina and London: McFarland & Co., 2010), 66.

matinee.”⁴²² The following telegraph was sent to him,

The matinee was played at my request. I preferred to work rather than spend the whole day in a bad hotel.

--Maude Adams⁴²³

Nonetheless, Adams’ devotion to the stage, and to her fans is evident in her effort to make both the theatre and herself accessible to girls who couldn’t afford and/or did not have the ability to attend evening performances.

Maude Adams’s Matinee Fans

Who were Maude Adams’ fans? William de Wagstaff of the *New York City Tribune* writes, “A Maude Adams audience is of every class, from the shop girl, who saves her fifty cents to go and see her, to the more pretentious theatergoer.”⁴²⁴ Kim Marra suggests, “inside the theatre, female enthusiasm erupted in deluges of flowers, dozens of curtain calls, and ovations that extended performance times beyond usual limits.”⁴²⁵ Young and single women and adolescent girls “were particularly susceptible to her charms.”⁴²⁶ Adams was a matinee girl favourite. In her opening performance in *L’Aiglon*, in Baltimore, as soon as Adams walked on stage wearing “long trousers and a long coat,” the audience erupted in applause, which delayed the performance by several minutes.⁴²⁷ In 1908 the *Burr McIntosh Monthly* documented the

⁴²² Ibid.

⁴²³ Ibid.

⁴²⁴ qtd. in Marra, 115.

⁴²⁵ Marra, 115.

⁴²⁶ Ibid.

⁴²⁷ Ibid.

behaviour of Adams' adoring fans:

All they want is to meet the glance of her eye, share in the warmth of her smile, hear her "good night," and they are rewarded—every mother's daughter of them, for however many hours' waiting and however many suburban trains home consequently missed. A small army of fair faced girls and cultured looking women have been known to gather and wait for hours, simply to exchange smiles with Miss Adams. It does not look so much like a crowd as a gathering of disciples. Almost nothing said, and in a moment after the object of it all disappears, everybody goes their different ways wreathed in smiles of happiness.⁴²⁸

The journalist refers to Adams' fans as "disciples," a reference to the Bible's twelve disciples, indicating that matinee girls were dedicated followers of Adams. It also suggests that Adams herself exceeded celebrity status. Like a deity, she had a large following of worshippers who made multiple visits to watch her perform. In addition, Shanley also notes, "clusters of women and girls used to wait outside the stage entrance after matinees for a glimpse at Maude Adams, the winsome star of the play. The eager, chattering groups would fall silent and then gasp in reverent wonder as the stage door opened slowly and the actress appeared."⁴²⁹ Adams' fans waited excitedly at the stage doors after a performance to get a glance of their favourite star. It is not surprising then, that many of these young adoring fans went home after a performance and worked on their scrapbooks. The scrapbook became a way for girls to engage with the performances and stars, as well as with each other. This fan practice is evidence of the ways matinee girls cultivated a culture of fandom, one where girls recorded special moments that they could relive with just a turn of a page. The scrapbook also allowed girls to feel connected to stars, even if it was just an imagined relationship.

⁴²⁸ W.D.J., "The Little Lady: An Appreciation of Maude Adams" (Burr McIntosh Monthly, June 1908), n.p., qtd. in Marra, *Strange Duets*, 115.

⁴²⁹ qtd. in Shanley, 175.

Some of Adams' fans became intimately involved with the star. According to the editors of *The Gay and Lesbian Theatrical Legacy*, both "Phyllis Robbins and Laura Kennedy [...] made their adoration of Adams into an all-consuming hobby, which involved attending multiple performances of all her shows, following her on tour, and saving every ticket stub, program, photograph, and print about her that they could find."⁴³⁰ This wasn't uncommon behaviour of fans. However, "in Robbins's case, her constant presence—usually in the front row—moved Adams to invite her backstage and eventually into her private life."⁴³¹ While matinee girls were fans of many different actresses during this period, the relationship between matinee girls and Adams was different. They emerged from "deep same-sex friendships involving intense exchanges of passion that merged gentility with eroticism," states Marra.⁴³² In fact, historians have commented on the homosocial relationships between Adams and her circle of female friends, some of whom emerged out of her fan base. In particular, Phyllis Robbins made herself known to Adams by attending multiple performances and sitting in the front row.

From Robbins' first experience of seeing Adams on stage in *The Little Minister* on 19 November 1898 with her aunt, Frances Horton, she began "filling her multiple volumes of

⁴³⁰ Billy Harbin, Kim Marra, Robert Schanke, (eds.), *The Gay and Lesbian Theatrical Legacy* (University of Michigan, 2007), 17.

⁴³¹ *Ibid.* It is said that Frohman wanted Adams to be known for her stage roles, controlling what she did offstage. Thus, her private life was kept quiet throughout her career. While she never had romantic relationships with men, she was able to maintain intimate relationships with women. She had two long-term same-sex relationships that lasted until her death. The first relationship was with Lillie Florence, which began in the 1890s until 1901, and then Louise Boynton, which began in 1905-1951. It is said that Adams burned all of her biographical documents. It is only in Robbins's writings about Adams that it was established that both Florence and Boynton were Adams romantic partners.

⁴³² Kim Marra, *Strange Duets*, 116.

meticulously and lovingly arranged scrapbooks,” suggests Marra.⁴³³ “In addition to reams of newspaper and magazine clippings, ranging from full-length articles and reviews to the briefest mentions of Maude Adams in the news, these scrapbooks contain photographs, theatre programs, and ticket stubs for the many times she saw each of Adams’ productions in Boston and New York.”⁴³⁴ Beside each ticket stub she would indicate where she sat, writing “my seat” and her companion’s name, for example “went with Aunt Fanno.” According to Marra, “Robbins’ devotion resulted in the fullest surviving documentation of the life of the nation’s biggest star during American theatre’s most profitable and culturally influential era.”⁴³⁵ Her collection can still be found at the Houghton Library and the practice of documentation is seen in many of her scrapbooks dedicated to Adams.

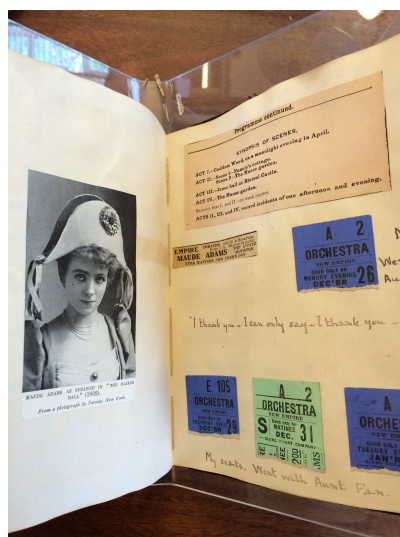


Figure 23: A page from Robbins’ scrapbook, Maude Adams Collection, Houghton Library. Author photo.

⁴³³ Marra, 118.

⁴³⁴ Ibid.

⁴³⁵ Ibid.

Robbins' scrapbook reveals the significance of commercial theatre as a leisure activity for young women during the period. Her scrapbook includes a page with neatly handwritten lines that were delivered by Adams, usually encores, at the request of the young cheering crowd made up of dotting girls. Often, Robbins attended multiple performances of the same play, as is evidenced by the ticket stubs taped to the pages, and was among the cheering crowd of admiring female fans. In examining her scrapbook, and considering the thought and creativity that went into its creation, it is clear that the scrapbook became a visual diary for the fan. Included in the extraordinary images of the star were marginal notes explaining Robbins' theatre experiences.

Both Robbins and Laura Kennedy became friends with Adams through their fandom. The fans often attended plays that Adams starred in and followed her on tour. Like Robbins, Kennedy was unmarried and became smitten with Adams decades before she even met the star. After she learned of Robbins' friendship with Adams, Kennedy began to write fan letters to the star and followed Adams on tour. She also sent presents to both Adams and Robbins after learning of their friendship and wrote "long, gushing letters."⁴³⁶ Marra suggests, "[i]n spite of the intensity of the female ardor circulating around Adams, her appeal could remain 'sexless' for those still clinging to older Victorian concepts of sexual activity that required a male initiator and focused chiefly on sexual intercourse."⁴³⁷ As such, both Robbins and Kennedy offer examples of the intense admiration of young women and the connection they felt with stars on stage. Their experiences also point to the importance of connecting with celebrities.

⁴³⁶ Marra 118.

⁴³⁷ Ibid.

Matinee Girl Scrapbooks

Examining female fan practices at the turn of the century, in particular the curation and creation of scrapbooks, offers insight into the culture of girlhood, fandom, and celebrity culture. According to Susan Tucker, Katherine Ott, and Patricia Bucker in *The Scrapbook in American Life*, “Scrapbooks represent individual and group identity in cultures ... They display artifacts and ephemera that track the migration of ideas and commodities up and down the cultural hierarchy of capitalism. They hold historical accounts in print and images that tell how events and lives were understood and told others, how individuality spars with the public and the commercial.”⁴³⁸ The authors argue that historians cannot look at the scrapbook in isolation of the historical and economic context in which they were created. They reveal nuanced ways of examining the creators but only when taking into consideration the context in which they were curated.

Additionally, theatre scrapbooks were not just archives of personal memories but they included shared moments with friends. Just like a photo album that is filled with special moments, the scrapbook functions in a similar way. Susan Tucker et al., argue that scrapbooks are “a material manifestation of memory—the memory of the compiler and the memory of the cultural moment in which they were made.”⁴³⁹ The popularity of female scrapbooking, particularly for theatre fans, indicates the influence of Broadway and female celebrities on the lives of girlhood and modernity.

Through their scrapbooking practices, matinee girls contributed to the development of a

⁴³⁸ Susan Tucker, Katherine Ott, and Patricia Bucker, eds., *The Scrapbook in American Life* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006), 2.

⁴³⁹ Ibid.

homosocial fan culture where girls would gather, create or share their curated albums or scrapbook of the star. According to Carroll Smith- Rosenberg, “an abundance of manuscript evidence suggests that eighteenth- and nineteenth – century women routinely formed emotional ties with other women. Such deeply felt, same-sex friendships were casually accepted in American society.”⁴⁴⁰ The intimate relationships that developed among girls was common to the new girl phenomenon and to modern girlhood. The theatre provided opportunities for girls to engage with a world of imagination and desire as a shared experience. The realities of working together in factories or shops, or attending school together, provided a shared experience that established tight bonds and created “emotional intimacy” among girls and young women.⁴⁴¹ In addition, “Within such a world of emotional richness and complexity, devotion to and love of other women became a plausible and socially accepted form of human interaction” during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁴⁴² It was within this shared world that female relationships developed. This gendered community resulted in girls’ admiration of female stars.

In thinking about the admiration of female stars, I’ve come to realize that the deep desire that was displayed between fan and celebrity was intrinsic to the culture of matinee girls. From collecting and sending postcards to her scrapbooking practices, the matinee girl expressed an intense eroticism for the celebrities she admired. The scrapbooks below suggest the different ways in which matinee girls explored their erotic feelings towards stars such as Adams. In

⁴⁴⁰ Carol Smith-Rosenberg, “The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations Between Women in Nineteenth Century America,” *Signs*, 1.1 (1975), 1.

⁴⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁴⁴² *Ibid.*, 9.

thinking about erotic desire, Marcus argues that “Because the erotic has no necessary connection to sex acts, to describe a dynamic or relationship as erotic requires no evidence of sex.”⁴⁴³ She argues that “Erotic relationships involve intensified affect and sensual pleasure, dynamics of looking and displaying ...”⁴⁴⁴ From the newspaper articles that traced the matinee girls’ desire to look and behave like stars to Burke’s self-reflection of performing and dressing well for her female audiences, the matinee girl was cultivating a culture of fandom that was deeply engrossed in erotic behaviour. It is through this archival material that her influence on shaping celebrity culture and erotic desire is established.

⁴⁴³ Sharon Marcus, *Between Women: Friendship, Desire, and Marriage in Victorian England*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007),105.

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid.

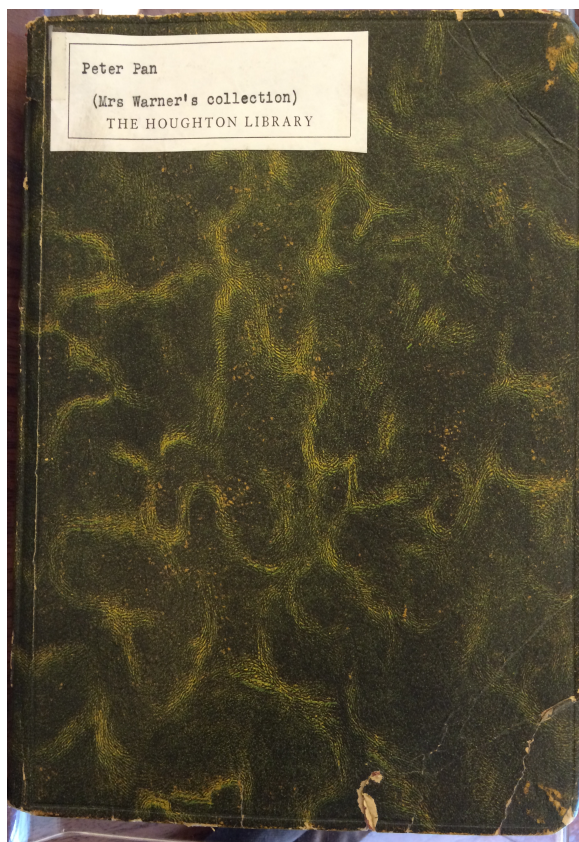


Figure 24: Frances Warren's Scrapbook: Maude Adams in Peter Pan (Houghton Library).

When I visited the Houghton Library in the summer of 2015, where hundreds of scrapbooks dedicated to the star by her adoring fans are held, I was overcome with the extensive creativity and dedication that went into every page. It was clear that Adams was both popular and influential in the lives of the girls who spent time and money searching, cutting and pasting articles, reviews, images, theatre programs, postcards and ticket stubs, and it was clear that there was a deep desire for the star. While I was unable to find biographical information on the scrapbook creator/curator, I examine the scrapbooks of three fans: Frances Warren, Agnes E. Alexander and Christine Houghton, in order to gain insight into the ways girls engaged with stars, plays, and popular media as forms of desire.

Frances Warren

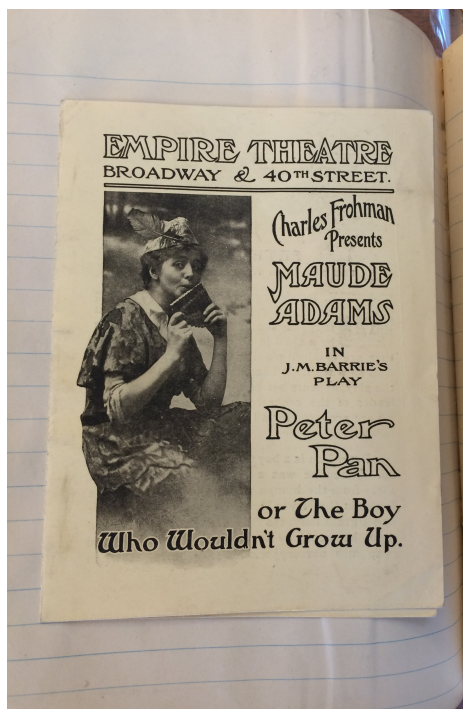


Figure 25: Frances Warren's Scrapbook: Maude Adams as Peter Pan (Houghton Library).

The first female fan scrapbook I examine belongs to Frances Warren. Warren inscribes her name on the front page of each of her carefully organized scrapbooks, and arranges each scrapbook by production, from *Joan of Arc* to *Peter Pan*. Each book documents Adams's celebrated performances with black and white newspaper images that fill each of the pages. At first glance, the simplicity of the repurposed paper-lined notebook points to Warren's economic status as well as her age (Figure 25). She is likely a student or a wage-earning girl who had limited financial resources to invest in the more expensive commercially gold-inscribed or leather-bound book which were commonly sold for this purpose.

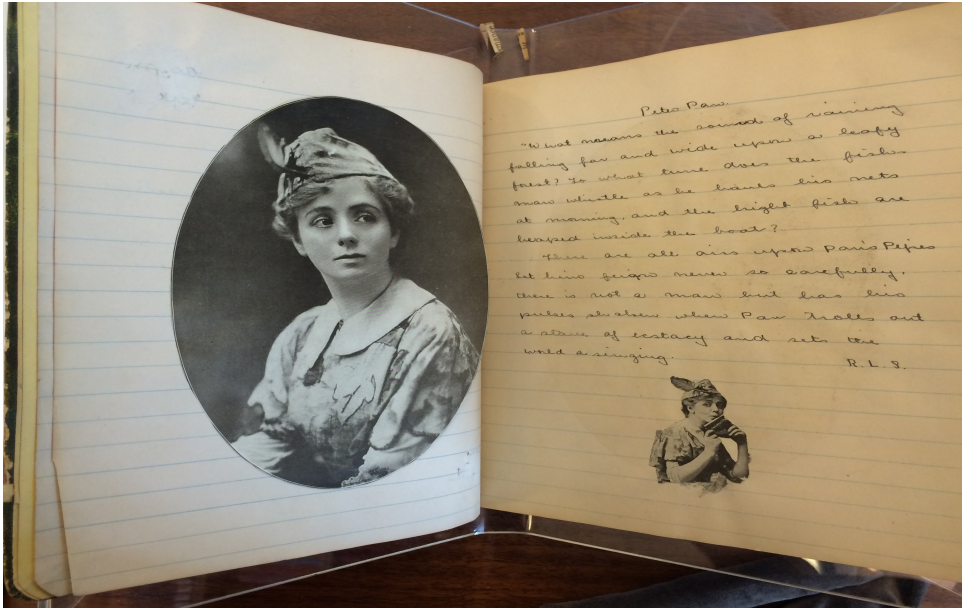


Figure 26: Frances Warren's scrapbook. Maude Adams in *Peter Pan*. Houghton Library.

Warren dedicates her first scrapbook to Adams in *Peter Pan*. It was in this role that Adams became closely associated with, despite playing Juliet in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* as well as Saint Joan in *Joan of Arc*, both of which also received audience praise. Her fans adored her performance in *Peter Pan* on Broadway and the success of this performance and this particular production was extended to approximately three thousand performances, taking her on tour. As I turned to the first page of the paper-lined notebook turned-scrapbook a leaflet of Maude Adams dressed in her role as *Peter Pan* standing in the woods was neatly pasted in the centre of the page. Although there is no cover page or inscription, the first image of Adams, dressed from head to toe as the charming and charismatic boy who can fly, suggests that this particular album, which is structured like a storybook, will focus on this role. On each page, Warren has neatly handwritten the script of *Peter Pan* and pasted images of Adams throughout (Figure 26). The absence of ticket stubs or personal notes indicates that Warren likely did not attend any of these performances, which may suggest that she did not have the resources to purchase her own ticket and attend the theatre. Interspersed throughout the script are images cut from newspapers, a

program for the production and a number of postcards that have been mailed from New York City, including one on 20 July 1906, to “Frances” c/o Miss Pauline in New Jersey (Figure 27). While I was not able to find information on Frances or Miss Pauline, my observation is that Miss Pauline was likely a friend.



Figure 27: Postcard found at Houghton Library (Right: The back part of postcard Left: Front of postcard with image of Maude Adams as young Peter Pan).

While I have found very little information on the creators of these scrapbooks, by piecing together the snippets of information a narrative about fan practices and female fan culture emerges. In this instance, Frances includes a program for *Peter Pan* at the Empire Theatre in New York City and an array of postcards of the actress of this particular production. The postcard suggests that Frances lived in New Jersey and presumably traveled to New York City to attend matinees, when and if she had the money.



Figure 28: “Peter Pan” Postcard. Found in Mrs. Warren’s Collection in Frances Warren’s Scrapbook of “Peter Pan.”

There were a number of postcards that were pasted in Warren’s scrapbook. One postcard had the inscription: “Hello Maudie Ain’t she Cunnning!” on the front side of the postcard, underneath a photo of Adams dressed as the boy who never grows up. The term “cunning” meant “quaintly interesting, or pretty, attractive” revealing the shared adoration of the actress.⁴⁴⁵ The back of the postcard is addressed to Miss Frances N. Warren in New Jersey. This postcard was likely sent to Frances from a friend who had attended the performance of *Peter Pan*. While the sender’s address is unknown, it was mailed from Brooklyn on 24 July 1906, suggesting that the sender possibly resided or worked in Brooklyn, allowing her access to the Brooklyn postal office. In examining the location of where postcards were sent suggests that matinee girls possibly lived in the suburbs of New York City, which also points to class and ethnicity. Schweitzer notes that “as these objects [i.e. postcards] move, they can unite geographically disparate groups of people by

⁴⁴⁵ Oxford English Dictionary, (accessed November 8, 2017) <http://www.oed.com>

articulating shared interests, hopes and dreams.”⁴⁴⁶ If girls’ social environments were formed at school or in the workplace, sending postcards as a form of communication outside of these controlled environments helped instill a sense of community outside of those constricted places. For example, Piepmeier suggests, “Scrapbooks offered a space for girls and women to comment on mainstream culture and also to construct community and solidarity.”⁴⁴⁷ In other words, the practice of sending postcards and creating scrapbook allowed girls with a shared interest to connect and belong to a community.

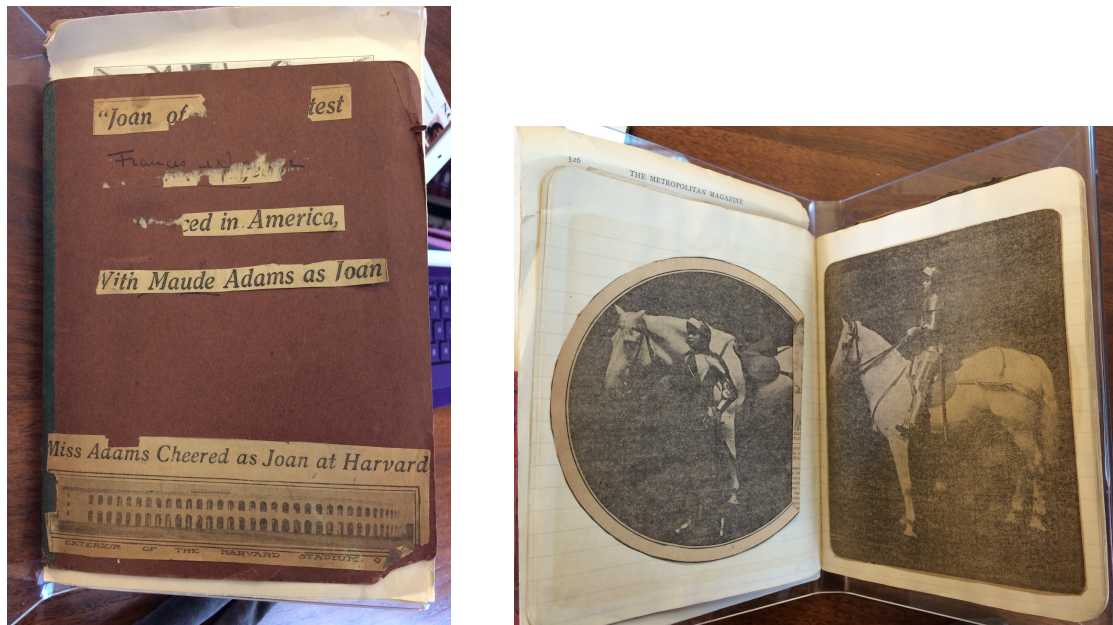


Figure 29: Scrapbook found in Mrs. Warrens Collection by Frances Warren at the Houghton Library.

Warren’s second scrapbook focuses on Adams’ performance of *Joan of Arc* and is primarily compiled of newspapers of her performance at the Harvard Stadium (Figure 29). The cover page

⁴⁴⁶ Schweitzer, *Transatlantic Broadway: The Infrastructural Politics of Global Performance*, Transnational Theatre Histories Series (Basingstoke UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, 150.

⁴⁴⁷ Piepmeier, 30.

for *Joan of Arc* is created out of newspaper clippings to provide context to the book. The strips of newspaper, which had been glued to the notebook have disintegrated over time, revealing Warren's name handwritten in the top-centre of the page. The notebook suggests that it was used as a school notebook. The newspaper clippings and images that have been pasted signals her economic status, as newspapers were more accessible to girls of all classes. The lack of theatre programs and ticket stubs in this particular book indicates that she did not attend any of the Harvard performances but instead followed the star's career closely. In knowing that Warren is from New Jersey, it becomes viable to extrapolate from her scrapbook that she did not travel far to see Adams.

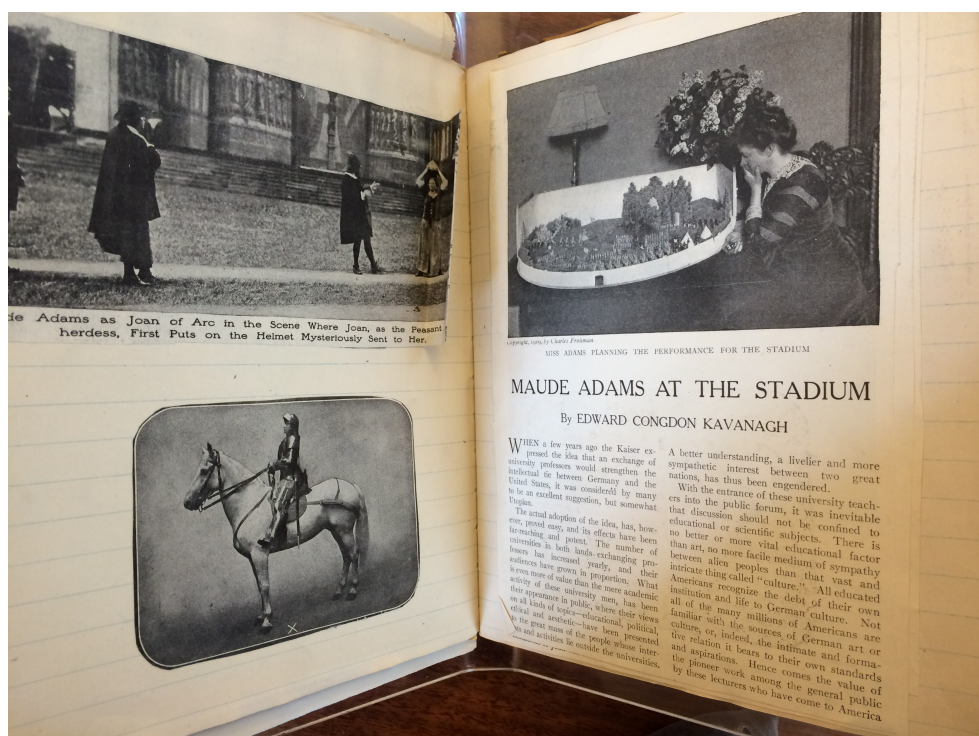
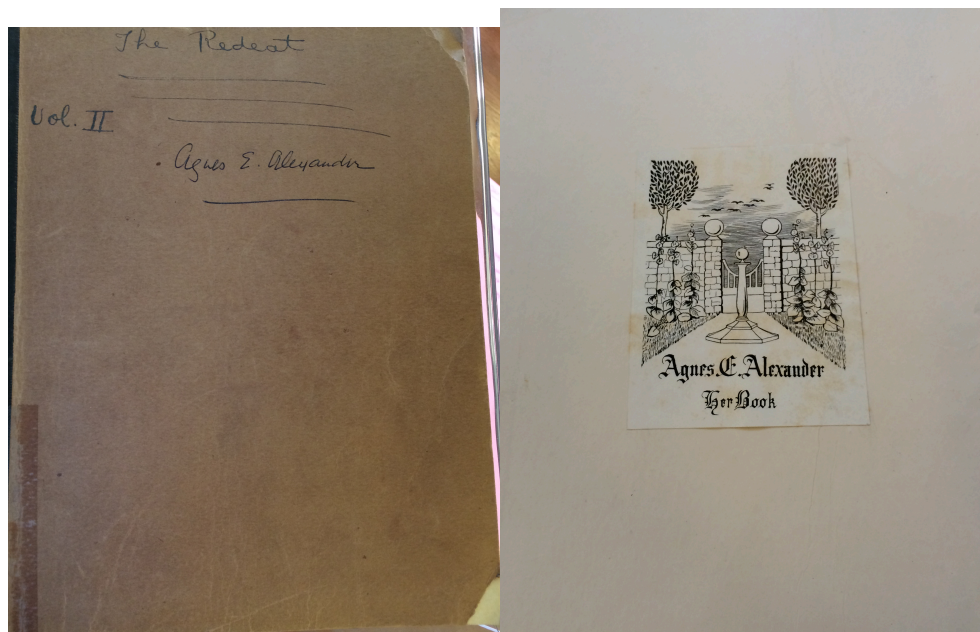


Figure 30: St. Joan of Arc, Mrs. Warren's Collection, Houghton Library.

Some of the articles included in the scrapbook include the titles, "Joan of Arc a Triumph of Art: Before 15,000 People in the Stadium Maude Adams Reaches Height of Dramatic Career" to "Maude Adams' Joan A Sublime Spectacle." Each carefully chosen article only

includes raving reviews of Adams, which suggest that the articles were carefully chosen and likely reflected the creator's own thoughts about the star.

Agnes E. Alexander



The Maid of Orleans	
1. Names are getting scarce, goan!	
2. A fragile and ethereal creature	
3. No new vehicles needed at present	
4. The evidence of a photographer	
1. Joy for readers in the West!	
2. Child actresses	
3. A visitor expected	
4. Money matters	
5. Definite arrangements	
6. A week at the Montauk Brooklyn	
7. Touring in "What Every Woman Knows"	
1. Brooklyn criticism	
2. Of de Jopnowski's painting of Peter Pan	
3. English Plans again!	
4. It might have been	
5. Late - only one minute!	
1. Touring whereabouts	
2. Diversed Opinions	
3. Miss Adams to return	
4. Touring Whereabouts	
5. The haziness of the "Star system"	
6. Touring Whereabouts	
7. Advance Sales	
8. About that stadium play	
1. Outright Christmas gifts	
2. Next Saturday night!	
3. The comedy that needs no introduction	

Figure 31: Vol II of Alexander's scrapbook.

The second set of scrapbooks that I examine are by fan Agnes E. Alexander. Curated as a book on Adams, Alexander provides a contents page that includes the titles of all the collected

articles and page numbers, making it easier for the compiler to find the article. Each volume includes about a year's worth of articles including performance reviews and general clippings on Maude Adams. Each book contains between thirty-nine and fifty titles. This was a long-term project that points to the way that loyal and devoted fans like Alexander kept track of what was being written about their favourite stars. Presumably they were also avid readers of local and national newspapers. This scrapbook is indicative of the ways matinee girls consumed and actively participated in popular culture. The title: "The Redeat" in three volumes shows the importance of these texts to the girl who collected the material. By providing a title, organized text and images, and even a table of contents shows the care and time girls put into each of their books. These scrapbooks became thoughtful representations of fans relationships to their celebrity idols.

As such, these examples reveal both matinee girls' fan practices as well as how they actively participated in celebrity and fan culture.⁴⁴⁸ These fan practices, in the form of curating and creating scrapbooks can be examined as "artifacts of personal identity."⁴⁴⁹ Through the carefully chosen articles and images posted in scrapbooks, the historian can begin to understand the fan's relationship to the star, and to the theatre in general. In my examination of these scrapbooks, it is clear that Adams' fans were actively following her career through their scrapbooks, whether or not they were present at all of her performances they continued to collect any information on Adams. They pasted reviews, interviews, postcards, ticket stubs, and at times wrote little notes to establish their agency in this culture.

⁴⁴⁸ Katherine Ott, Susan Ticket, and Patricia P. Buckler, "An Introduction to the History of Scrapbooks." *The Scrapbook in American Life*, eds. Susan Ticket, Katherine Ott, and Patricia P. Bucklet (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006), 3.

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid.

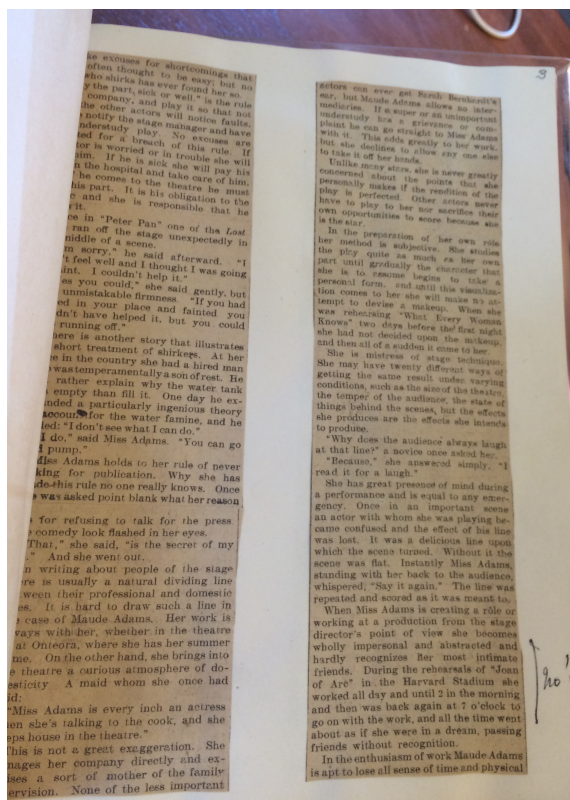


Figure 32: Alexander's scrapbook, Vol. III.

Volume III of the "Redeat" series includes articles from 14 January 1910 to 28 January 1911, and approximately forty-eight articles. Some pages include play and performance reviews such as "Peter Pan, What Every Woman Knows" and "Romeo and Juliet." Other pages feature articles on Adams' offstage life; these include titles such as, "Yale Opinions, The Real Maude Adams," "An attraction of the First Magnitude," "Fresh From my Watch Pocket," "What Boston Thought of her and her Play," among others. Although not much is known about the compiler's life, she did choose articles that shed light on the actress's life on and off stage indicating a fascination with Adams as a young woman more than Adams as a celebrity. Alexander's voice comes through particularly on page three in an article "The Real Maude Adams" as the journalist writes,

When Miss Adams is creating a role, or working at a production from the stage director's point of view she becomes wholly impersonal and abstracted and hardly

recognizes her most intimate friends. During the rehearsals of “Joan of Arc” in the Harvard Stadium she worked all day and until 2 in the morning and then was back again at 7 o’clock to go on with the work, and all the time went about as if she were in a dream, passing friends without recognition.

Next to this excerpt is a handwritten “no!” indicating that Alexander disagreed with the journalist’s opinions of Adams (Figure 32). While the article delves into the difficult and treacherous work of the actress who rehearsed all day and committed herself to her art, the journalist also claims that Adams dismissed her friends and those closest to her due to the constraints of the theatre. This little handwritten note reveals that the compiler was an avid reader. While she may have enjoyed reading about Adam’s commitment to the stage, Alexander had her own opinion of the actress, one that was not shared with this particular journalist. Clippings that were chosen to be part of scrapbooks were prioritized and given greater importance. For example, the importance of Adams’ commitment to her art is relevant and important to the curator.

In discussing women’s engagement with newspaper clippings, Alison Piepmeier states that suffragist and journalist Ida Harper’s scrapbook in 1912 and Danielle Bustian’s zine in 1993 have similarities in their structure. In reading her examination of both of these women’s creative books, I see similarities to Alexander’s use of structure. Piepmeier states that by “remov[ing] the clipping from its original context and, by placing it in their own publication, [they] take control over it.”⁴⁵⁰ Scrapbooks allowed girls to recreate and take control over the narrative of their favourite star. In writing “marginal notes in their own handwriting to correct what they see as misrepresentations or disrespect and, in so doing, put their voices into

⁴⁵⁰ Alison Piepmeier, *Girl Zines: Making Media, Doing Feminism*, (New York: NYU Press, 2009), 163.

conversation with the mainstream media.”⁴⁵¹ This applies to Alexander’s “no!” which I interpret as a way that she sought to interject her own thoughts into the larger mainstream discussion of Adams. In drawing from Piepmeier’s discussion of the visual difference in the typeset newsprint to the handwriting of the creator, which adds authenticity to their voices, these texts continue to live on in memories and scrapbooks.

Through scrapbooking, Adams’ fans shaped and cultivated their shared love for the actress and built a community for themselves. In sharing and exchanging scrapbooks, matinee girls were actively engaging and connecting with the star in their own homes. Additionally, Peipmeier calls the act of creating such books (either in the form of scrapbooks or zines) an “embodied community” because of its use of “material artifacts.”⁴⁵² She suggests that although individual women documenting their experiences independently, “each woman uses her artifacts to communicate and connect with a broader community of women.”⁴⁵³ Also noteworthy is Amy Mecklenburg-Faenger interpretation that “These scrapbook collections of ‘rare gems’ were meant to be shared with other people, and scrapbooking often, although not always, was constructed as a communal activity. That is, scrapbooks were not understood as private documents, but as artifacts meant to be shared with others.”⁴⁵⁴ In taking this into consideration, it is not surprising that scrapbooking was a shared activity that defined the matinee girl’s identity – since matinee girls were already defined by their social activities, including attending the theatre together and

⁴⁵¹ Ibid.

⁴⁵² Ibid.

⁴⁵³ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid.

congregating at soda shops after a performance. The culture of female fandom was informed by a sense of community.

Christine M. Houghton

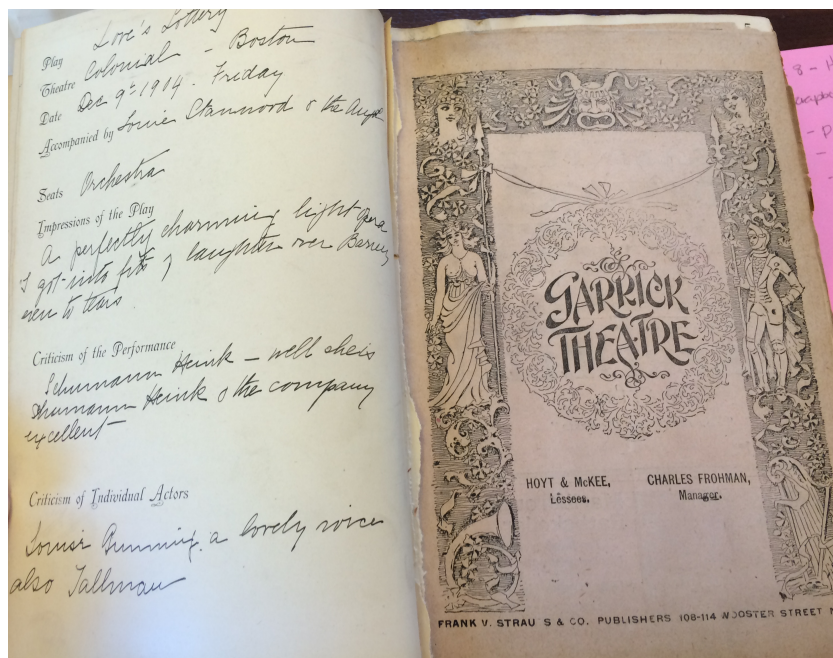


Figure 33: Christine Houghton Scrapbook, Maude Adams Collection.

Finally, the third matinee scrapbook belongs to Christine Houghton which can be considered “purpose built”, one that was commercially sold and meant to record specific moments of one’s experience, usually referred to as Theatre Record Books. The scrapbook can be leather bound and has headings on each page to guide the author. These commercially sold books point to the popularity of theatrical scrapbooking during the period.⁴⁵⁵ In this specific example the compiler uses the headings in the book to describe her theatre experience and her thoughts about the actors and the performance. The headings include: *Play, Theatre, Date,*

⁴⁵⁵ Marcus, “Theatrical Scrapbooks.”

Accompanies By, Seats, Impressions of the Play, Criticism of Performance, Criticism of Individual Actors. Each of these subheadings allow the scrapbooker to be an active audience member (Figure 33).

This type of scrapbook scripts or shapes the fan experience by using headings to direct and guide the curator, even educating the creator on what to care about and which important details should be documented. While Houghton does follow the headings for the most part, she also disregards others. In one example, she writes down the Broadway opera, *Love's Lottery*, performed in Boston in 1904. She handwrites the date she attends: 1904 Dec 09 and under *Accompanied by* she writes, "Lorrie Stannord & the group." She writes *Criticism of Performance*: "A perfectly charming light opera" and "laughter over Barney near to tears."⁴⁵⁶ Under *Criticism of Performance*, she writes "Schumann-Heink and company excellent."⁴⁵⁷ In *Criticism of Actors* "Louise Gunning a lovely voice also Tallman."⁴⁵⁸ This first page reveals a few things about the author and matinee girls in general. It notes the importance of community, as she attends in a "group" of presumably other girls. It also suggests that while these books were scripted she took the agency to write her own impressions rather than follow the suggestion to critique.

⁴⁵⁶ She is referring to actor Barney O'Toole.

⁴⁵⁷ Referencing actress Ernestine Schumann-Heink.

⁴⁵⁸ Referencing George L. Tallman.



Figure 34: Houghton Library, Maude Adams Collection

Moving on from the first page, Miss Houghton's scrapbook includes ticket stubs and handwritten notes alongside clippings, sections of programs that have been cut, and images of performers she saw, and notes on whom she attended the theatre. Carefully curated on one of the pages are three images, a list of cast and characters, a synopsis of the scene and handwritten notes on each image indicating which act they are from. "Boston. January 10, '14 Tremont Theatre - Went with all the girls from School - Sat. evening" is handwritten next to images of Ethel Barrymore in "Tante" (Figure 34). Her access to the theatre seems to be more than the other two scrapbookers, signaling Houghton's class background and temporal access to leisure.

Ethel Barrymore, like Adams, was adored by many theatre-loving girls. Barrymore's career spanned six decades. She was born in 1879 to a matinee idol, Maurice Barrymore and a comedienne Georgina Emma Drew Barrymore. Her maternal grandparents were comedian John Drew and actress-manager Louisa Lane Drew, whose parents and grandparents had also been

performers. She was raised by her grandmother, manager of the Arch Street Theatre in Philadelphia and was the niece of matinee idol and prominent actor John Drew Jr. She appeared in performances with Ellen Terry and Sir Henry Irving, and was a protégé of Charles Frohman. According to Barbara Smitherman and Carol Hurd Green in *Notable American Women: The Modern Period: a Biographical Dictionary*, “Barrymore broke the Empire Theatre House record with 200 sold-out performances, made a sensation on tour and then played another season in New York.”⁴⁵⁹ Barrymore was adored by many and made a significant mark on early twentieth century Broadway theatre.

Barrymore’s appearance in Houghton’s scrapbooks indicates that this particular scrapbook was not dedicated to one particular star but instead served to document the plays that Miss Houghton attended. Her recording of the dates and who she goes to see the performances with tells us that there was a community or sub-culture of young women who accompanied each other to the theatre. In the case of Houghton, it is known that she attends school, possibly high school or college, which likely means she was young, possibly in her mid-late teens, and from a middle-class family. Some scrapbooks, such as this one, become visual diaries of the experiences of fans. The images, which are glued to the page, include one of Barrymore playing the piano with a handwritten note identifying that it was in Act IV of *Tante*; a list of characters; a small side profile of Barrymore and a larger image of two actresses; again, in handwriting she states that the scene is from Act II.

Postcards

Postcard collecting and sending was significant to matinee girl fan culture. Postcards were

⁴⁵⁹ Barbara Smitherman, Carol Hurd Green, *Notable American Women: The Modern Period: A Biographical Dictionary* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1980), 59.

easily accessible and relatively inexpensive to purchase and mail. They were either collected or exchanged. In fact, Gillian, Hall, and Glifford, note that the postcard became so popular that it infiltrated post offices. “The frenzy of postcard giving and receiving reached a crescendo sometime around 1909 to 1910, by which time staggering numbers of holiday postcards, literally billions, were clogging the mails.”⁴⁶⁰ Postcard sending became a “fad.” The case of Warren and her friend Miss Pauline, who sent her a postcard without a message or note, suggests that the girls likely collected and exchanged postcards with one another. It only cost one cent for a postage stamp, making it affordable for girls of all classes to take part in purchasing these items.⁴⁶¹ According to Kelly, “Collectors, then as now, have a keen eye for the market value of postcards as exchangeable commodities as well as symbolic gifts.”⁴⁶² Kelly suggests that postcard collectors did not rest until they collected every possible image of their favourite star, “thus, driving and appropriating mass consumer culture at the turn of the century.”⁴⁶³ The theatre encouraged the collecting of postcards by providing them for free at some performances with a beautiful image of the star. According to Kelly, “[t]hese star images are *familiarized* – selected, purchased, inscribed, compared, contrasted, assessed, classified, hunted down, swapped, and collected.”⁴⁶⁴ In addition, this popularity was used by impresarios to receive feedback on performances.

⁴⁶⁰ Daniel Glifford, *American Holiday Postcards, 1905-1919: Imagery and Context*. (London: McFarland & Co. 2013), 81.

⁴⁶¹ Schweitzer, *Transatlantic Broadway*, 176.

⁴⁶² Kelly 105.

⁴⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

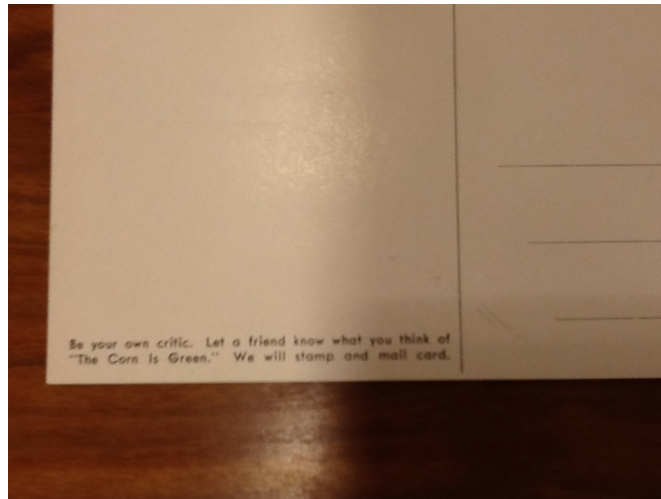


Figure 35: Postcard found at the Harry Ransom Center (Sarah Bernhardt Collection)
 “Be your own critic. Let a friend know what you think of ‘The Corn Is Green.’ We will stamp and mail card.”



Figure 36: Postcard found at the Harry Ransom Center (Sarah Bernhardt Collection)
 “Hand this card to an usher. We will stamp and mail it.”

In the performance of “The Corn in Green,” a postcard was offered to audience members inviting them to provide their thoughts. The text on the card reads: “Be your own critic. Let a friend know what you think of ‘The Corn Is Green.’ We will stamp and mail card” (Figure 35). Another example reads, “Hand this card to an usher. We will stamp and mail it” (Figure 36). These postcards could have been used as an early form of audience survey or they could have been a strategy to get more matinee girls to attend shows by sending their friends a postcard. The popularity of the postcard, between young women, is established in the theatre’s attempt to gather insight or possibly encourage a larger audience by using a familiar item.

The postcard was a public document that was exposed to the public and read by anyone who came across it (i.e. postal office employees). Glifford's research indicates that the public act of sending postcards were "public affirmations ... known to be (indeed meant to be) seen by others. Postcards were mutually reassuring messages between a network or community looking to make larger claims that their vision, their beliefs, and their values were supreme."⁴⁶⁵ He suggests that these public conversations were empowering.⁴⁶⁶ As such, the private lives of matinee girls were made public not only in their attending matinee shows, taking up space in soda/drug shops, filling up the urban sidewalks of New York, but also by the act of writing and sending postcards where post office employees had insight into their private messages.

The postcard, like the scrapbook sheds light into the intimate thoughts of girls. Kelly suggests, "one enters the world of women" when examining the intimate details in the postcard. In addition, Schweitzer in *Transatlantic Broadway* notes, "In response to the renewed accessibility of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century postcards via online auction sites like eBay, theatre historians have embraced postcards as historical sources for the study of fan behaviour and the production of celebrity culture."⁴⁶⁷ In addition, drawing on Sarah Bay-Cheng's important work in the area, Schweitzer notes, "Today many theatre-goers participate in and extend performance events through blogging, tweeting, and other social media. In so doing, they not only shape and reshape the performance event for themselves but also invite friends, family

⁴⁶⁵ Glifford, 81.

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁷ Schweitzer, *Transatlantic*, 151.

and other contacts to participate in that event via their own mediated performances.”⁴⁶⁸ In thinking about the ways in which fans today use social media to engage in performances, the use of postcards at the turn of the century was a platform used to “shape and reshape” their experiences of attending the theatre. While social media provides a sense of community for theatre-goers today, the importance of a public community and the sharing of information can be traced by examining the ways in which scrapbooks and postcards were used between matinee girls.

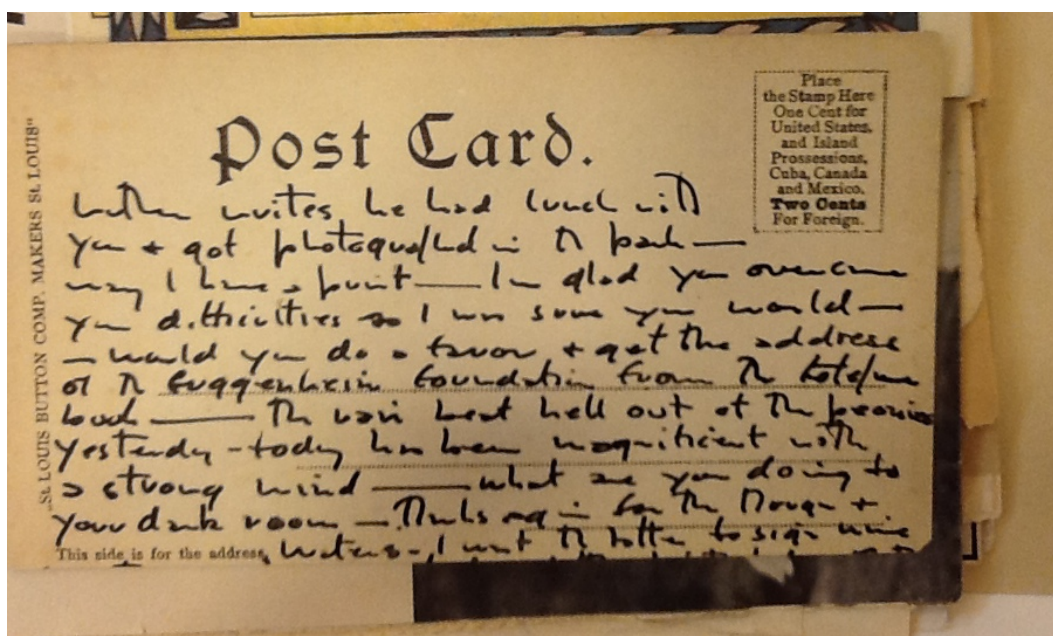


Figure 37: Postcard from Sarah Bernhardt Collection at the Harry Ransom Center

A postcard of Sarah Bernhardt from the Sarah Bernhardt Collection at the Harry Ransom Center contains a personal note from the sender who writes about her day. While the handwriting is difficult to read, she says, “I’m glad you overcame your difficulties so I was sure you would –

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid.

would you do a favor and get the address of the Guggenheim Foundation from the hotel you booked—The rain beat hell out of the peonies yesterday – today has been magnificent with strong wind - What are you doing to your dark room?” (Figure 37). According to Gillen and Hall, “The very way that the limited space of the card is used demonstrates choice.”⁴⁶⁹ Unlike the letter, girls had to carefully choose how they took up space on the postcard. Gillen and Hall highlight, “one of the most significant aspects of this text is how it vividly demonstrates the ways in which postcards sustain personal relationships. Each of the sentences, while brief and unrelated to surrounding sentences, nevertheless affirms the relationship between the writer and the receiver.”⁴⁷⁰ In addition, “postcards are generally used as a quick and relatively easy way to maintain and solidify social relations with other people.”⁴⁷¹ The postcard was also a quick and easy way to get information. Gillen and Hall note that there were several deliveries per day in major cities, therefore, getting important information to a friend or relative was arguably quick and easy with a postcard. In the previous example, the sender wants directions from the hotel to the museum. She also uses the opportunity to update her friend on the latest events in her life and asks her about her plans with the front room. Nonetheless, the postcard was a popular way of communicating with and maintaining one’s social network.

Fan Art and Ephemera: From Bookmarks to Prints

The production of fan art, including scrapbooks, bookmarks and drawings, is instrumental to the ways in which matinee girls engaged with celebrities and theatre culture. “How do the

⁴⁶⁹ Gillen, J. & Hall, N., “Edwardian Postcards: Illuminating Ordinary Writing” in D. Barton & U. Papen (eds.), *The Anthropology of Writing*, 176.

⁴⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 179.

⁴⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 182.

pleasures of viewing and of handcrafting intersect? How fan audiences respond to popular culture is important here. Audiences are not only active users of media but also, and particularly in the context of media fandom and fan cultures, producers of additions to the text,” notes Cherry.⁴⁷² While Cherry explores the fan practice of knitting, her theoretical approach is applicable to my examination of the particular types of handicrafts or fan art that were created by matinee girls.

First, fan art brings the actress/character into the homes and private lives of the fan. Cherry notes, “Fan handcrafting is framed in terms of participatory culture within which fans can be seen playing with the text, extending it, rewording it to suit their own desires and interest, and building communities around their fan production.”⁴⁷³ Through my exploration of fan scrapbooks, I encountered a number of different production texts that were created by matinee girls. In addition, Henry Jenkins’ research on participatory practices of fan culture, and the extensive work done on fan production, has been recognized by scholars such as Camille Bacon-Smith and Lisa Lewis, among others. His work provides the theoretical underpinnings necessary to position the practices of the matinee girl as fan production.

⁴⁷² Cherry, *Cult Media, Fandom, and Textiles: Handicrafting as Fan Art*, 3.

⁴⁷³ *Ibid.*, 11.



Figure 38: A handmade bookmark found in a scrapbook in the Maude Adams Collection, Houghton Library

The first fan art I examine is a handmade bookmark with red and yellow embroidery. The words “Peter Pan” and “Maude Adams” were sewed onto the bookmark with yarn. It was then taped onto the scrapbook. This bookmark reflects the marquee outside the theatre, as if the creator was bringing the neon lights of Broadway into their home (Figure 38). This object, which took time to design and sew, points to the types of activities that girls participated in and the ways they were producing fan art. They created objects that were inspired by their experiences in public, integrating public and private into their homes.



Figure 39: Drawings by Matinee Girls of Maude Adams, found at the Houghton Library, Maude Adams Collection.

These drawings of Adams, one dressed as Peter Pan, the other a portrait of the star, demonstrate the way the creator interacted with celebrity culture. Both drawings are beautifully designed and provide insight into how Adams' fans saw her. Her portrait depicts a poised and attractive woman whose soft gaze looks directly at the creator. It is a drawing of someone who is admired and adored. As such, these drawings can be seen as examples of how Adams' fans interacted with the star and brought her into their home, continuing to engage with the celebrity and performance well after its closing.

Conclusion

To conclude, the scrapbook and fan art allowed fans to express their own ideas through the arrangement and collection of print into the scrapbook. They offer examples of how matinee girls responded to their experiences, ultimately producing material objects that were inspired by Broadway and celebrity culture. Girls purchased cheaper afternoon tickets to performances and

presumably spent time thinking about the star and the performance, shaping and reshaping their experiences by creating and curating scrapbooks, collecting and sending postcards, and producing art. Like social media today, the scrapbook and the production of creative objects allowed girls and young women to interact, share, and actively engage with culture.

Moreover, the types of fan art reveal the intense desire to be pleased as a distinct feature of matinee girl culture during this period. The matinee girl attended the theatre to gaze at the stars on stage while she consumed sweet treats, exciting her senses simultaneously. I also want to point to her erotic desire towards male and female actors. The matinee girl often went to the theatre, not necessarily for the narrative of the play but to be in the presence of her favourite star. She would document her experiences in scrapbooks, save her ticket stubs, programs, or flower petals that she had given to the star, and collected postcards of her celebrity crush. She neatly wrote out her favourite lines that were recited by the star, her impressions of the star's performance, and saved newspapers that printed the name of her idol. The relationships that were formed in and out of the theatre were rooted in her deep desires.

Conclusion

The Power of Place: From Modern Girlhood to the Contemporary Girl

The term girl has historically been used to denote young women, from its obscure etymology that was first used to identify (genderless) children in the thirteenth-century to its reference to “young animals, children, and all kinds of creatures considered immature, worthless, or past their prime” by the sixteenth century.⁴⁷⁴ While the term continues to shift over time, it remains one associated with lingering fears and tensions. By the nineteenth century, the term girl was used to identify a new modern female identity who was accessing public spaces and making herself both seen and heard. Today, the term is being reclaimed. Of the many pop stars that have become advocates for girls’ voices, Beyoncé points to the importance of girls having a place in the world.

The concept of place is a powerful one. At the turn of the century matinee girls made themselves heard and established a presence by occupying public spaces. This idea of place and space has been explored by a number of girlhood experts, including Carrie Rentschler and Claudia Mitchell who note, “Place is a stage and practice of power; it is also the site of great pleasures and possibilities for girls.”⁴⁷⁵ From the matinee girl and the movie-struck girl to social media activists today, girls and young women are taking action and publicly announcing their need for a place of their own. In addition, Rentschler and Mitchell’s “The Significance of Place in Girlhood Studies” draws on the work of a number of scholars including cultural geographers to understand the politics of place. For instance, Timothy Cresswell asserts that “Experience is at

⁴⁷⁴ www.etymonline.com, accessed 27 September 2017.

⁴⁷⁵ Claudia Mitchell and Carrie Rentschler (Eds.), “Introduction: The Significance of Place in Girlhood Studies,” in *Girlhood and the Politics of Place*, Berghahn Books, 2016, 1.

the heart of what place means' because place is something that is practiced and enacted in girls' daily lives."⁴⁷⁶ Doreen Massey and Nigel Thrift note, "'place has become one of the key means by which the social sciences and humanities are attempting to lever open old ways of proceeding and telling new stories about the world,' a world that is deeply marked and territorialized around lived experiences of gender, race, sexuality, class, age, citizenship, and other social differences, privileges, and oppressions."⁴⁷⁷ As such, in examining "place" it illustrates the world in which (matinee) girls were shaped by and in turn helped to shape.

I introduce contemporary girlhood scholarship to demonstrate the importance of looking back and tracing the cultural and economic factors that have helped to shape ideologies of girls and the politics of place. Rentschler and Mitchell claim that the idea of place, in particular geography, is "a contentious reality that shapes girls' lives; girls and young women struggle to assert their rights to territory and autonomous spaces, to represent their experiences of belonging to and relating with others in key spaces of learning, working, playing, consuming, and, as Mary Thomas argues, *hanging out* in the city."⁴⁷⁸ I draw from and build on this concept of place to explore how place is and has been crucial for girls to express themselves, both as a stage of life as well as the importance of particular spaces. Through the examination of matinee girls we can better understand the world in which the emergence of girlhood and female fandom as categories were shaped. As such, I wish to provide the historical material necessary to understand the shifts that have occurred over the centuries.

⁴⁷⁶ qtd. in Mitchell and Rentschler (Eds.), "Introduction: The Significance of Place in Girlhood Studies," in *Girlhood and the Politics of Place*, 1.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid.

The idea of place as an important aspect for girls first emerged almost four decades ago in Angela McRobbie and Jenny Garber's study on bedroom culture. In their groundbreaking work, "Girls and Subcultures," McRobbie and Garber suggest that "the important question may not be the absence or presence of girls in male subcultures, but the complementary ways in which young girls interact among themselves and with each other to form a distinctive culture of their own."⁴⁷⁹ In addition, girls have drawn from the bedroom culture to create what is now considered "digital bedrooms"⁴⁸⁰—virtual places that girls occupy such as websites, blogs, and social networks including Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, or YouTube to engage in digital technology. In addition, this has created a gendered digital divide while also fashioning girls' online communication and girl-oriented activism. More and more young women are taking up digital spaces and using these spaces to actively produce their own cultures. The increasing amount of cultural production by female adolescents can be understood as a distinguishing characteristic of early girlhood culture.

My contribution to the scholarship on girls is twofold: it unpacks the systemic barriers that modern girls faced in their agency and autonomy as they entered urban spaces, and it provides examples of the ways in which girls actively participated in culture, shaping and reshaping notions of girlhood through their public acts of attending the theatre, creating fan art, chewing loudly, and taking up physical and aural spaces. Most importantly, it provides examples of how matinee girls used the idea of place to make themselves both seen and heard.

⁴⁷⁹ Angela McRobbie and Jenny Garber, "Girls and Subcultures," in *Feminism and Youth Culture: From Jackie to Just Seventeen*, ed. Angela McRobbie (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1991), 11.

⁴⁸⁰ Mitchell, Claudia A. and Jacqueline Reid-Walsh (eds). *Girl Culture: An Encyclopedia. Volume I*. London: Greenwood Press, 2008: 17-24.

In providing a history of the ways in which matinee girls cultivated a public culture of female fandom, one that engages with and participates in popular entertainment, an understanding of the importance of place is established through this historical lens. My research on the matinee girl reveals the ways in which New York City's popular media shaped narratives around girls and female fandom. It was through their fan practices that matinee girls created a community where "their experiences of belonging to and relating with others" were shared between other theatre-loving girls.⁴⁸¹ By looking back at the matinee girl as one of the first public female fans in America, the importance of place for girls—from scrapbooking as a place to engage with and document experiences at the turn of the twentieth century, to the bedroom culture which was introduced in the 1970s, and now digital and virtual spaces that are paramount to the experiences of contemporary girlhood—becomes crucial to the understanding of female fan culture. While the place shifts through time, it has continued to be crucial to the advancement and identities of girls.

While the voices of girls at the turn of the century—including matinee, stage- and movie-struck girls—continue to be undervalued today, the nuances of girl culture and the places to "loudly proclaim" continues to be contested. Shortly after the January 2017 Inauguration of US President Donald Trump, twenty-five-year-old Brooklyn based *Teen Vogue* columnist Lauren Duca published "Donald Trump is Gaslighting America," which garnered her rise to popularity. In this piece, she argues that fashion and politics are not mutually exclusive and that girls and young women should have a place to speak to both. While Duca was eminently celebrated for her progressive approach to writing politics for girls and young women, she was also publicly

⁴⁸¹ Ibid.

debased for her articles. Fox News' *Tucker Carlson Tonight Show* hosted Duca and suggested that her articles in *Teen Vogue* on celebrities and fashion discredited her from writing about politics. He criticized her political statements and stated, "You should stick to the thigh-high boots, you're better at that." Politely, Duca responded, "A woman can love Ariana Grande and her thigh-high boots and still discuss politics," a theme she has cultivated in her recent articles, including her column, "Thigh High Politics."⁴⁸² While I don't want to suggest that this moment is comparative to the narratives around matinee girls, I do want to highlight a fascinating similarity: the fear of girls' voices in public spaces and an attempt to devalue their contribution in society continues to shape public discourse.

Duca's disappointing interview with Carlson, points to a larger issue in understanding what kinds of discussions and public acts are socially acceptable in public spaces by girls, both historically and currently. Duca has said that this exchange speaks to the ways in which girls and young women "have been denied their voice in the political dialogue."⁴⁸³ Tucker's treatment of Duca writing about political matters in a teen magazine led *Teen Vogue* establishing a space for regular political dialogue called "Thigh High Politics." "Thigh High Politics" is a place for girls to understand and participate in current political discussions; a space that also cultivates and celebrates girls' voices. While this incident is fueled with its own twenty-first century complexities and politics, I use it as an example of the importance for girls to "loudly proclaim their needs and rights to places for and as girls" without the discrimination of *concerned* male

⁴⁸² Edward Helmore, "Fashion versus Trump: 'Women Can Love Thigh High Boots and Still Talk Politics,'" *The Guardian*, 29 Jan 2017.

⁴⁸³ *Ibid.*

critics.⁴⁸⁴

While the matinee girl's voice has (for the most part) been excluded from serious scholarly and historical examinations, it is significant to understand its influence on contemporary girlhood and fandom. "The Matinee Girl" column, for example, provides a space to explore the issues that girls faced, including rental properties, labour injustices, and the condescending response to women's public opinions by male critics. "The Matinee Girl" column establishes a place where stereotypes on girls are contested and challenged. The authors provide an intelligent, provocative and at times political frame to understand the nuances of modern girlhood. While the importance of place for girls to create and collect memorabilia, or to write in their scrapbooks or read columns, was instrumental to the culture of girlhood, the idea of place as an academic study can be traced back to early studies of girls.

In each of my chapters I attempt to demonstrate how place was crucial to matinee girls. The matinee girl was one of the first public female identities that emerged in New York City with the rise of the "girl fad." She helped pave the road for girls' access to public spaces and helped to establish the importance of leisure activities. Young adolescent girls were using their new identities as modern girls to challenge notions of femininity, from eating and chewing in public to pleasuring themselves with a pretty boxes of chocolate bonbons at the theatre. This new identity raised as much curiosity as it did fear. The matinee girl represented a changing society. Postcards featuring the matinee girl alone with her companion—a box of chocolate bonbons—were sold, and poems and stories about her public disruptions were regularly published in journalistic accounts. However, along with curiosity came real concerns and tensions, and articles were

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid.

published instructing the public how to identify the matinee girl and distinguish her by class. It was important that the shabby, wage-earning girl be marked differently from the middle- or the upper-class girl.

Finally, when thinking about the influence of girls in popular culture, Mitchell and Jacqueline Reid-Walsh, in their introduction to *Girl Culture: An Encyclopedia*, note that girls' culture is continually under construction and the "shifting meanings girls bring to their engagement with popular culture must be respected."⁴⁸⁵ While some have criticized girls for being passive consumers who participate in low culture, it is evident that girls have been making their own meanings whether through consumption or production, and actively taking up spaces to produce their own culture. While the term "girl" is always shifting, it does maintain a set of performative practices and specific "places" that have and continue to shape the identities of girls.

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid.

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