



**The True, New, Newer, Not-So-New, and Blue Woman  
Onstage in American Painting,  
1880-1940**

Melanie N. Enderle

A dissertation  
submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

University of Washington  
2012

Reading Committee:

Susan P. Casteras, Chair  
Margaret Laird  
Stuart Lingo

Program Authorized to Offer Degree:  
Art History

University of Washington

**ABSTRACT**

The True, New, Newer, Not-So-New, and Blue Woman  
Onstage in American Painting,  
1880-1940

Melanie N. Enderle

Chair of the Supervisory Committee:  
Professor Susan P. Casteras  
Art History

Much information concerning the trajectory of the New Woman in American society can be gathered by studying paintings of theatrical scenes centered on female performers in New York City from the years of the Victorian era through the decade of the Great Depression. This dissertation concentrates primarily on the work of male artists whose canvases recorded not only the evolution of popular entertainment, but also revelatory transformations in the status of women in society during those years. This study begins with two of the leading proponents of American realism, Thomas Eakins and Robert Henri, and continues with four artists they influenced: Everett Shinn, Walt Kuhn, Reginald Marsh, and Edward Hopper. Their work also reflects their own reactions to America's changing cultural environment as gender barriers collapsed and women gained more power and determination over their own lives. These images of actresses, singers, and showgirls provide clues to the continuing momentum of women's accomplishments as they overcame the impediments of economic hardship and traditional chauvinistic values concerning women in general, and in particular, against women who seemingly debased themselves by performing onstage.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
List of Figures.....	ii
Introduction.....	1
Chapter One The Well-Performed Ideal of the True Woman.....	44
Chapter Two The Newer Woman Setting the Stage.....	71
Chapter Three Acting Up in the London Music Hall.....	92
Chapter Four Taking the Spectacle Seriously.....	107
Chapter Five The Newer Woman in the Audience.....	126
Chapter Six Gentlemen Spectators in the Wings.....	144
Chapter Seven Cheap Amusements, Chorus Girls, and the Not-So-New Woman....	166
Chapter Eight Moving Violations: Strippers, the Tease, and the Blue Woman.....	184
Chapter Nine The Cinema and the Unsettled Usherette.....	212
Conclusion.....	225
Figures.....	232
Bibliography.....	285

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. "A 'New Woman,'" September 8, 1894, <i>Punch</i> .....	232
2. "What It will Soon Come To," February 24, 1894, <i>Punch</i> .....	232
3. "The New Woman and Her Bicycle – There Will Be Several Varieties of Her," <i>Puck</i> , June 19, 1895, Library of Congress.....	233
4. "She was Certainly a Study, this Girl in Bloomers," from George F. Hall, <i>A Study in Bloomers; or, The Model New Woman</i> , 1895.....	234
5. "The New Woman in Hunting Costume from George F. Hall, <i>A Study</i> <i>in Bloomers; or, The Model New Woman</i> , 1895.....	234
6. Charles Dana Gibson, <i>Gibson's Typical American Girl</i> , 1901.....	235
7. "Modern. Mrs. Newgurl (to daughter) - "Goodness me, Kitty! Don't stand there with your hands in your pockets, that way; - you don't know how ungentlemanly it looks!," <i>Puck</i> , April 17, 1895.....	235
8. Thomas Eakins, <i>Singing a Pathetic Song</i> , 1881.....	236
9. Thomas Eakins, <i>The Concert Singer</i> , 1890-92.....	236
10. Robert Henri, <i>Jessica Penn in Black with White Plumes</i> , 1908.....	237
11. Robert Henri, <i>Salome</i> , 1909.....	238
12. Robert Henri, <i>Ruth St. Denis in the Peacock Dance</i> , 1919.....	238
13. Walter Sickert, <i>Little Dot Hetherington at the Bedford Music Hall</i> , 1888-89...	239
14. Walter Sickert, <i>Minnie Cunningham at the Old Bedford</i> , 1892.....	239
15. Everett Shinn, <i>Revue</i> , 1908.....	240
16. Everett Shinn, <i>In the Loge</i> , 1903.....	241
17. Everett Shinn, <i>The Rehearsal</i> , ca. 1915.....	241
18. Walt Kuhn, <i>Trude</i> , 1931.....	242
19. Walt Kuhn, <i>Plumes</i> , 1931.....	242
20. Reginald Marsh, <i>Down at Jimmy Kelly's</i> , 1936.....	243
21. Edward Hopper, <i>Girlie Show</i> , 1941.....	243
22. Edward Hopper, <i>New York Movie</i> .....	244
23. Reginald Marsh, <i>Usherette</i> , 1939.....	244
24. John Singer Sargent, <i>Lady Agnew of Lochnaw</i> , 1892.....	245
25. Thomas Eakins, <i>Frances Eakins</i> , ca. 1870.....	246
26. Thomas Eakins, <i>Elizabeth at the Piano</i> , 1875.....	246
27. John Singer Sargent, <i>La Carmencita</i> , 1890.....	247
28. William Merritt Chase, <i>Carmencita</i> , 1890.....	247
29. Thomas Eakins, <i>Swimming</i> , 1885.....	248

30. Edgar Degas, <i>Singer with Glove (Chanteuse de Café)</i> , ca. 1878.....	248
31. Thomas Wilmer Dewing, <i>The Piano</i> , 1891.....	249
32. Edgar Degas, <i>Orchestra Musicians</i> . 1870-71.....	249
33. Edgar Degas, <i>The Rehearsal of the Ballet Onstage</i> , ca. 1874.....	250
34. Robert Henri, <i>Young Woman in Yellow Satin</i> , 1907.....	250
35. Robert Henri, <i>Young Woman in Black (Jesseca Penn)</i> , 1902.....	251
36. John Singer Sargent, <i>Mr. and Mrs. Isaac Newton Phelps</i> .....	251
37. Edwin Howland Blashfield, <i>The Evolution of Civilization</i> , 1896-1900.....	252
38. Charles Dana Gibson, <i>Scribner's for June</i> , 1895.....	253
39. Charles Dana Gibson, <i>Stepped On</i> , 1905.....	253
40. Charles Dana Gibson, <i>The Gibson Girl</i> , ca. 1900.....	254
41. Charles Dana Gibson, <i>Head of Girl</i> , ca. 1900.....	254
42. Henri Regnault, <i>Salomé</i> , 1870.....	255
43. Aubrey Beardsley, <i>Salomé</i> , 1907.....	256
44. Aubrey Beardsley, <i>Peacock Dance</i> , 1907.....	256
45. William Hogarth, <i>A Scene from The Beggar's Opera</i> , 1728-29.....	257
46. Walter Sickert, <i>The Old Bedford: Cupid in the Gallery</i> , ca. 1890.....	257
47. William Glackens, <i>I'm So Glad You Found Me. Oh, Take Me Away!</i> , ca. 1901..	258
48. Édouard Manet, <i>Bar at the Folies-Bergères</i> , 1882.....	258
49. Edgar Degas, <i>Cabaret Scene</i> , 1876-77.....	259
50. Everett Shinn, <i>Footlight Flirtation</i> , 1912.....	259
51. Everett Shinn, <i>The Singer</i> , 1902.....	260
52. Everett Shinn, <i>The Monologist</i> , 1910.....	260
53. John Sloan, <i>Sunday Afternoon in Union Square</i> , 1912.....	261
54. John Sloan, <i>Hell Hole</i> , 1917.....	261
55. George Luks, <i>Café Francis</i> , 1906.....	262
56. John Sloan, "The Unemployed" cover for <i>The Masses</i> , March 1913.....	262
57. Pierre Auguste Renoir, <i>At the Theater, The First Outing</i> , 1876-77.....	263
58. Mary Cassatt, <i>The Loge</i> , 1882.....	263
59. Mary Cassatt, <i>Woman with a Pearl Necklace in a Loge</i> , 1879.....	264
60. Mary Cassatt, <i>In the Loge</i> , 1878.....	264
61. Everett Shinn, <i>Broadway: Late in the Afternoon</i> , 1899.....	265
62. Harrison Fisher, "The Spring Fashion Number," <i>The Ladies' Home Journal</i> , March, 1907.....	265
63. "What he saw at the Matinee," <i>Puck</i> , 1880.....	266
64. Everett Shinn, <i>Girl in Red on Stage</i> , ca. 1905.....	266
65. Édouard Manet, <i>The Masked Ball at the Opera</i> , 1873.....	267
66. Pierre Auguste Renoir, <i>Leaving the Conservatoire</i> , 1877.....	267
67. Edgar Degas, <i>Dancers</i> , 1879.....	268
68. Edgar Degas, <i>The Curtain</i> , 1881.....	269
69. Edgar Degas, <i>Dancers, Pink and Green</i> , 1890.....	269

70. Edgar Degas, <i>Pauline and Virginia Conversing with Admirers</i> , 1878.....	270
71. Edgar Degas, <i>Conversation: Ludovic Halévy Speaking with Madame Cardinal</i> , 1876.....	270
72. Jean-Louis Forain, <i>On the Stage</i> , 1912.....	271
73. Jean-Louis Forain, <i>In the Wings</i> , 1899.....	271
74. Jean-Louis Forain, <i>Evening at the Opera</i> , 1879.....	272
75. Jean-Louis Forain, <i>Negotiations in the Wings</i> , ca. 1898.....	272
76. John Singer Sargent, <i>Portrait of Lord Ribblesdale</i> , 1904.....	273
77. Everett Shinn, <i>Matinee, Outdoor Stage, Paris</i> , 1902.....	273
78. Everett Shinn, <i>At the Stage Door</i> , 1915.....	274
79. Everett Shinn, <i>The Magician</i> , 1907.....	274
80. Everett Shinn, <i>London Music Hall</i> 1918.....	275
81. William Glackens, <i>Chez Mouquin</i> , 1905.....	275
82. Letter from Everett Shinn to Poultney Bigelow, November 6, 1928.....	276
83. "Unpleasant Assurance," <i>Puck</i> , April 28, 1897.....	277
84. Jean-Antoine Watteau, <i>Pierrot (formerly known as Gilles)</i> , ca. 1718-19.....	277
85. Reginald Marsh, <i>Striptease at New Gotham</i> , 1935.....	278
86. Reginald Marsh, <i>Gaiety Burlesque</i> , 1930.....	278
87. Reginald Marsh, <i>Minsky's Chorus</i> , 1935.....	279
88. Reginald Marsh, <i>Audience Burlesk</i> , of 1929.....	279
89. Reginald Marsh, <i>Gaiety Burlesque</i> , 1932.....	280
90. Reginald Marsh, <i>Irving Place Burlesk</i> , 1929.....	280
91. Reginald Marsh, <i>Eltinge Follies, Engraving</i> , n.d.....	281
92. Edward Hopper, <i>Two on the Aisle</i> , 1927.....	281
93. Mabel Dwight, <i>The Clinch</i> , 1928.....	282
94. Mabel Dwight, <i>Stick 'Em Up</i> , 1928.....	282
95. John Sloan, <i>Movies, Five Cents</i> , 1907.....	283
96. Edward Hopper, <i>Solitary Figure in a Theatre</i> , ca. 1902.....	283
97. Auguste Rodin, <i>The Thinker</i> , 1902.....	284

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the faculty and staff of the History of Art Department at the University of Washington who have supported and guided me during my endeavor to complete this dissertation. These include the Professors I studied under, the members of my committee, the administrative staff, my colleagues, and especially my advisor, Dr. Susan Casteras for her countless hours of guidance and encouragement – I truly believe that I could not have found a better mentor.

I am grateful and honored to have received awards which enabled me to travel to complete my research. These include: the Parnassus Excellence in Teaching Award, the Allan and Mary Kollar Fellowship, the Boyer & Elizabeth Gonzales Scholarship, the De Cilla Teaching with Excellence Award, the Luce American Art Research Grant, the Award for Excellence and Innovation, and UW Research and Recognition Award.

I would also like to acknowledge the encouragement of my family including my parents and brothers in Texas, my sisters in Seattle who aided me in countless ways, and my mother-in-law in France for her detailed proofreading.

And, of course, I would never have achieved this milestone in my life without the love and support of my husband, Daniel, who I was lucky enough to have met during my first week of college as an undergraduate. Our first substantial conversation occurred when he flipped open my brand-new copy of *Gardner's Art Through the Ages* and showed me his favorite page. Two lines from Shakespeare encapsulate our romance:

“Whoever loved who loved not at first sight?”  
and  
“More than enough am I that vex thee still.”

## **DEDICATION**

To my parents, Fred and Myra Nichols, a couple of  
childhood sweethearts from Jacksboro, Texas.

## INTRODUCTION

The shifting balance of power between the sexes in American society during the latter years of the nineteenth century and the first part of the twentieth century changed perceptions of proper feminine appearance and codes of behavior. During the span of the sixty years between 1880 and 1940, women increasingly filled roles traditionally held by men and challenged the assumptions of patriarchal power. These years witnessed the emergence of an evolving succession of different female role models. Some gradual stages of progress in women's efforts to gain more equal status with men can be identified by considering various exemplary female figures featured in literature and the arts. Because men dominated most fields of endeavor, many of these images of women were created by male writers and artists and therefore sometimes reflect biases and points of view common to men of their time. This dissertation examines sixty years of images produced by male artists of female entertainers and discusses them as nominative milestones along the path of American women seeking parity with men. The artists in question were directly and indirectly associated with a group that in later years became known as the Ashcan School. These include Thomas Eakins (1844-1916), Robert Henri (1865-1929), Everett Shinn (1876-1953), Walt Kuhn (1877-1949), Reginald Marsh (1898-1954), and Edward Hopper (1882-1967).

I selected these particular artists in order to reveal previously unacknowledged interconnections existing between their various images of female performers which are emblematic of various stages in the advancement of American women as they gained more

power and equal status in a heretofore exclusively male dominated society. The diverse images by these painters do not present the New Woman (who was, as will shortly be explained, seldom seen in fine art), but rather detail the progress of her successor, the working-class Newer Woman, as she assumed new roles in society and on stage. These six painters engender a mixture of admiration for and prejudice against the women they painted. Although one cannot with any certainty know the intentions of these individual artists as they painted female entertainers, some deductions can be made based on the works they produced. They may not have deliberately chosen to embody images of the New Woman, but they did use the performers to comment on issues of concern to the male observer. These include the subjects of voyeurism, class struggle, and in the case of Eakins, scientific exploration of the anatomical process of producing sound.

In the early 1880s, as the United States entered the so-called Gilded Age, the most popular ideal of American womanhood was commonly referred to as the "True Woman."<sup>1</sup> Many men and women took for granted the notion that women could only contribute to society within the confines of the domestic domain. Most people of both sexes in the 1880s did not question the idea that the proper place for a woman was in the home fulfilling her natural vocation as wife and mother. This attitude was prevalent but certainly not unanimous. Some women throughout American history chafed against the restrictions placed upon their liberty to participate in public life. These include, among others, Abigail

---

<sup>1</sup> The term "True Woman" was in common usage in the late nineteenth century and has also been much discussed in late twentieth-century scholarship. For more on the "True Woman" see Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood, 1820-1860," *American Quarterly*, 18 (Summer, 1966), 151-74; Nancy Cott, *The Bounds of Womanhood: Woman's Sphere in New England, 1780-1835* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 160-206; Susan Levine, "Labor's True Woman: Domesticity and Equal Rights in the Knights of Labor," *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 70, No. 2 (Sept. 1983), 323-339. These authors define the True Woman as a traditional woman who was tied to the domestic domain and who did not work outside of the home.

Adams, who during the American Revolution advocated for women's rights, Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who, starting in the 1840s, agitated for women's suffrage, and Sarah Grand, a writer who, beginning in the 1870s, promoted the importance of girls and young women gaining knowledge rather than maintaining innocence in order to succeed and contribute to modern society.

Aside from her passivity, the most marked characteristic of the True Woman was her adherence to the unwritten, yet widely accepted, strict code of proper conduct which emphasized devotion to her husband and her children. The True Woman demonstrated through her proper decorum, behavior, and speech, that she in no way thwarted male authority. At that time, women were generally considered frail. Members of the "weaker (female) sex" were believed to be prone to fainting spells, hysteria, and "irrational" behavior. The True Woman, it was believed, could thrive only within the domestic realm safely sequestered from the stress and responsibility required of an active participant in public life.

Throughout much of human history, including Victorian times, a dichotomy has existed between the perceptions of women as second-class citizens and their actual active, albeit usually discrete, level of participation in public affairs. However much the wives of politicians or business leaders advised and consulted with their husbands concerning their careers, these proper, conventional women were required by the expectations of their times to remain in the background and refrain from openly discussing their own views in public.

The ideation of the True Woman preconceived her as being of the more powerful middle and upper classes. Such was also the case for her successor, the “New Woman” who arose in the 1890s as many young, well-to-do women enrolled in universities and took up new, more active, leisure-time pursuits such as tennis and bicycle riding.<sup>2</sup> Although these activities may seem like innocuous sport to the present-day observer, they were then perceived as distinct threats to time-old traditional male dominion over family, society, and government. This was particularly evident given that these activities required less restrictive and more revealing attire which, coupled with the trend towards women smoking cigarettes in public, presented an arresting new feminine image; one that incorporated masculine traits. A subtle yet important facet of the New Woman was her appearance in public independent of a male chaperone. Nearly all images of the New Woman that were then abundant in popular magazines were of unaccompanied, finely-dressed young ladies.

The terms “True Woman” and “New Woman” were in common usage at the time and are still familiar. However, there exist no common terms for other types of independent women that stepped from the working-classes during the early years of the twentieth century. Therefore, throughout the later chapters of this study, I will employ terms of my own invention for successors of the True and New Woman. These are the

---

<sup>2</sup> Apparently, the term “New Woman” was first used in print by Grand in the May 1894 issue of the *North American Review*. See Viv Gardner, “The New Woman in the New Theatre,” in *The Routledge Reader in Gender and Performance* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 74.

“Newer Woman,” prominent in the years after the turn-of-the-century, the Depression-era “Not-So-New Woman,” and, just prior to World War II, the “Blue Woman.”<sup>3</sup>

The chief characteristics of the “Newer Woman” differentiating her from her predecessors were her lack of affluence and her employment outside of the home. She might work in mills, factories, shops, or offices. Or, if she possessed a modicum of talent for singing, dancing or acting, she might seek a career as a vaudeville performer. While the Newer Woman earned her own money and could enjoy some hours of “leisure time” each week she probably could not afford a bicycle and was not likely to have ever had the opportunity to play tennis. The Newer Woman was independent, self-sufficient, and decidedly not of the more privileged middle or upper classes.<sup>4</sup> She often shared living space with others like her in a tenement or communal apartment and, as historian Ellen Wiley Todd notes, the Newer Woman did not live under the jurisdiction of a patriarch or “any traditional guardian of female virtues.”<sup>5</sup> These are the type of women seen in theater paintings of that time.

Following the disruption of World War I, American women gained the right to vote and the era of Prohibition introduced the stereotype of the “Flapper,” who displayed a new

---

<sup>3</sup> The new terms that I have retrospectively assigned to the various types of women are my own inventions and I use them to differentiate between working-class women in successive eras from 1880 to 1940. I find that these expressions more accurately specify the New Woman as she took her place in each generation. Of course, these terms were not used by the artists that depicted each incarnation of the New Woman. It is only with the hindsight of history that these distinctions have become apparent.

<sup>4</sup> During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, expectations of behavior and decorum for women were constantly challenged as the separate gender spheres merged and a new idea of a woman’s place in society presented itself. For the first time in American history, women had a third option of a career instead of merely marriage or spinsterhood and began working in increasing numbers in factories, department stores, and offices. At this time, the typical female earning wages was white, young, and unmarried. After marriage, most women withdrew from the workforce.

<sup>5</sup> Ellen Wiley Todd, *The “New Woman” Revised: Painting and Gender Politics on Fourteenth Street* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 24.

measure of sartorial independence as she discarded cumbersome corsets, frilly undergarments, and with them, her “lady-like” manners. In popular imagery and magazines she typically bobbed her hair, engaged in premarital sex, and entertained little interest in furthering the cause of woman’s equality. While images of Flappers featured prominently in advertising and appeared in literature, very few of them appear in fine art so, consequently, the Flapper is not one of the role models in this study.

The Depression of the 1930s disrupted progress for American women which remained stagnant as images of glamour or prestige associated with being a working woman faded into the specter of harsh economic realities. One steady, if not lucrative category of employment for an energetic female was that of a stage performer. Because her image in contemporary painting presents none of the optimism concerning women’s equality seen during the earlier era of the New Woman, I have labeled this working-class entertainer the “Not-So-New Woman.” The countenance of the Not-So-New Woman seen in Depression-era paintings reflects the weariness and resignation of showgirls toiling through long hours of hard work wearing heavy make-up and gaudy attire. The Not-So-New Woman, while still fully clothed, was more jaded sex object than inspiring role model.

Because other 1930s artists naturally evinced a more bleak view of their times than earlier artists in this dissertation, the female performers they painted exhibited a less sunny disposition than the Newer Woman and inhabited an even darker aura than the Not-So-New Woman. These other artists painted burlesque queens not vaudeville starlets or chorus girls. These are hardened performers with grim, matter-of-fact outlooks who express little celebration of their femininity beyond the display of their own naked flesh.

For this reason, I have chosen the appellation “Blue Woman” to represent the last stage of women’s cultural progression in this study.

The label “Blue Woman” refers not only to the effects of the Depression on economic possibilities for women but also to the fact that burlesque entertainment was strictly for adults and almost exclusively for men. These women worked at the lowest level of show business and had no pretense of representing upper-class women or advancing women’s place in society as did the entertainers in the era of the Newer Woman. Their degraded status and withdrawn demeanor recalls the melancholy world-view described in Blues music from the 1930s. The term Blue Woman also relates to the “Blue Laws” that decreed rigid moral codes of social behavior. Blue Laws limited sale of alcoholic beverages and curtailed certain activities on Sundays. Blue Laws varied by state and many are still in effect today.

Although this study details images of newly empowered women in art, it should be noted that the concept of the New Woman was actually first introduced in literature as an upper and middle-class phenomenon and a byproduct of urbanization. She could not exist in rural environs where job prospects were more rigidly differentiated according to gender. The New Woman as an archetype first surfaced in British novels but soon crossed the Atlantic as American authors championed independent, self-reliant women as characters. Perhaps the New Woman debuted in literature because her character on the printed page posed a less threatening affront to society than her brazen image rendered in paint on

canvas.<sup>6</sup> The popularity of such tales appealed to both the prurient interests and the lust for vengeance of the general public. These novels often began with a female boldly deviating from societal expectations and ended with the fates punishing her aberrant behavior with illness, madness, or death unless she found salvation in marriage and motherhood. Thus the New Woman reverts to the True Woman.<sup>7</sup>

The New Woman featured prominently in the literature of the 1880s and 1890s, but her historical precedents date back forty years earlier in works such as Elizabeth Barrett Browning's nine volume *Aurora Leigh* (1856), which detailed the plight of a woman who rejected the conventional path of marriage to pursue an unconventional life as an artist. The philosopher John Stuart Mill in *On Liberty* (1859) and *The Subjection of Women* (1869) raised issues of morality and women's rights and also promoted equality between the sexes. However, most scholars consider *The Story of an African Farm* (1883) by Olive Schreiner and her heroine Lyndall to be the first real embodiment of the New Woman in fiction. Lyndall established her identity as a New Woman by refusing marriage to the father of her child in order to pursue a stage career.

In the ten years following the publication of Schreiner's novel, a legion of other British books featured the New Woman. George Gissing's *The Odd Women* (1893), for example, chronicled the difficulties and choices facing five spinsters forced to provide for themselves. One of the single women, Miss Barfoot, earned money with weekly lectures to young women on how to go about leading useful, independent lives. In one of her "Four

---

<sup>6</sup> Susan Casteras, *Images of Victorian Womanhood* (Cranbury, NJ and London: Associated University Presses, 1987), 145.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

O'clock Addresses," Barfoot said, "There must be a new type of woman, active in every sphere of life...Of the old ideal virtues we can retain many, but we have to add to them those which have been thought appropriate only in men. Let a woman be gentle, but at the same time let her be strong; let her be pure of heart, but nonetheless wise and instructed."<sup>8</sup>

Other fictional representations of the emerging New Woman in British literature include Thomas Hardy's strong-willed female characters in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891) and *Jude the Obscure* (1895). The first was initially rejected for its compassionate portrayal of a fallen woman and the latter faced even greater condemnation for its blunt descriptions of female sexual emancipation.<sup>9</sup> After all, as art scholar Susan Casteras explains, "The prostitute was a social outcast, and in a different respect so too was the 'New Woman' ...."<sup>10</sup>

In late nineteenth-century American literature, authors such as Henry James championed the New Woman. James invented female characters with varying degrees of independence. He raised feminist issues in several novels including *Daisy Miller* (1879); *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881); *The Bostonians* (1886); and *The Wings of the Dove* (the 1901). Title character Daisy Miller, for example, one of James's earliest independent heroines asserted, "I've never allowed a gentleman to dictate to me or to interfere with anything I do."<sup>11</sup>

Following Schreiner's lead with her heroine Lyndall, the American novelist Theodore Dreiser in 1900 presented a stage career as an option for his heroine in *Sister Carrie*. The British and American writers' emphasis on the New Woman's determination to be free from

<sup>8</sup> George Gissing, *The Odd Women* (London: Lawrence and Bullen, 1893), 88.

<sup>9</sup> The author D.H. Lawrence attempted to analyze the complex character of Sue Bridehead from Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* in his 1914 "A Study of Thomas Hardy."

<sup>10</sup> Casteras, *Images of Victorian Womanhood*, 144.

<sup>11</sup> Henry James, *Daisy Miller* (London: Martin Secker, 1915), 72.

male control and approbation engendered controversy on both sides of the Atlantic.

British professor Angelique Richardson writes that “More than a hundred novels and a far greater number of short stories were published by and about the New Woman before the century was out, and magazines studied, celebrated, and satirized her without respite.”<sup>12</sup>

The New Woman, as a figure in the public imagination, was popularized in novels which fixed aspects of her character, but the initial conception of the New Woman most likely originated in plays by Norwegian Henrik Ibsen, who advocated equal rights for women. “A woman cannot be herself in contemporary society,” he asserted in his notes for *A Doll’s House* (1879), “it is an exclusively male society with laws drafted by men, and with counsel and judges who judge feminine conduct from the male point of view.”<sup>13</sup> In 1890 in *Hedda Gabler*, Ibsen created a strong lead character that some critics liken to a female equivalent of Hamlet. The English essayist Sir Henry Maximilian “Max” Beerbohm remarked that, “The New Woman sprang fully armed from Ibsen’s brain.”<sup>14</sup> Modern scholar Sally Ledger’s essay entitled “Ibsen, the New Woman and the Actress” traces the origins of the New Woman to the playwright’s work. Ledger identifies Ibsen as one of the few male playwrights who wrote strong, realistic female characters.

One of the earliest documented appearances of the term “New Woman” was in the August 17, 1893 article “The Social Standing of the New Woman” published in London’s

---

<sup>12</sup> Angelique Richardson, *Love and Eugenics in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 5.

<sup>13</sup> Sally Ledger, “Ibsen, the New Woman and the Actress,” in *The New Woman in Fiction and in Fact: Fin-de-Siècle Feminisms*, Angelique Richardson and Chris Willis, eds. (Basingstoke, Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan Ltd., 2001, 2002), 81.

<sup>14</sup> Ann L. Ardis, *New Women, New Novels: Feminism and Early Modernism* (New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 30.

feminist newspaper *The Woman's Herald*.<sup>15</sup> It is possible, however, that the British novelists Sarah Grand or her contemporary Ouida (Maria Louise de la Ramée), each of whom was a New Woman in her own right, actually brought the term into common usage.<sup>16</sup> In May, 1894, Ouida responded in the *North American Review* to an essay by Grand, "The New Aspects of the Woman Question," printed in that same publication in March of that year. Grand and Ouida debated the proper characteristics of the New Woman. Grand's intent seems to have been to make the New Woman more palatable to the general public by presenting her as a "fairly obscure emblem of utopian feminism,"<sup>17</sup> while Ouida took a more confrontational approach and presented the New Woman as a "grotesque creature" in both manner and appearance, who challenged, and rightly so, male dominance.<sup>18</sup> Ouida, according to feminist scholar Talia Schaffer, "turns the New Woman into a literary product not to contain her, but to expand her."<sup>19</sup> Earlier labels for the independent female included: "wild woman," "odd woman," "modern woman," "Novissima," "shrieking woman," "superfluous woman," and "redundant woman."<sup>20</sup> Grand and Ouida's debate in the press concerning the New Woman illustrates how much this independent creature

---

<sup>15</sup> Michelle Elizabeth Tusan, "Inventing the New Woman: Print Culture and Identity Politics During the Fin-de-Siècle: 1997 VanArsdel Prize," *Victorian Periodicals Review*, Vol. 31, No. 2 (Summer, 1998), 169.

<sup>16</sup> Ardis, *New Women, New Novels*, 10.

<sup>17</sup> Jennifer Shepherd, review of *The New Woman in Fiction and in Fact: Fin-de-Siècle Feminisms*, by Angelique Richardson and Chris Willis, *Victorian Periodicals Review*, Vol. 31, No. 2 (Summer, 1998), 99.

<sup>18</sup> Talia Schaffer, "'Nothing but Foolscap and Ink': Inventing the New Woman" in *The New Woman in Fiction and in Fact*, Angelique Richardson and Chris Willis, eds. (Basingstoke, Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan Ltd., 2001, 2002), 42.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Sally Ledger, *The New Woman: Fiction and feminism and the fin de siècle* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1997), 2-3.

unsettled Victorian sensibilities on both sides of the Atlantic at the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>21</sup>

The first visual depictions of the New Woman in British humor and satirical illustrated magazines dramatized the power dynamic between the male and female sexes. In the view of feminist scholar Ann L. Ardis, “Naming the New Woman in this manner, Ouida furnished *Punch* and *Pall Mall Gazette* with both a target for attack and a way to release anxiety about changes in the Victorian social order.”<sup>22</sup> In May 1894, responding to the advent of the New Woman in the popular imagination, *Punch or the London Charivari* (its full title) published the verse:

There is a New Woman, and what do you think?  
She lives upon nothing but Foolscap and Ink!  
But though Foolscap and Ink are the whole of her diet,  
This nagging New Woman can never be quiet!<sup>23</sup>

Some of the earliest pictorial images of the New Woman appeared in the mid-1890s in *Punch*. An illustration in the September 8, 1894 *Punch* (fig. 1) has a New Woman carrying a rifle as she expounds on the “good sport” of hunting to the Vicar’s wife who represents the now outdated True Woman.<sup>24</sup> The emancipated woman menaces the male race by wearing pants and adopting masculine postures, attitudes, and behaviors.

The unstated but nonetheless overtly misogynistic editorial policy of *Punch* took evident delight in poking fun at the antics of the New Woman, whom it saw challenging the

---

<sup>21</sup> According to Ellen Jordan, “The Christening of the New Woman: May 1894,” *Victorian Newsletter* 63 (Spring 1983), 19-21, it was Ouida who “selected out” the term the “New Woman” from the title of Grand’s essay. Quoted in Richardson and Willis, eds., *The New Woman in Fiction and in Fact*, 40.

<sup>22</sup> Ardis, *New Women, New Novels*, 11.

<sup>23</sup> Quoted in Patricia Marks, *Bicycles, Bangs, and Bloomers: The New Woman in Popular Press* (Lexington, KY: The University of Kentucky, 1990), 11.

<sup>24</sup> Richardson and Willis, eds., *The New Woman in Fiction and in Fact*, 14.

status quo and eroding male hierarchy. The New Woman canon established by these types of illustrations of the over-educated, decadent, mannish, and asexual New Woman of the middle and upper classes regularly appeared on its pages. Drawings and cartoons juxtaposed strong women with effeminate men suggesting this must be the inevitable result if women asserted new rights and took new responsibilities. In an 1894 *Punch* cartoon entitled, “What It Will Soon Come To” (fig. 2), an Amazon-sized New Woman offers to carry the bag of an apparently emasculated man. Although cloaked in the guise of harmless fun, such illustrations spoke to real concerns of men in a changing society. Similarly, *Puck*, the American equivalent of *Punch*, put forth satirical and critical images of emancipated women such as its 1895 illustration of the New Woman and her bicycle (fig. 3). These light-hearted humorous weekly magazines of social commentary presented caricatured, de-humanized versions of the New Woman whose very existence threatened social hierarchy. These British and American publications sensationalized images of the New Woman presenting her in the worst possible light and suggesting that men should react scornfully to females seeking emancipation.

Another early American image of the New Woman in mainstream media appeared in an illustrated novel by Minister George F. Hall entitled *A Study in Bloomers; or, The Model New Woman*. Hall presented a decidedly masculine but positively viewed New Woman (fig. 4) who, he wrote, “was jovial, but not silly; well informed, but not affected; cordial, but not soft.”<sup>25</sup> The bloomers which Hall referred to in his title were a novel garment for the newly active modern woman. These loose, full pants cuffed below the knee allowed for easier

---

<sup>25</sup> George F. Hall, *A Study in Bloomers, Or, The Model New Woman a Novel* (Chicago, Philadelphia, Stockton: American Bible House, 1895), 35.

mobility and Hall's heroine (representative of the athletic New Woman) rode bicycles, played sports, and even hunted (fig. 5).

At about the same time, magazine illustrator Dana Charles Gibson introduced American audiences to a fresh take on the New Woman. He transformed the decided masculinity of Hall's New Woman into a more feminine but still powerful ideal with the label *Gibson's Typical American Girl* (fig. 6). The "Gibson Girl," as she became known, was a tall, forthright Amazon but still possessed beauty and a lady-like appearance. Gibson's refined, upper-class American incarnation of the New Woman was first published in *Life* magazine in the 1890s and was soon widely disseminated in popular culture with images of the Gibson Girl advertising products such as the modern Sweepette broom (for what New Woman would want to sweep "the old way?") and Ivory Soap. The copy for the latter from the September 1895 issue of *Ladies' Home Journal* declares that after some "good quick exercise" and a "scrub with Ivory Soap," the lady is "indeed a new woman."<sup>26</sup> The New Woman also appeared on postcards, on calendars, and as paper dolls.<sup>27</sup>

The powerful New Woman in the cartoons in *Punch*, *Life*, and other publications, blended sexual attractiveness with a statuesque physique and a psychologically threatening masculine attitude enacting a role reversal on her puny male counterparts. Gibson imbued her with a certain seductive magnetism that made his New Woman dangerous and able to emasculate men with a single withering glance. Under the constant scrutiny of the male

---

<sup>26</sup> Marianne Berger Woods, *The New Woman in Print and Pictures: An Annotated Bibliography* (Jefferson, North Carolina and London: McFarland & Company, Inc. Publishers, 2009), 99 and 102.

<sup>27</sup> Berger Woods, *The New Woman in Print and Pictures*, 9.

gaze, the True Woman was vulnerable to unfavorable critiques, but the New Woman met the gaze and deflected the scrutiny via her own approbation and power.

The Newer Woman, on the other hand, could act the part, so to speak, as a performer, but given her lower economic status, did not have the standing to completely subvert the male gaze.<sup>28</sup> Despite the interruption of World War I, the vapid era of the Flapper, and the difficulties of the Depression, the Not-So-New Woman and the Blue Woman of the 1930s and 1940s embodied some progress in that she little feared being found wanting in the judgment of the male gaze and was unaffected by it.

In the first years of the twentieth century, the American painter Robert Henri and his circle refashioned the affluent New Woman by appropriating her attributes and applying her confidence and self-assurance to images of working-class female singers and chorus girls performing on the stages of New York City theaters. This strong-willed Newer Woman was a novel incarnation for a new era; she was a worker and not a lady. As scholar Lois Banner aptly notes, “The New Woman included a variety of types drawn from the spectrum of the American class structure,” but Henri’s Newer Woman came not from the ranks of debutantes but more often from rural environs or urban tenements.<sup>29</sup> She ventured off the farm or strode down the gangplanks of an immigrant ship into the cities of the Eastern seaboard to work in factories, department stores, and offices or, if she was lucky and talented enough, in show business.

---

<sup>28</sup> For information on the gendered gaze and “to-be-looked-at-ness” see Laura Mulvey, *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1989). This series of essays includes Mulvey’s seminal 1973 article *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* in which the author suggests and defines two distinct modes of the male gaze – “voyeuristic” where women are seen as “whores” and “fetishistic” where men view women as “Madonna’s.” See also Griselda Pollock, *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and Histories of Art* (London and New York: Routledge, 1988).

<sup>29</sup> Lois Banner, *American Beauty* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1983), 187.

The Newer Woman wielded new-found economic clout and sought to gain enough political power to challenge men's traditional ideas concerning how females could participate in public life. In their free time after work and on Sundays, which was usually the only day they were not working, women were now able to venture out in the company of girlfriends unchaperoned by male kin. They spent some of their newly-earned income on various forms of affordable leisure entertainment catering to working-class crowds in dance halls, vaudeville theaters, nickelodeons, amusement parks, and eventually, movie houses.

Single, young women unburdened by the duties of wives and mothers benefited from being employed and consequently they had some leisure time to enjoy. As a result, the Newer Woman gained economic power and social mobility, but at the same time, she contributed to fears about the perceived moral breakdown of American society as it changed due to accelerated urbanization, increased immigration, and the erosion of male dominance. For these reasons many people across the strata of American society resisted acknowledging the changing status of women.

The Rector of the Catholic Cathedral in Denver, Colorado, Reverend Hugh L. McMenamín, wrote an essay entitled "Evils of Woman's Revolt Against the Old Standards" championing the view that "Modern conditions have made woman more independent, if you will, but that independence is not benefiting the race."<sup>30</sup> Rev. McMenamín, social reformers, and others with strong Victorian views of the New Woman as an unnatural being, felt that she was "cold and unwomanly."<sup>31</sup> To Rev. McMenamín and those like him,

---

<sup>30</sup> Angela Howard and Sasha Ranaé Adams Tarrant, eds., *Redefining the New Woman, 1920-1963* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1997), 88.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

the New Woman was a creature of “distorted nature at its very worst” and personified the antithesis of the nurturing, feminine, and subservient True Woman.<sup>32</sup> Fears of masculinized women were reinforced by illustrations currently in vogue. For instance, the April 17, 1895 cover for *Puck* (fig. 7) features a young woman dressed in male attire while her distressed mother, “Mrs. Newgurl,” looks on and warns her daughter, “Goodness me, Kitty! Don’t stand there with your hands in your pockets, that way; - you don’t know how ungentlemanly it looks!”<sup>33</sup> “If this be the ‘New Woman,’” Rev. McMenamain declared, “then God spare us from any further development of the abnormal creature.”<sup>34</sup>

Paintings of American turn-of-the-twentieth-century leisure entertainments recorded the evolution of popular amusements and illustrated dramatic changes in the social and economic environment of America as it progressed from the Victorian age into the modern era. Responses to women in society changed through time as they gained new standing and greater equality. Milestones in the evolution of the New Woman were embodied in other novel incarnations.

My research concerns the progress of the American New Woman from 1880 to 1940 and chronicles successes and setbacks in her quest to extinguish gender inequalities as reflected through the lens of the male American artist in portraying female performers. I begin with Thomas Eakins, who loomed large in the early careers of the other artists in this study, and I follow the artistic lineage of his influence. Eakins, although he supported and

---

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 88.

<sup>33</sup> *Puck*, Vol. 37, No. 945 (April 17, 1895), cover.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 87.

encouraged his wife and other women artists, displayed what I deem decidedly chauvinistic and misogynistic Victorian attitudes.

To varying degrees, the artists in this study were also influenced by nineteenth-century French artists such as Edgar Degas (1834-1917), Pierre Auguste Renoir (1841-1919), the American Mary Cassatt (1844-1926), and the British painter Walter Sickert (1860-1942). Degas, Renoir, and Cassatt presented images of the Paris Opéra while Sickert featured London music halls. Their paintings will be used as examples to illustrate differences in how the American, British, and French painters dealt with female performers as representatives of women's emancipation.

Robert Henri, strongly influenced by Eakins, became the leader of a group of younger American artists who were first known as The Eight and later as the Ashcan School. Henri evinced genuine support for advances in feminism and created images of a successor to the New Woman in the figures of female performers I call the Newer Woman. Everett Shinn, another of The Eight, had contradictory views of women onstage. On the one hand, he publicly reveled in their new, bold identities as solo performers, but on the other hand, he continued to depict them as objects of male sexual desire. Shinn displayed a reluctant acceptance of a woman's right to live more freely and independently and he cast his women as empowered but still alluring. The other three artists in this dissertation, Walt Kuhn, who painted backstage portraits of showgirls; Reginald Marsh, who painted lively scenes of burlesque queens; and Edward Hopper, who painted a stripper and an usherette, were not members of The Eight, but nonetheless shared strong connections with Henri and his circle and are generally considered extensions of the Ashcan School. The optimism of turn-of-the-

century America was crushed by World War I, rebounded in the Roaring Twenties, and was deflated again during the Great Depression. Kuhn's worn-out showgirls, with their sullen attitudes and slouch-shouldered postures representing the Not-So-New-Woman, might be seen as mirroring the despair of the American psyche at that time. The naked strippers, exemplified by the Blue Woman in works by Marsh and Hopper, represent the long years of the Depression and the corresponding sense of moral loss and unabashed hopelessness.

## **Organization and Methodology**

This dissertation, focusing on paintings of female performers by leading American male artists over a range of sixty years spanning the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, will uncover heterogeneous reactions to the emergence of a new ideal of the independent woman and explore how these artists chronicle an American society confronting and reconciling its fears as gender roles shifted and the culture adjusted to this change. The female performer, by the very nature of her work, diverged from other working women. Regarded as "the Other," she experienced a more elevated level of liberation because her exclusion left her free of many of the restrictions imposed on working, middle, and upper-class females. I believe that images of the performer provide an interesting distillation of expectations and reactions to the transformation of the balance of the sexes in a changing American culture. The female entertainers may seem to have some authority over their male spectators, but they were, nonetheless, subjects that were posed, dressed, directed, leered at, and ogled by men and are therefore, constrained by these male attitudes. To support my ideas, I will compare how private and public issues

(including domestic responsibilities, workplace concerns, social reform, immigration, consumerism, the suffrage movement, and politics) invaded the periphery of painted scenes of the theater.

In tracing past scholarship in this arena, an aspect of women's emancipation not previously written about is the study of images of female stage performers. The topic of the New Woman has been much discussed and some individual actresses' lives well documented, but no studies of images of turn-of-the-twentieth-century stage performers in fine art as avenues to new insights into the complex issues surrounding women of that time have yet been undertaken and this is where my dissertation covers new ground.

Female entertainers represented, as Banner notes, a "new, modern concept of womanhood, one that involved independence, sexual freedom, and an enterprising, realistic attitude toward a career."<sup>35</sup> Her relatively unfettered position outside of mainstream society makes the female performer an interesting and valuable vehicle to understand the varied attitudes of acceptance that prevailed as women gained entry into other, more masculine avenues of employment.

Past scholars have discussed the evolution of the nineteenth and early twentieth-century New Woman, especially images of the Gibson Girl and her counterpart, the Christy Girl, but none have centered their research on the female performer as representative of this newly assertive creature. My research expands her role because the early to mid-twentieth-century working-class New Woman was no longer synonymous with the original nineteenth-century concept; thus, the need for fresh, expanded appellations. The Newer

---

<sup>35</sup> Banner, *American Beauty*, 183.

Woman's identity was forged by different circumstances as she downgraded from her initial status as empowered and upper-class New Woman to an eroticized, sometimes grotesque, working-class figure gradually stripped, so to speak, of her power. No previous scholarship has focused on how the changing conditions for American women at the turn-of-the-twentieth-century can be seen in images I single out for analysis, namely, the concert singer, the vaudeville coquette, the chorus girl, the burlesque stripper, and the movie usherette.

The nine chapters of this dissertation thus elucidate these categories and feature key images to underscore the analysis of the main themes. I employ a chronological progression while presenting the various artists; this allows me to demonstrate the influences of earlier artists, cultural factors as careers developed, and how these conditions affected the various renditions of female stage entertainers. In most cases, these artists painted several works that could be used to support this study. However, since quality reveals more than quantity, I narrowed my discussion to a few works that, in my judgment, best illustrate the issues in question.

The first chapter, "The Well-Performed Ideal of the True Woman," provides a foundation to study the progression of women's forays into traditionally male-dominated spheres by looking closely at one of the most influential artists of the time, Thomas Eakins and his canvases of two images of "True Women" in *Singing a Pathetic Song*, 1881 (fig. 8) and *The Concert Singer*, 1890-92 (fig. 9). These reaffirm how strongly he adhered to Victorian ideals of a clearly delineated power balance between the sexes. Although Eakins as teacher pioneered the use of nude models and encouraged female art students to study

the human figure, his paintings of women, along with experiences with women in his personal life, belie his discomfort with female empowerment. In his *Singing a Pathetic Song* and *The Concert Singer*, Eakins portrayed female performers lacking sexuality and vitality and he avoided any direct reference to the emerging New Woman; in fact, his singers qualify as the anti-New Woman in their depleted and seemingly depressed states.

Eakins' enervated performers embody some of the same characteristics as those of his contemporary Thomas Wilmer Dewing (1851-1938). Both artists picture passive, subservient women, although Dewing's are more aesthetically pleasing as objects of beauty. Dewing will be briefly addressed in this chapter as a comparison to Eakins' Victorian sensibilities, since neither artist chose to feature lively women of strong character.

The second chapter, "The Newer Woman Setting the Stage," features three of Robert Henri's paintings, *Jessica Penn in Black with White Plumes*, 1908 (fig. 10); *Salome*, 1909 (fig. 11); and *Ruth St. Denis in the Peacock Dance*, 1919 (fig. 12), each exemplifying different aspects of the spirited Newer Woman. Unlike Eakins, who was a dominant influence on the younger artist during Henri's formative years in Philadelphia, Henri anticipated the revolutionary changes in American culture that would roil male dominance in the early twentieth century. Henri's more enlightened attitude is evident in the women he put on canvas, especially in his depictions of female entertainers who project the aura of the confident, self-reliant, early twentieth-century American woman. These entertainers provided Henri an opportunity to explore the transition of women from subjugated singers reflective of the constrictive Victorian period to empowered performers showcasing the new status of women of the modern era.

Chapter Three, “Acting Up in the London Music Hall,” compares British turn-of-the-twentieth-century public entertainment with that of New York, through paintings of London’s East End music halls by Walter Sickert such as *Little Dot Hetherington at the Bedford Music Hall, 1888-89* (fig. 13) and *Minnie Cunningham at the Old Bedford, 1892* (fig. 14). Sickert’s interpretation of British womanhood in the guise of female performers, provides a contrast with New York artists representing the Newer Woman and attests to the popularity of this subject in England, as well as in the United States.

I use Everett Shinn’s work as a basis for my next three chapters because, of all the artists discussed in this dissertation, he was the one most enamored of show business and the one who produced the greatest number of theater paintings. Moreover, his work and career have not yet been studied in much depth by scholars despite the advantageous opportunity his prolific output grants to examine topics related to the changing New Woman through images of female performers from his era.

In Chapter Four, “Taking the Spectacle Seriously,” I delve into Shinn’s images of female vaudeville performers and how they illuminate the general impact of vaudeville upon the development of leisure-time entertainments tailored to the American working-class woman. Shinn presents a working-class actress onstage as the Newer Woman in *Revue, 1908* (fig. 15). Despite her fresh status as a star solo attraction commanding the stage without the support of a male performer, Shinn sees her as still vulnerable and pure with none of the boldness and confidence of Henri’s female subjects. His need to maintain an aura of demure virginity seems to be subtext for much of Shinn’s work and is explored in subsequent sections.

“The Newer Woman in the Audience,” Chapter Five, deals with the working-class “girls” who people the audience of Shinn’s *In the Loge*, 1903 (fig. 16). As previously indicated, in the 1890s, the New Woman in literature, in magazine illustrations, and in paintings was naturally assumed to be upper class. However, soon lower-class women availed themselves of new possibilities available to their gender and, with money saved from their wages, began to participate in activities such as attending the theater. Shinn’s view of the audience allows a chance to consider New Women who were not performers. This chapter investigates audience spectatorship in America and compares it to similar observations by the British artist Walter Sickert and the French Impressionists Degas, Renoir, and the American Cassatt. Shinn included other figures in his loge painting who demonstrate to the viewer the fact that these unescorted young ladies attending the theater diverted some attention from the activities on the stage. This chapter also discusses the concept of the male gaze, falling upon both female performers and women in the audience, as relevant to the overall scope of my dissertation.

Chapter Six, “Gentlemen Spectators in the Wings,” shifts to consideration of male spectators. I analyze Shinn’s *The Rehearsal*, ca. 1915 (fig. 17) and the role of privileged American males in theater settings, scrutinizing their manners and attitudes towards women in society and onstage. The chapter also encompasses nineteenth-century French paintings, especially those depicting top-hatted men and their relations with working-class performers. Additionally, a reading of correspondence between Shinn and his wealthy friend, Poultney Bigelow (1855-1954), contrasts expectations of proper decorum with actual behavior, a hitherto unexplored subject. I have read much of their correspondence in the

Archives of American Art and the New York Public Library. Their letters, especially from the 1930s and 1940s, further underscore some of the challenges and difficulties American gentlemen, and certainly Bigelow, had in accepting the new role of woman. This correspondence between Shinn and Bigelow has not been previously examined and written about. This is another area unique to my dissertation.

Chapter Seven, "Cheap Amusements, Chorus Girls, and the Not-So-New Woman," briefly discusses the fact that World War I intervened to slow down the suffragette campaign and that, after the Great War's conclusion in 1918, the empowered fin-de-siècle New Woman was essentially usurped and replaced by the frivolous, carefree flapper of the 1920s. This decadent party-girl who flouted social norms eclipsed the ideal of the New Woman but was downplayed by artists preoccupied with stage performers despite her frequent appearance in print, on magazine covers, and in more formal portraits of individual women. However, in the 1930s, the female entertainer reappeared as a brash, tarnished Not-So-New Woman emblematic of the harsh economic conditions of an America then in the throes of the Great Depression. Chapter Seven focuses on Walt Kuhn, a contemporary of Henri and Shinn, whose sympathy for the hard-working chorus girl surfaces in his images such as *Trude*, 1931 (fig. 18) and *Plumes*, 1935 (fig. 19). The vitality and seductive nature of Henri and Shinn's female performers are absent in Kuhn's paintings of fatigued New York chorines. Kuhn deliberately underscored the real life of overworked, underpaid stage performers and presented a beaten-down version of the New Woman.

Chapter Eight, "Moving Violations: Strippers, the Tease, and the Blue Woman" details images of the less wholesome burlesque entertainment flourishing during the 1930s

and highlights more negative aspects of the era's spectatorship such as debauched, leering, and drunk men watching the show. Reginald Marsh, like Kuhn, focused less on vibrancy in American theater culture and more on its hardened attitude as America slipped from the optimism of a new century into the brutal years of the Great Depression. This chapter features Marsh's *Down at Jimmy Kelly's*, 1936 (fig. 20), which showcases a brassy and curvaceous burlesque stripper as she entertains an audience of unsavory, lecherous men. All performance is pretense and all performers adopt personas other than their own, but in many cases, women go further afield than men. Strippers, in order to collect their wages and keep their jobs, must put on the mantle of an alien role as they do and say certain things onstage which are not of their own devise. Although vulnerably nude, Marsh's stripper maintains her detachment thus immunizing herself from the males gazing upon her body. Her vacant eyes meet neither those of her audience nor of the viewer of the painting itself. Marsh, and the other artists in this study, presented a dual level of spectatorship in that they depicted the audience in the painting while simultaneously and subtly acknowledging the painting's other admirer, the actual spectator who gazes at the work.

In presenting her as an emotionless, expressionless sex object, Marsh completely dispatches any possibility of his fan dancer being a New Woman. The stripper in *Down at Jimmy Kelly's* may represent sexual dominance but does not project the same confident power seen in Henri and Shinn's performers. She also lacks the exuberant expectations of the Newer Woman or the glint of satisfaction expressed by Kuhn's Not-So-New Woman who, despite her weariness, at least seemed to believe that her situation was not hopeless.

For Marsh's Blue Woman who broke social taboos, there were few jobs in legitimate theater but there were numerous opportunities for one willing to shed her clothes.

Although Chapter Eight focuses on Marsh, it includes the sterile scene of Edward Hopper's *Girlie Show*, 1941 (fig. 21) for comparison. Through the lone stripper, Hopper expresses feelings of isolation and alienation common to the zeitgeist of the period between the two World Wars. While Marsh's burlesque dancer seems to wear a mask that prevents any real interaction with her audience as she retreats into herself, Hopper's performer is so alienated as to appear isolated, disconnected even from herself. In both cases, the Newer Woman has been replaced by the Blue Woman and has lost, or is withholding, any sense of self.

The final chapter, "The Cinema and the Unsettled Usherette," contrasts Hopper and Marsh's movie usherettes as a kind of ancillary or sidelined performer. Hopper's 1939 *New York Movie* (fig. 22) and Marsh's *Usherette* (fig. 23), from the same year, each feature women who have descended from the stage and assumed places traditionally held by men as theater ushers. Not only have Marsh and Hopper's women successfully encroached into a male sphere, but they are now also donning male attire such as trousers. While it might seem that these women should be presented as jubilant and victorious in their quest for equality, the two artists instead feature dramatically different reactions to female advancement; either she is a sex object more interested in vamping and showing off her curvaceous body than performing her job, or she is stripped of her sexuality and stands as a bored, uncertain, androgynous figure apparently incapable of action. Marsh objectifies the usherette while Hopper renders her neutered and sexless.

After the many ups and downs of women's progress during the previous sixty years, Marsh and Hopper's usherettes fail to exemplify any particular triumph for working women. However, one must keep in mind that none of the images in this study truly represent empowerment from a woman's point of view because, of course, they were made by male artists who projected their own attitudes and prejudices onto the female performers they painted. American women had in fact made real progress and, from the vantage point of the twenty-first century, one cannot help but muse upon the fact that as these women loitered in darkened New York City theaters in 1941, the world was about to drastically change and create unimaginable new opportunities for women to achieve parity with men. All of the paintings in this dissertation provide glimpses of the myriad issues confronting American women as they sought to remove the confines of tradition and expectation concerning their place, aspirations, and work in society.

## **Scholarship**

Although certain elements of my topic have been briefly mentioned in assorted articles, essays in exhibition catalogues, and art journals, and several of the artists I cover have been previously researched (this is less true of Everett Shinn, Reginald Marsh, and Walt Kuhn), no one has yet produced a comprehensive study of these artists and their comments on, and reactions to, social issues concerning the emergence of the New Woman through their paintings of female stage performers during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

While I have been indebted to a number of scholars for their insightful and thoughtful research, I use their work as a launching point from which to learn, respond, and sometimes disagree. In addition, I have also relied heavily on primary source materials, especially the artists' papers and files from the Archives of American Art, the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art, the New York Public Library, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Corcoran Gallery of Art, the Delaware Art Museum, and the National Gallery of Art.

Following, I include a brief overview of the leading and current scholars, divided by topic and/or artist, who have been influential to my dissertation.

#### **Issues of Gender and the New Woman:**

While a wide range of issues surrounding the New Woman have been discussed by numerous scholars, I have narrowed my focus to those scholars whose definitions and explorations of the emancipated woman most closely connect with my own research. The New Woman's development and her clashes with American and British Victorian culture are covered by Sally Ledger, Ann Ardis, and Angelique Richardson. Ledger is especially important when considering Henrik Ibsen as a source for labeling the New Woman. She credits Ibsen with providing parts for actresses that embodied elements of the New Woman. Ardis' focus is on the changes and marginalization of feminism in British culture brought on by the modernist movement. Richardson, especially in her collection of essays edited with Chris Willis, questions whether the New Woman, as an assimilation of many manifestations, can successfully speak from a singular viewpoint to the larger issues of race, gender, and culture. Additionally, Mary Louise Roberts' 2002 *Disruptive Acts* offers an insightful study of the New Woman at the turn-of-the-twentieth-century in France.

Among others who present a lively range of current scholarly debate on the New Woman are several of the contributors to the 2006 exhibition catalogue *Off the Pedestal: New Women in the Art of Homer, Chase, and Sargent* for the Newark Museum's exhibition of images of the late nineteenth-century emancipated woman. Notably, Holly Pyne Connor's essay, "Not at Home: The Nineteenth-Century New Woman" defines the new kind of woman who appeared in literature, the popular press and, through a series of portraits of prominent women, explains the foundation laid by these very diverse women who were united in self-confident empowerment. The essay by Sarah Burns explores the New Woman in Winslow Homer's paintings, while May W. Blanchard concentrates on a different type of New Woman, those who wore pants and engaged in male behavior, immersing themselves fully in the male domain.

Despite the significant contributions of these scholars, no one has yet presented a focused study on how the American artists in my dissertation observed and responded to the changing gender balance as women gained freedoms never before available to them. Nor has any scholar examined these artists' perceptions and depictions of female performers which reflected the growing power of women and their evolving position within society as the iconic New Woman. More importantly, no scholar has attempted to differentiate and define the various permutations of the New Woman, something I do in my renaming of these novel types.

### **The Gendered Gaze:**

Much has been written on the various renditions of gender roles and spectatorship in images of the theater. This process of looking and being seen has become known as "the

gendered gaze,” or more specifically, “the male gaze.” The activities of looking and being on display have been discussed in contemporary feminist scholarship and include issues which are beyond the scope of my dissertation. However, I do consider how some contemporary writers have dealt with manifestations of the male gaze in images created by Shinn, Marsh, and Hopper during the first half of the twentieth century. Perhaps the two best examples are Griselda Pollock and Jonathan Crary. Pollock labels the male gaze “fetishistic scopophilia” (love of looking) and relates her psychoanalytic theories to the ideas of loss and desire. Crary’s focus is primarily on photography, but his insights are beneficial in decoding the social and cultural conditions of early twentieth-century New York. By looking at photographs of audience members, Crary examines how body language, facial expressions, and dress changed over time due to changes in society. I utilized these ideas in thinking about my subject and cite these authors when appropriate.

**Thomas Eakins:**

Many books and articles have been published on Eakins’ unique style of realism and his unparalleled influence on younger American artists. And although scholars have discussed the differing way he presented men and women, no one has yet taken his images as a commentary on the issue of women gaining powerful roles within a society long dominated by male attitudes and prerogatives. The primary, and first serious scholar on Eakins, Lloyd Goodrich, a one-time curator and later Director of the Whitney Museum of American Art, wrote on the artist in the 1930s and then, in 1982, published a two-volume tome on Eakins for the National Gallery of Art. Goodrich’s comprehensive presentation of Eakins’ life and art emphasizes his importance in forming modern American art. In regard

to the paintings by Eakins of female singers discussed in this dissertation, *Singing a Pathetic Song* and *The Concert Singer*, Goodrich describes the artist's subtle and refined delicacy, dramatic light, and intricate forms but ignores his unfavorable consideration of femininity and female self-confidence that, in my view, seem acutely apparent.

Goodrich's studies were good initial work, but in 1997, Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts curator Kathleen A. Foster "rediscovered" Eakins after she and her assistant, Elizabeth Milroy, investigated previously unknown material on the artist. These new documents included correspondence, personal papers, and photographs that had been secured after the death of Eakins' wife, Susan Macdowell, by her friend (and one of Eakins' most devoted students), Charles Bregler. Foster reevaluated Eakins' work, focusing on his tremendous influence and legacy on the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. Her impressive study of Eakins is a more critical examination of his work than Goodrich's, but only briefly discusses the paintings in my study, and concentrates more on composition and setting than on the lives of Eakins' subjects and the broader issues of gender relations. Foster's research does offer new insight regarding Eakins' nonconformist attitudes as a creative man and his tortured psyche as a Victorian man responding to a rapidly changing world. Foster's deeper and more informed analysis was helpful to my consideration of Eakins and his legacy.

In contrast, the most "sensational" book on Eakins, published in 2005 by Henry Adams, highlights the "secrets" of Eakins and seems to delight in presenting (and perhaps exaggerating) his unsavory and sometimes inappropriate behavior. Though Adams sensationalizes his material, his radical work seems to be more tease than truth. Many of

his allegations are based on hearsay and not supported by fact. The scholar Michael Leja might have had Adams in mind when he wrote, “This interpretation [his strict scientific attention and systematic approach] of Eakins’ work remains resilient despite efforts by some scholars to advance alternative understandings of his ‘realism.’”<sup>36</sup>

When judged against twenty-first century standards, Eakins’ Victorian attitude towards women as both physically and intellectually inferior is somewhat shocking and nearly repellant, but although his behavior was commonplace at the time, Adams asserts that Eakins had “some sort of deep-rooted loathing or anxiety about their female state.”<sup>37</sup> Yet ironically, Eakins married a woman who was strong in talent as well as spirit. While I believe Eakins’ misogynistic tendencies come forth in his treatment of women (even in his portraits of his wife), I do not take it to the extreme of Adams; instead, I equate Eakins’ behavior with a kind of knee-jerk reaction to the push for women’s equality from a man whose responses and manners are reflective of the Victorian mindset.

Leja’s more well-founded interpretations of Eakins explore the conflict he sees in Eakins’ work between veristic portrayals and the trickery of illusion – or the conflict between scientific honesty and artistic deception. Leja points out that some of the leading Eakins’ scholars such as Goodrich, Foster, and Barbara Novak have discussed this issue as a conjunction between what one sees and what one knows. Instead of a mixture of visual observation and knowledge, Leja sees a rift in Eakins work between seeing and knowing.

---

<sup>36</sup> Michael Leja, *Looking Askance, Looking Askance: Skepticism and American Art, from Eakins to Duchamp* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2004), 59.

<sup>37</sup> Henry Adams, *Eakins Revealed: The Secret Life of an American Artist* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 99.

This tension, he asserts, helps underscore some of the angst expressed in *Singing a Pathetic Song* and *The Concert Singer*.

Other Eakins' scholarship includes Darrel Sewell's 1982 and 2001 publications, Elizabeth John's books of 1983 and 1991, and William Innes Homer's 1992 exploration of the life and work of the artist. In 2000, Martin A. Berger wrote *Man Made: Thomas Eakins and the Construction of Gilded Age Manhood*, which discusses some of the attitudes to femininity and masculinity in America, especially the vast gulf between Victorian beliefs and those of today. I also address these gender attitudes by placing Eakins and his staid Victorian ideals within the context of the Gilded Age mentality.

In 2006, Sidney Kirkpatrick's book, *The Revenge of Thomas Eakins*, put forth the artist as seeking to move beyond the disgrace he suffered after his forced resignation from the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. Kirkpatrick chronicles the shunning Eakins suffered for his nonconformist lifestyle and nontraditional approach to teaching. Eakins' revenge, according to Kirkpatrick, is the acclaim he has received by a twenty-first century audience that does not consider his odd behavior a detriment when valuing his artistic accomplishments.

A more recent publication from 2007 by Amy Werbel posits Eakins as a "fallen hero;" although she discusses the sexuality present in his works, she does not mention the images covered in my study. Some of Werbel's observations of Eakins as a "victim of a paranoid Oedipal complex, sexual harasser, pervert, philanderer, abusive uncle misogynist, repressed

homosexual and slandered innocent”<sup>38</sup> conform to my analysis, but her arguments seem reactionary and polemical as she delves into the various aspects of his sexuality, most specifically his apparent obsessive interest with nudity. Her focus varies greatly from my interest in Eakins’ reactions to women interloping in a male-dominated world and how he suppressed female sexuality to express masculine control.

### **Robert Henri:**

Robert Henri is another major figure in modern American painting, but with a few exceptions, scholars did not research Henri until the latter part of the twentieth century. Recent scholarship focuses primarily on his leadership of The Eight and influence on Ashcan artists. However, along with the other artists in this dissertation, his work has not been analyzed as a gauge of his reaction to the suffrage movement and the rise of women’s equality.

One of the earliest publications on Henri is a 1921 book edited by William Yarrow and Louis Bouché. They present Henri as a distinguished American artist and offer a straightforward, yet brief overview of his life and include no comment regarding the images mentioned here. Later books, such as William Innes Homer’s 1969 writing on Henri’s circle, and 1979 articles by Joseph J. Kwait and Bennard Perlman, present more focused and in-depth studies of Henri. More recently, Valerie Ann Leeds has published several books on Henri and also contributed to the 2007 exhibition catalogue *Life’s Pleasures: The Ashcan Artists’ Brush with Leisure, 1895-1925*. Leeds discusses images of leisure in paintings by Henri and those artists under his influence. Her scope is broader than my own and covers a

---

<sup>38</sup> Amy Werbel, *Thomas Eakins: Art, Medicine and Sexuality in Nineteenth-Century Philadelphia* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007), x.

wider range of artists. For instance, Leeds introduces images of restaurants, parks, and nickelodeons. However, closer to my dissertation topic, Leeds discusses Henri's interest in performers such as Ruth St. Denis, and his portrayal of the character Salome, but makes no comparison to Shinn's vaudeville paintings, a topic that I address.

Elizabeth Milroy's 1991 *Painters of a New Century* exhibition catalogue for the Milwaukee Art Museum offers a brief biography on each of the painters that form The Eight and notes that they were provocative artists in their time, but she does not explain why their work was so sensational to America. Other notable scholarship on Henri includes Virginia M. Mecklenburg's essay on Henri in *Metropolitan Lives*, published in 1995 with Rebecca Zurier, perhaps the leading scholar on the Ashcan School, and social and cultural historian, Robert W. Snyder, delivers well-balanced and thorough information on popular theater culture in New York in the early twentieth century.

#### **Everett Shinn:**

Prior to the 1974 publication of Edith De Shazo's book, *Everett Shinn, 1876-1953, A Figure in His Time*, very few magazine articles or catalogue essays mentioned Shinn. De Shazo, a distant relative of Shinn's, made an exhaustive study of the artist by interviewing Mrs. John Sloan, David Shinn and Janet Shinn Flemming (the artist's children), and others. De Shazo's book, the first devoted to the artist, is more an overview of his life and art career than comprehensive study, although it does include exhibition lists, a chronology of Shinn's life, the locations of his paintings (at that time), and pertinent personal photographs. Her work, though excellent, is now somewhat out-of-date because new information surfaced in the 1990 essay by art scholar Linda Ferber, "Stagestruck: The Theater Subjects of Everett

Shinn” for the National Gallery of Art’s *American Art around 1900, Lectures in Memory of Daniel Fraad*. Ferber documented how Shinn’s European travels influenced the development of his art in both his choice of subject matter and his technique. Of particular note is Shinn’s study and indebtedness to Degas’ ballet and café concert scenes with their dramatic perspectives, innovative lighting, and contemporary subjects.

One of the more prominent exhibitions of Shinn’s work in recent years was presented by the Berry-Hill Galleries in New York in 2000. In its accompanying exhibition catalogue, a leading scholar on Shinn, Janay Wong, concisely chronicled his art, his life, and his take on the theater, café concerts, and the circus. Wong also made Shinn the subject of her 2002 dissertation. Although she chronicles Shinn and his art, neither of Wong’s publications explores the performer as the New Woman or her interaction with the audience. Neither De Shazo nor Wong speculates on what social issues and gender concerns are revealed in Shinn’s images, which are all subjects detailed in my study.

Rebecca Zurier is an important scholar in the field of early twentieth-century American art. Her chapter, “The Reporter’s Vision: Everett Shinn and the City as Spectacle” in *Picturing the City: Urban Vision and the Ashcan School*, is helpful in understanding how Shinn, as a trained newspaper illustrator, was able to quickly collect and sketch minute details that conveyed a wealth of information. Zurier astutely notes Shinn’s ability to depict the “pulse of the period” as both an artist and a spectator. Although she mentions how his theater paintings seem to emphasize the spectators as much as the performers, she does not do so in significant depth or consider the New Woman.

Sylvia Yount is the modern scholar who deals most directly with my topic. She wrote an essay, "Everett Shinn and the Intimate Spectacle of Vaudeville," included in the catalogue of the 2002 exhibition *On the Edge of Your Seat, Popular Theater and Film in Early Twentieth-Century American Art*. Yount tells how Shinn reconciled high art with the low art vaudeville scenes of working-class figures. She sees Shinn as an urban realist but mentions that his concentration on theatrical images set him apart from his colleagues who only occasionally dealt with popular entertainment as subject matter. However, Yount does not delve into these topics in great detail, nor does she compare Shinn with artists outside of his immediate circle, as I do.

**Walt Kuhn:**

Except for his role in the planning and organization of the 1913 Armory Show, little else has been written on Walt Kuhn. In 1978, Philip Rhys Adams published the only monograph on Kuhn. Although an ambitious undertaking, Adams' catalogue raisonné lacks detailed information on the artist and contains several errors and obvious omissions. Adams does include some interesting information on Kuhn and his art, but this book falls short of what it could have been -- a complete and thorough account of the artist's career.

Paul Bird published *Fifty Paintings by Walt Kuhn* in 1940, and presented a range of the artist's work with captions Kuhn himself supplied for each image. But the book contains no other written information.

The recent, and perhaps most thorough scholarship on Kuhn comes from Kathleen Spies, who wrote her 1999 Ph.D. dissertation on Kuhn and Reginald Marsh, entitled "Burlesque Queens and Circus Divas: Images of the Female Grotesque in the Art of Reginald

Marsh and Walt Kuhn, 1915-1945.” Spies has gone on to publish additional material on these artists’ “burlesque queens and circus divas.” Prior to her study, Kuhn’s female performers had not yet been the focus of any scholarship nor had they been discussed in the context of gender issues. While Spies and I both concentrate on images of female performers by these two artists, her interest is on their representation as “grotesque” figures of desire and disgust and she relates these showgirls and strippers to America’s troubled national identity. Spies’ in-depth research and well-considered analysis of both Kuhn and Marsh’s images of the Depression-era performer have been extremely helpful to my own study, but my study explores other important concepts and directions.

**Reginald Marsh:**

A number of works have been published on American burlesque. As early as 1937, David Dressler wrote a Ph.D. dissertation entitled “Burlesque as a Social Phenomenon.” While this is an academic study and includes some valuable data, it is a dated historical document. Other popular histories on burlesque include Irving Zeidman’s 1967 *Burlesque Show* and Mort Minsky and Milt Machlin’s 1986 *Minsky’s*. Robert Allen takes a scholarly approach to the history of burlesque with his 1991 *Horrible Prettiness: Burlesque and American Culture* and his work, therefore, proves most valuable to my study. It is one of several books and approaches that come from a non-art historical perspective yet have proven seminal to my research and thinking.

In-depth research on Reginald Marsh and his images of burlesque first appeared in the early seventies when Goodrich, a childhood friend of the artist, published a large-format book that grew out of his work on Marsh when he curated a 1955 exhibition for the

Whitney Museum of American Art. Goodrich's book remains the most comprehensive overview of the artist – including information on his personal life as well as his stylistic development. Goodrich worked directly with Marsh's widow who made available to him a trove of records, notes, photographs, and other material.

The Whitney Museum mounted an exhibition of Marsh's art in 1983 for which Marilyn Cohen, who wrote a 1987 dissertation on Marsh, authored a catalogue essay entitled "Reginald Marsh's New York." She observes that the women performers in Marsh's paintings seem to hold power over the men who are watching them or waiting for them. Cohen's perceptions are a good starting point, but I will go further by connecting the social conditions of the time with the female performers who inhabit Marsh's paintings.

More recently, in 1997, Michelle Miller wrote a Ph.D. dissertation on "The Charms of Exposed Flesh: Reginald Marsh and Burlesque." Miller discusses how Marsh's images of strippers were more exemplary of the cultural conditions of the time than of the individual burlesque performers. She discusses issues of class, gender, and the consumer culture during the years of the Depression. However, it is the 1999 dissertation by Kathleen Spies on both Kuhn and Marsh that offers the most in-depth analysis of the burlesque (and the circus) and the women who work in those professions.

Spies' subsequent 2004 article, "Girls and Gags: Sexual Display and Humor in Reginald Marsh's Burlesque Images," further examines Marsh's images of burlesque. Noting his frequent linking of sex with humor, Spies views Marsh's paintings and prints in the context of contemporary burlesque skits and girlie magazines to reveal this linkage as part of a larger trend that was vital to modern understandings of commercialized leisure

and female sexuality. The distinctly grotesque flavor of Marsh's humor and its repeated connection to sexual display suggest that the artist used humor both to capture what he saw as the modern, lewd, and popular character of the subjects he depicted, and simultaneously, to mitigate the potential threat of those subjects. It may also have helped the artist and his upper-class viewers negotiate their ambivalence toward the working-class women in his images, and to alleviate the guilt associated with desiring them. As the letters of Marsh's primary patron William Benton attest, this bawdy blend of sex and humor signaled a temporary escape into an invigorating world of lower-class leisure for his viewers. It also aided Marsh in fashioning his own identity as a liaison to this enticingly tawdry realm.

Prior to Spies, Ellen Wiley Todd's 1993 *The "New Woman" Revised: Painting and Gender Politics on Fourteenth Street* devotes a chapter to Marsh with a pioneering and provocative study of the social and cultural history surrounding the artist and his portrayal of women (often seen shopping) in and around Fourteenth Street in New York, in the period between the two World Wars. Todd's focus is on issues of gender and female behavior in this period, a topic which had not previously been discussed by Marsh's scholars.

Rachel Shteir's 2004 *Striptease: The Untold History of the Girlie Show* is one of the first serious studies of this low form of entertainment. Shteir contends that the tease is equal in importance to the act of stripping (the term "striptease" was not used until the late 1920s) and that the maintenance of distance between the performer and her audience heightens the effect.

**Edward Hopper:**

Of the artists covered in my dissertation, Hopper has attracted the most scholarly attention. The 1971 monograph on Hopper, again by the Whitney Museum one-time Curator and past Director Goodrich, remains the standard source (similar in scope and impact to his 1972 large-format publication on Marsh).

Additionally, Gail Levin, Deborah Lyons, Carol Troyen, and Walter Wells have each contributed scholarship on the period of the artist's greatest achievements—from about 1925 to 1950. Former curator of the Hopper Collection at the Whitney Museum of American Art, Levin is recognized as one of the pre-eminent Hopper scholars today. She is the author of *The Poetry of Solitude, Edward Hopper: A Catalog Raisonné* (2007); *Edward Hopper: An Intimate Biography* (1998); *Edward Hopper: The Art and the Artist* (1981); *Edward Hopper as Illustrator* (1979); and *Hopper's Places* (1998) in which she coupled Hopper's paintings with her photographs of his New York Maine, Gloucester, and Cape Cod settings. Through her collection of Hopper's correspondence, newspaper and magazine articles, and interviews, Levin, in her many publications, has recorded detailed accounts of Hopper's life and his art.

Exploring other sources, Lyons made a thorough study of Hopper's four ledgers, kept by his wife, Josephine Nivison Hopper. The ledgers record in detail nearly every work he created, exhibited, and sold from 1924 to 1966. These journals contain exhibition records, listings of magazine and newspaper articles, trip records, prizes, detailed sketches, and copious notes for each of his finished works. Publishing a selection from his ledgers, Lyons

focuses more on the actual record of his output and his stylistic tendencies and less on any analysis of his subject matter.

Troyen is one of the curators and contributors to an extensive and comprehensive catalogue for a 2007 Hopper exhibition. In addition to discussing Hopper's creative process, Troyen places his work within the cultural events of his time. She outlines Hopper's oeuvre and includes a section on his theater and movie images, but she does so in a limited way compared to my own investigations.

More specific to my topic are Linda Nochlin's 1981 article for *Art Journal* entitled, "Edward Hopper and the Imagery of Alienation" and Vivien Green Fryd's 2000 article for *American Art*, "Edward Hopper's 'Girlie Show': Who Is the Silent Partner?" which both examine Hopper's presentation of women as reactive to cultural conditions.

It is from this pool of scholarship that I have drawn inspiration and information. I have sought to delve further into areas previously ignored, or only briefly touched on, in my quest to further understand how the images produced between 1880 and 1940 by some leading American painters reveal various and wide-ranging responses to the rapid and profound emergence of women into America's popular culture.

## CHAPTER ONE

### The Well-Performed Ideal of the True Woman

#### Thomas Eakins, *Singing a Pathetic Song*, 1881 and *The Concert Singer*, 1890-92

The insistent realism and dynamic teaching style of the Philadelphia painter Thomas Eakins influenced many late nineteenth and early twentieth-century American artists. His paintings *Singing a Pathetic Song*, 1881 (fig. 8) and *The Concert Singer*, 1890-92 (fig. 9) convey the attributes of the Victorian ideal, the “True Woman.” At the time he painted these two canvases, women were expected to be (and under law, were) subservient to men in their roles as daughters, wives, and mothers.<sup>39</sup> This construct dominated the overall culture and Eakins’ output as an artist dovetailed with the status quo. Despite Eakins’ professed affection for his wife and his somewhat enlightened attitude regarding female students, in his capacities both as a teacher and an administrator, his images of female performers suggest that he harbored the Victorian view that women were indeed the weaker, if not weakened sex. However, during the decades Eakins was most active as an artist, a new more self-actualized ideal of femininity appeared; she was known as the New Woman.

---

<sup>39</sup> For more on the traditional male / female dynamic of the era see Sarah Grand, “The New Aspect of the Woman Question,” *The North American Review*, Vol., 158, No. 448 (March 1894): 271. Grand, a feminist pioneer, explained that women were not entirely without blame for they had allowed man “to arrange the whole social system and manage or mismanage it all these ages without ever seriously examining his work with a view to considering whether his abilities and his motives were sufficiently good to qualify him for the task. We have listened without a smile to his preachments, about our place in life and all we are good for, on the text that ‘there is no understanding a woman.’”

Eakins was perhaps the American artist who most influenced Robert Henri and The Eight, a group of young artists associated with him.<sup>40</sup> If these painters did not ardently admire Eakins' work, his realistic approach and his ambition to accurately portray contemporary urban life nonetheless exerted a considerable influence upon them. Eakins was an instructor and briefly the Director of the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts where Henri enrolled as a student in 1886, the same year that Eakins departed under rather scandalous circumstances due to his controversial teaching methods involving the study of the nude.<sup>41</sup>

Eakins adopted a radically new scientific approach to art yet he clung to Victorian ideals and his paintings of True Women in performance, *Singing a Pathetic Song* and *The Concert Singer*, emphasize the disparity in power and status between the sexes.<sup>42</sup> Henri was certainly affected by the dynamic and innovative approach to realism that Eakins championed during his tenure. Henri and his circle took Eakins' desire to paint realistic scenes of modern life as a starting point, but they more willingly embraced rapidly transforming values of gender relations at the beginning of the twentieth century. As artists, they did not deliberately seek to proselytize women's liberation, but neither did they

---

<sup>40</sup> The Eight, under the mentorship of Robert Henri, were artists who rebelled against the academic traditions of New York's National Academy of Design. They exhibited only once at New York City's Macbeth Galleries in 1908. During the months prior to the opening, several newspaper articles about the exhibition aroused public curiosity. An article in the *New York Evening Sun* on May 15, 1907 noted the artists' unorthodox choice of rather startling realistic views of the gritty side of New York City featuring some of its poor, disenfranchised denizens rarely portrayed in fine art. The writer dubbed The Eight the "apostles of ugliness."

<sup>41</sup> For more on Eakins' forced resignation from the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts see Amy Werbel, *Thomas Eakins: Art, Medicine and Sexuality in Nineteenth-Century Philadelphia* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007), 75, 85, 126-131.

<sup>42</sup> See Clement Greenberg, "Review of Two Exhibitions of Thomas Eakins," *Nation* (July 1, 1944) reprinted in John O'Brian, ed., *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and criticism, Vol. 1* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 222. See Greenberg for information on Eakins' unique approach to realism. Greenberg wrote of his keen scientific interest saying that Eakins "reentered academic painting to destroy it by its own logic."

ignore the New Woman. Instead, they both consciously and unconsciously absorbed and reflected the changes that were occurring around them.

Eakins oeuvre contains his female family members and their close friends numerous times as vulnerable and listless True Women. In most instances they populate quiet, well-appointed interiors where they sew, spin, or play music; all acceptable pastimes for well-mannered American bourgeois True Women in the years of Reconstruction after the Civil War.

The two singers introduced earlier are somewhat unusual for Eakins in that they are standing rather than seated and engaged in an activity that draws attention to themselves. Eakins painted *Singing a Pathetic Song* and *The Concert Singer* in his unflattering style combining realism with meticulously accurate anatomical detail.<sup>43</sup> The soloist of *Singing a Pathetic Song* is a distinctly plain young woman with an elaborately fussy lavender dress which she stands within rather than wears. Her poorly-fitted dress is more detailed than any other element of the painting, with each ruffle, ribbon, and wrinkle fully rendered. The art critic Earl Shinn said she wore the “worst-fitting of reach-me-down dresses, executing a song with the fixity and rigidity of taxidermy.”<sup>44</sup> Eakins scholar Kathleen Foster adds that “the dress bespoke the values of Victorian society: elaborately artificial, luxurious in its investment of materials and labor, protective of women, who were covered-up, bound in

---

<sup>43</sup> In 1879, a writer for *Scribner's* magazine questioned Eakins about the unusual and rigorous anatomical studies and dissections that his art students underwent. When asked, “Must a painter know all this?” Eakins answered, “To draw the human figure it is necessary to know as much as possible about it, about its structure and its movements, its bones and muscles, how they are made, and how they act....Knowing all that will enable [an artist] to observe more closely, and the closer his observation is, the better his drawing will be.” Quoted in Michael Leja, *Looking Askance: Skepticism and American Art From Eakins to Duchamp* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, Ltd., 2004), 60.

<sup>44</sup> Darrel Sewell, *Thomas Eakins: Artist of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1982), 110.

and weighted down by such clothing.”<sup>45</sup> Her garment, with its oppressive and restraining heaviness, enforces Eakins’ desire to suppress, control, and contain his women.

The True Women of the upper and middle-classes were expected to carry primary responsibility for the education of their children and to keep a well-run household. Generally believed to be inherently more nurturing and more aesthetically sensitive than men, women ruled the domestic sphere, for they were thought unable to cope with the stress of engaging in an active public role in the male dominated modern world outside the home. Many portraits of women at this time presented them as feminine, refined captives caged within well-appointed parlors.

Eakins did not subscribe to expectations of patrons desiring the flattering, glamorous execution of fashionable society paintings and Gilded Age portraits by artists such as John Singer Sargent. His 1892 *Lady Agnew of Lochnaw* (fig. 24) is of a British socialite sitting in an informal, natural pose, looking directly at the viewer with alert and sultry eyes in a setting evoking femininity, vivacity, and privilege. Not only did Sargent compliment her features, but he also charged her with a vibrant, healthy energy radiating confidence, a characteristic utterly lacking in Eakins’ portrayal of women.<sup>46</sup> Instead, as the British art historian Andrew Wilton notes, with Eakins’ women there is an “extraordinary absence of sensuousness of

---

<sup>45</sup> Kathleen A. Foster, *Thomas Eakins Rediscovered, Charles Bregler’s Thomas Eakins Collection at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997), 115.

<sup>46</sup> As quoted in Evan Charteris, *John Singer Sargent* (New York: C. Scribner’s and Sons, 1927), 160, Sargent responded in a letter to an unnamed patron who had requested that the artist “soften” the features on a painting of his wife. Sargent wrote that although he was often “reproached with giving a hard expression to ladies portraits, especially when I have retained some look of intelligence in a face,...the face in the portrait [the patron complained about] is kind and indulgent, with over and above this, a hint at a sense of humour” and Sargent went on to make it clear he would not change it.

any kind.”<sup>47</sup> The women in *Singing a Pathetic Song* and *The Concert Singer*, like those in his other female portraits, appear awkward, exhausted, or even ill.

“The cornerstone of Eakins’ own pictorial aesthetic,” as art scholar Patricia Failing explains, is “freedom from affectation and uncompromising fidelity to physical fact.”<sup>48</sup> Eakins’ artistic purview was formed during the Reconstruction period as America’s economy boomed and its citizenry found themselves in a period of growth and extensive development of its urban centers. The culture of America at that time expanded in many areas including music-making. For example, in the 1880s, mass production of pianos began in the United States. Piano manufacturers embraced the industrial techniques of interchangeable parts and coupled them with production lines, leading to affordable instruments available to a broader public. The piano derived from the harpsichord which had long been a symbol of status and refinement for the privileged. Now the piano became an instrument of status and refinement for the middle class. Pianos were abundant and affordable during Reconstruction and were equated with genteel behavior and wholesome morals. Piano playing was an acceptable and even expected pastime for proper Victorian gentlewomen. Viewed as an admirable skill of feminine accomplishment and grace in both European and American societies, the piano was considered “an emotional center for home life and played a significant role in courtship.”<sup>49</sup> True Women, such as the singer in Eakins’ *Singing a Pathetic Song*, were encouraged to entertain family and friends with music at the

---

<sup>47</sup> Andrew Wilton, “Review: Thomas Eakins, London,” *The Burlington Magazine* Vol. 136, No. 1090 (Jan., 1994), 43.

<sup>48</sup> Patricia Failing, *Best-Loved Art from American Museums* (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, Inc., 1983), 107.

<sup>49</sup> Henry Adams, *Eakins Revealed: The Secret Life of an American Artists* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 167.

piano but were discouraged from professional careers or even from taking their musical studies too seriously.

A number of nineteenth-century artists, both European and American, painted scenes of genteel refinement inspired by seventeenth-century Dutch genre scenes such as those by Johannes Vermeer.<sup>50</sup> Nineteen of Eakins' paintings concern music and four of these feature his sisters or their friends spending time at the piano. *Frances Eakins*, ca. 1870 (fig. 25) features his sister as a bored, well-bred young woman with seemingly nothing better to do than to appear well-dressed and idly decorous. Music as a leisure activity was one of the few acceptable pastimes for young women who were not yet wives or mothers. However, as underscored in 1839 by the editor of the English journal *Musical World*, women were not encouraged to pursue a career in music, for this was "too laborious a profession for women."<sup>51</sup>

One exception was an Eakins family friend, Elizabeth Crowell, a gifted and serious musician who studied at the Philadelphia Music Academy.<sup>52</sup> In *Elizabeth at the Piano*, 1875 (fig. 26) Eakins alluded to her talent by illuminating one side of her face, the sheet music, and her hands on the piano keys. Art scholar Elizabeth Johns writes that "in this painting,

---

<sup>50</sup> Throughout the whole of the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth century, most Americans believed that the serious study of art in Europe was essential to an artist's training. Eakins left for Europe in September 1866 and entered the atelier of Jean-Léon Gérôme, a teacher in the Academic style at the École des Beaux-Arts, the leading art academy of the day. He later studied at the private atelier of Léon Bonnat, a teacher known for his blending of academic and realist styles.

<sup>51</sup> *Musical World* (April 11, 1839), 222.

<sup>52</sup> See Sidney D. Kirkpatrick, *The Revenge of Thomas Eakins* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006), 177-179. Elizabeth Cromwell was the sister of William Crowell, Eakins' classmate at Central High School. William married Eakins' sister and another of Crowell's sisters, Katherin, was engaged to Eakins before her premature death.

Elizabeth's music making is a totally integrated unison of body and mind."<sup>53</sup> When the painting was exhibited in 1880 at the Society for American Artists, critics and Eakins' fellow painters commented on the depth of the psychological mood, an element seldom seen in female portraits of the time.<sup>54</sup>

Six years after painting *Elizabeth at the Piano*, Eakins executed the larger, more complex composition of another young woman performing, again, in a private home. *Singing a Pathetic Song* portrays a performer standing amid a small ensemble of musicians engaged in an evening of home musicale performance in the tradition of *Hausmusik*, a popular nineteenth-century amateur home entertainment derived from similar after-dinner European traditions.<sup>55</sup> Painted with an unflinchingly truthful eye, Eakins isolated his singer in a head-to-toe composition and recorded every facial feature and bodily characteristic with the same blunt honesty that often alienated patrons of his portraiture. While the painting may be a satire on the notion of the amateur singer, this might also simply be a painting that displays the artist's own enjoyment of the at-home concerts that he and his wife frequently hosted and attended.

Two of Eakins' art students from the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts modeled for *Singing a Pathetic Song*. Margaret Alexina Harrison sings and Susan Hannah Macdowell (whom Eakins would later marry in 1884) plays the piano in a nondescript Victorian parlor.<sup>56</sup>

---

<sup>53</sup> Elizabeth Johns, *Thomas Eakins: The Heroism of Modern Life*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), 121.

<sup>54</sup> Sewell, *Thomas Eakins*, 32.

<sup>55</sup> First exhibited as *Lady Singing a Pathetic Song* at the 4th Annual Exhibition of the Society of American Artists on Oct. 23, 1881. See Johns, *Thomas Eakins*, 134, footnote, 33.

<sup>56</sup> According to information in the Vertical Files for Thomas Eakins at the Corcoran Gallery in Washington, D.C., the face of the piano player in a photograph of the painting is softer and may have been an image of his sister,

They are joined by the accomplished cellist and member of the Philadelphia Orchestra, Charles F. Stolte.<sup>57</sup>

Eakins took liberties with the composition and placement of his musicians and arranged them in an unlikely manner, atypical of a chamber ensemble. The performers are lined-up single file, unable to make eye contact with each other or meet the viewer's gaze. Eakins placed the audience off to the far right of the piano with the singer curiously remote from them. Standing at an awkward angle, facing away from the viewer, the singer in *Singing a Pathetic Song* looks toward unseen spectators but is not engaged with them; her expression is vacant. Her shoulders and the sheet music she holds are drooping, as though she is too weary, too weak, or too disinterested to hold them up. Although in *The Art Journal* one critic wrote, "her expression of an intelligent soul transforming what is popularly considered ugliness into beauty," it seems apparent that beauty was the least of Eakins' concerns. He abandoned typical Gilded Age idealization and replaced it with a brutally honest and meticulously anatomical drawing of her mouth and throat forming a particular note of the song. Eakins' interest in the physical act of singing and producing sound is reflected by his concentrated focus on the shape of the mouth and throat. He was less interested in the singer and the mournful message of her song than with the physicality of the facial muscles and tendons in her neck engaged in singing. Eakins' intense study of human anatomy and his dogged observation of how flesh covers muscles and bones denote a more scientific and less artistic approach to the composition; his art is blunt and direct.

---

Margaret Eakins, who died in 1882. Eakins later changed the face of the piano player to that of Susan Macdowell.

<sup>57</sup> Johns, *Thomas Eakins*, 133.

Some of Eakins' compositional choices seem unusual and may indicate his awareness of the trend of European painters to incorporate compositional design borrowed from *ukiyo-e* Japanese woodblock prints which were novel and revelatory when introduced to Westerners in the 1850s as a result of Japan's increased foreign trade.<sup>58</sup> The few other items in view, such as the blue-green vase upon a pedestal, the framed portrait, and the piano are marginalized and nearly cropped out of the frame.

One modern-day writer notes that Eakins' "pathetic singer transcends a specific moment in a particular parlor to tell an emblematic story of the power of music."<sup>59</sup> The vocalist and the musicians appear to somberly and intensely concentrate on their performance and this is fitting, given that it is a so-called pathetic song. This was a specific kind of poignant, melancholy song telling of loss, regret, and pathos especially popular after the Civil War.<sup>60</sup> Pathetic songs were known to move listeners to tears. Eakins' singer is, according to Ariane Ruskin Batterberry, "a woman seized by such sadness we think the life must have been wrung out of her, despite her elegant and expensive dress."<sup>61</sup>

It is not merely her demeanor and frail posture that lend her an anemic air, but also her heavy clothing, the dim lighting, and the muted interior colors. She does not project the vibrant energy of the performers painted by some other nineteenth century artists. Eakins'

---

<sup>58</sup> In 1853 Japan reopened to foreign trade after a two hundred year period of isolation and imports including fans, kimonos, silks, screens, and prints soon arrive into the European market. Parisians saw their first formal exhibition of Japanese arts and crafts in the Japanese Pavilion at the World's Fair of 1867 and in 1890 the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris presented a large exhibition of *ukiyo-e* prints.

<sup>59</sup> From the wall label for Thomas Eakins' *Singing A Pathetic Song* that was included in the exhibition, "American Stories: Paintings of Everyday Life, 1765-1915" on view at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, October 12, 2009-January 24, 2010.

<sup>60</sup> Johns, *Thomas Eakins*, 135.

<sup>61</sup> Ariane Ruskin Batterberry and Michael Batterberry, *The Pantheon Story of American Art for Young People* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1976), 96.

work stands in contrast to that of such contemporaries as John Singer Sargent and William Merritt Chase, both of whom painted Carmencita, a famed “Spanish Gypsy dancer,” then enchanting audiences in Paris theaters and New York concert halls like Oscar Hammerstein’s famed Victoria Theatre with its Paradise Roof Garden and Koster and Bial’s Music Hall.<sup>62</sup> Sargent saw Carmencita perform in Paris at the Exposition Universelle in 1889.<sup>63</sup> The following year, he arranged for her to dance before a small audience at Chase’s Tenth Street studio in New York which was, according to Sargent, “a capital big place.”<sup>64</sup>

After that event, she posed for both Sargent’s *La Carmencita*, 1890 (fig. 27) and Chase’s *Carmencita*, 1890 (fig. 28). Each artist capitalized on her vivid costume, her bold forthright stance, and vivid gaze as she engaged with the viewer. With their slashing, energetic brushstrokes, both painters exulted in her exotic looks and the sweeping motion of her body “from toes to finger tips, from crown to heel.”<sup>65</sup> Such energy was difficult to corral, yet the two artists managed to capture her highly charged and commanding presence.<sup>66</sup> In contrast, Eakins’ drab, stationary, asexual performer in *Singing a Pathetic Song* is no Carmencita.

---

<sup>62</sup> According to Edison film historian C. Musser, Spanish dancer Carmencita was the first woman to appear in front of an Edison motion picture camera. She was filmed at Edison’s Black Maria studio in March of 1894, performing a dance routine.

<sup>63</sup> Carmencita claimed to be the daughter of a French army officer and an Andalusian-Moorish woman; however, it was apparently born in Aliquippa, Pennsylvania in 1868.

<sup>64</sup> From an undated letter written by John Singer Sargent to Isabella Stewart Gardner quoted in Stanley Olson, *John Singer Sargent: His Portrait* (London and New York: Macmillan, 1986), 162. Olson believes the letter was written in March 1890.

<sup>65</sup> Lida Rose McCabe, “Carmencita and Her Painters,” *The New York Times* (July 8, 1923), Book Review and Magazine section, BR4.

<sup>66</sup> *The New York Times* (Nov. 20, 1984), <http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?res=9907EED61131E033A25753C2A9679D94659ED7CF> (accessed June 12, 2011) in a review for a show at Koster and Bial’s stated that Carmencita had “made the mistake of becoming a bit civilized, and no longer comes upon the stage like a colt who has leaped a pair of pasture bars.”

Devoid of any sentimentality or sensuality, the interior by Eakins is bleak. Although Eakins was from a Quaker background, he seems to present a Calvinist outlook, and as Wilton suggests, the “prevailing ethos of conscientious and self-denying endeavor is manifest in his work; as a portrait painter he interprets it with an insight that is at times frightening.”<sup>67</sup> The frail, subdued female performer seems remote and listless and lacks the kind of energy one might expect from a person in the midst of a performance. The female pianist plays her accompaniment in the shadows, yet the male cellist’s face, in keeping with Eakins’ *modus operandi* regarding his male subjects, is warmly illuminated and he appears to be confident and more active. The female singer stands solemnly in a harsh, partial light making her complexion seem pale and reducing her dress to gray scale. The high contrast leaves half of her angular face in profile and the rest in darkness. She concludes the final note of the song while slowly lowering her sheet music.<sup>68</sup> Her hesitant posture suggests that she lacks the confidence to master her performance.

The poor quality of the light Eakins allows to fall on the singer ensures that, in the words of modern art historian Michael Leja, she does not benefit from the artist’s “anatomical and perspectival knowledge – measurable information about bodies in space...” or from “the dissolving and flattening effect of light and reflection [that was so pervasive in Impressionist works of the same period].”<sup>69</sup> Glimmers of light shine on her brown hair and its braided bun, the sheen of her loose-fitting silk dress, and the pages of sheet music in her hand, but the rest of the scene fades to shadows reminiscent of Rembrandt’s subdued tonal

---

<sup>67</sup> Wilton, “Review: Thomas Eakins,” 44.

<sup>68</sup> Michael Fried, “Realism, Writing, and Disfiguration in Thomas Eakins’ *Gross Clinic*,” *Representations*, Vol. Winter 1985, No. 9 (Winter, 1985), 79.

<sup>69</sup> Michael Leja, “Eakins and Icons,” *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 83, No. 3 (Sept. 2001), 482.

qualities and chiaroscuro effects. The art scholar, William Innes Homer notes Rembrandt van Rijn's influence on Eakins, who employed light to "establish visual priorities in the composition, spotlighting what is most important and, by its absence, relegating nonessentials to the shadows."<sup>70</sup> The dark overall tone evokes the oppressive domestic color palette of the period between 1865 – 1895, sometimes referred to as "the Brown Decades," a term coined by the American historian Lewis Mumford for the title of his 1931 book.

*Singing a Pathetic Song* does not document an actual performance. Instead it is an imagined event concocted from a series of eleven photographs that Eakins shot in the garret studio of the town house he shared with his widowed father, two sisters, and an aunt at 1729 Mount Vernon Street in the prosperous Fairmount neighborhood of Philadelphia. It had been his family home since 1857. Apparently, Eakins acquired his first camera in 1880 and it is possible that this series of full-length photographs may represent the first of a number of times Eakins used photography to aid with his compositions and subjects.<sup>71</sup> However, this is his only painting with existent accompanying photographic studies.<sup>72</sup> The glass-plate images detail the wrinkles in the dress which are meticulously mimicked in the painting. However, none of the photographs include the two musicians.<sup>73</sup> Also visible in the photographs is a swatch of fabric pinned to the wall behind the model. The cloth sample is the basis of the textured wallpaper in the painting. The photographs include

---

<sup>70</sup> William Innes Homer, *Thomas Eakins: His Life and Art* (New York, London, and Paris: Abbeville Press Publishers, 1992), 78.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 263.

<sup>72</sup> John Wilmerding, *Thomas Eakins and the Heart of American Life* (London: National Portrait Gallery, 1993), 189.

<sup>73</sup> According to Foster, *Thomas Eakins Rediscovered*, 114-116 there are at least eleven known photographs of Harrison in Eakins' studio, wearing this dress.

Eakins' studio window, which is cropped from the painting though its light fills the upper left part of the painting's composition.

*Singing a Pathetic Song* was purchased in 1885 by Edward Hornor Coates, Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts' Chairman of the Committee on Instruction.<sup>74</sup> Coates had expressed the desire to have a work by Eakins that "might some day become part of the Academy."<sup>75</sup> Originally Coates accepted Eakins *Swimming*, 1885 (fig. 29) which perhaps might have better fulfilled the apparent intention of presenting a painting that would confirm "the full flowering of the academy's pedagogy."<sup>76</sup> However, Coates declined the painting of six nude males and a dog frolicking at the edge of the water on a warm day, even though the bodies and their postures present a more thorough anatomical study and more challenging composition than does the gentler image of True Womanhood found in *Singing a Pathetic Song*.<sup>77</sup> In a "brief and confidential" letter, as Coates labeled it, he asked if he could "talk frankly" in his request for a painting with "more acceptable" subject matter.<sup>78</sup> Coates went on to profess that Eakins "must not suppose from this that I depreciate the present work – such is not the case."<sup>79</sup>

The choice of the unassuming, plain female over the virile and athletic male nudes seems to suggest Coates discomfort with the whiff of homoeroticism that some observers

---

<sup>74</sup> Edward Coates, in keeping with his role as chairman of the committee on instruction, was the official to request Thomas Eakins' resignation in 1886, according to notes in Eakins' vertical file in the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

<sup>75</sup> Letter from Edward H. Coates to Thomas Eakins dated November, 27, 1885 – copy of letter in vertical file of Thomas Eakins, Corcoran Gallery, Washington D.C. Original letter is in the Bregler Collection of the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts.

<sup>76</sup> Werbel, *Thomas Eakins: Art, Medicine and Sexuality*, 39. Of interest, neither *Swimming* nor *Singing a Pathetic Song* entered into the collection of the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts.

<sup>77</sup> Letter from Edward H. Coates to Thomas Eakins dated November, 27, 1885, from Thomas Eakins, vertical file. Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

have noted in *Swimming* and others of Eakins' images. Coates was more comfortable with the image of a delicate woman in a laudable display of proper Victorian feminine deportment as opposed to the proffered study of healthy American maleness. Although she is singing, she does not seem to bring much strength to her performance. Her torpid figure stands in marked contrast to the masculine physicality of the figures in *Swimming*.

Later in his career, Eakins departed from his preference for studies of amateur female performers and instead painted Weda Cook who, despite her status as an esteemed stage professional, appears just as inert and awkward as the subject of *Singing a Pathetic Song*.<sup>80</sup> Cook stands alone onstage in *The Concert Singer*, which is painted with great precision.<sup>81</sup>

Cook was from Camden, New Jersey, where she often visited the revered writer Walt Whitman, who greatly admired her singing talent and, according to Cook, frequently asked her to perform "O Rest in the Lord." She made her debut at the Philadelphia Academy of Music at age sixteen. One music critic writing for the *North Philadelphia Musical Journal* reported that, "The event of the evening was the appearance of Miss Weda Cook, of Camden (one of Conductor Schmitz's pupils), whose powerful contralto voice, unassuming manner and thorough training won the most enthusiastic tributes from the

---

<sup>80</sup> Originally the painting was titled, *Lady Singing a Pathetic Song*.

<sup>81</sup> See Wilmerding, in *Thomas Eakins and the Heart*: footnote 3, 118, for information on the price of *The Concert Singer* which was listed in 1893 and again in 1895 as \$1000, making it one of the most expensive works by the artist before 1900. Eakins raised the price to \$5000 in 1914 because of the \$4000 sale of *Dr. D. Hayes Agnew*. After his death in 1916 *The Concert Singer* was appraised for only \$150.

critical assemblage. Miss Cook's voice is undoubtedly phenomenal, and, should she decide upon a stage career, she seems destined to make a sensation one of these days."<sup>82</sup>

Eakins painted Cook wearing a conservative but elegant pink gown of brocaded taffeta trimmed with lace and beads of pearl appropriate for public performance, with a dipping neckline and ornate bodice above a cinched waist. A fashionable bustle made with pleats and gathers fills the back of Cook's skirt which ends in a long train. A surfeit of etiquette books of the time instructed readers about social behavior and appropriate dress for a variety of social events. In the 1896 manual *Social Life or The Manners and Customs of Polite Society*, author Maud C. Cooke advised, "A regularly décolleté (exposing shoulders and neck) gown is properly worn only during the same hours that a gentleman's dress suit is donned, that is, 'from dusk to dawn.'"<sup>83</sup>

Eakins depicts Cook encumbered and contained in the gown as a massive, solid form with an odd combination of blurred and focused features; some of the beadwork, for example, is precisely portrayed, while other areas such as the floral brocade are impressionistic and painterly. This inconsistency may suggest the use of photography, although no photographs of Cook by Eakins seem to have survived. In the objects and accessories, the painting alternates from extreme realism to near abstraction for no clear reason. For instance, even the flaws of her dress are clearly rendered when they might have been softened or left out. Like the wrinkled dress in *Singing a Pathetic Song*, a large crease is visible on the bodice of Cook's gown. When asked by a visitor to his studio why he

---

<sup>82</sup> Quoted in Johns, *Thomas Eakins*, 138 from original source, *North Philadelphia Musical Journal* 3, no. 1 (January 1888), 7.

<sup>83</sup> Maud C. Cooke, *Social Life or The Manners and Customs of Polite Society* (Buffalo, New York: The Matthews-Northrup Company, 1896), 392.

chose to include such imperfection, Eakins replied, “Why, what’s the matter with that? It’s there, isn’t it?”<sup>84</sup> He emphasized the busy pattern and artifice of the garment. The visual oddities and contradictions attract attention to the garment but do not hold it, allowing the viewer’s eye to scan various elements before focusing on the singer’s face.

With hands clumsily clasped on a well-lit yet barren stage, Cook stands before a simple, neutral background which offers no distraction and allows the viewer’s eye to settle on Eakins’ subject. The light illuminating her elaborately beaded gown grants an elegance not reflected in her expression. Her chin recedes awkwardly as she opens her mouth to sing the opening musical bars of a song Whitman admired, the Aria, No. 31, Air: The Angel, “O Rest in the Lord” from Felix Mendelssohn’s *Elijah*.<sup>85</sup>

Although Eakins probably witnessed Cook in live performance, the painting, *The Concert Singer*, was entirely his own construction in that he chose the model, her dress, her pose, and the song she is singing. The lyrics of “O Rest in the Lord” include lines such as “wait patiently for Him, and He shall give thee thy heart's desires” and “commit thy way unto Him, and trust in Him, and fret not thyself because of evil doers.” This choice of song seems to reinforce Eakins’ desire as a male artist to control and dominate a female performer. Such was the case in his early work, *Singing a Pathetic Song*, which ensconces an amateur singer in a somber setting as she sings a mournful tune. In both cases, the songs themselves underscore an attitude of oppression forced on them by the artist.

---

<sup>84</sup> Lloyd Goodrich, *Thomas Eakins, Vol. II*, (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press for the National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C., 1982), 84.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

Completed some ten years after *Singing a Pathetic Song*, *Concert Singer* projects more sophistication and incorporates some elements common to French Impressionism specifically the flattened design, the partially cropped ornamental plant, the conductor's hand, the bouquet of flowers, the hooded footlights, and the low viewpoint. These are all compositional characteristics common to Degas' Japanese woodblock-inspired theater scenes. The unbecoming posture of the singer in action may, in fact, have been inspired by Degas' *Singer with Glove*, (*Chanteuse de Café*) ca. 1878 (fig. 30), which features a bawdy café-concert chanteuse boisterously belting out a racy song full of sexual innuendo. Degas' performer is seen from the low, close vantage point of the spectator who peers awkwardly up her nose and down her throat. Still, her dramatic gestures and animated expression during her energetic performance make her appealing to the viewer.

*The Concert Singer*, like *Singing a Pathetic Song*, denotes Eakins' lack of interest in traditional idealization and his extreme concern for an accurate, albeit unbecoming, exploration of human anatomy as well as his fascination with musical performance. Eakins incorporated characteristics of modernist technique into his otherwise traditional style resulting in realistic portrayals with a sense of immediacy and insight into his female performers' introspection and concentration on their vocalizations.

*The Concert Singer* and Eakins other portraits of women betray his possible misogyny and hostility which goes beyond the more commonly accepted attitudes of patronizing tolerance adopted by many men of that time. Not all scholars agree with this interpretation of Eakins' psychology regarding women, but scholar Henry Adams in his controversial 2005 essay on the artist maintains that Eakins "viewed women as physically

and intellectually inferior to men, and felt some sort of deep-rooted loathing or anxiety about their female state” and his misogynistic tendencies were “extreme even by Victorian standards.”<sup>86</sup> To Adams, Eakins’ lackluster female subjects betray no strong emotions, and *Concert Singer* is a case in point. Her apathy, lethargy, and stoicism resemble some of the tranquil, virtuous characteristics of Thomas Dewing’s “Aesthetic Women.” While Dewing’s women represent delicate femininity, their calm and listless postures hint at the submissiveness expected of the True Woman.<sup>87</sup> Rather than objectify and encapsulate his women as Dewing did in the domestic realm where they pose no threat to a male-dominated society, Eakins placed his two singers in harsh light, scrutinizing them for their frailties rather than idealizing their beauty.

Born just a few years apart, Eakins and Dewing were contemporaries who found artistic success during the same period. Nonetheless, their two reactions to the changing American culture at the end of the nineteenth century were radically different.<sup>88</sup> Modern art historian Susan Hobbs suggests that Dewing’s indolent, vacant, and beautiful women may be an escape from the “vigorous, strong-willed women he knows so well: Maria, his wife (a painter and suffragist); Annie Lazarus [their friend] (independently wealthy and

---

<sup>86</sup> Adams, *Eakins Revealed*, 99.

<sup>87</sup> Dewing, like several other mid to late-nineteenth century painters and writers, emphasized aesthetic values over moral or social themes.

<sup>88</sup> Feeling constrained by the conservative standards of the Society of American Artists, Dewing and a group of American Impressionist painters withdrew from the Society in 1897 and called themselves “The Ten.”

<sup>88</sup> The first exhibition of The Ten American Painters was held in spring 1898 at the Durand-Ruel Gallery in New York City. The Ten exhibited together until 1918.

opinionated); Lucia Fairchild Fuller (with whom he had an affair and who was said to “have the mind of a man”); and his own headstrong daughter, Elizabeth.”<sup>89</sup>

In their treatment of female subjects, Eakins and Dewing, to different degrees, each seem to harbor some negative feelings toward women and, perhaps wished to keep them from achieving dynamic roles in society. Despite the very capable women they married, both artists ironically and subtly resisted featuring women of strong character in their images of domestic life. Dewing painted passive women, although he lacked Eakins’ jaundiced eye and instead showed lovely, ephemeral girls lounging demurely in sunlit parlors or floating through misty landscapes. Art historian Kenyon Cox, Dewing’s friend, wrote, “Some hundreds of years hence the historian of our time may be puzzled by Mr. Dewing’s treatment of our life and wonder if the ladies of the day usually sat in such bare rooms or wore low-cut dresses in the daytime; but what does it matter? It is a fantasy, but what a delicate one!”<sup>90</sup> Dewing’s young women are arrayed like *objets d’art* and are ultimately just as decorative and useless.

Dewing’s major benefactor and primary patron, Charles Lang Freer, collected soothing images of sexually appealing nubile women who posed little threat to masculine power within the patriarchal society. Freer seems to have been attracted to Dewing’s work as a means to appreciate feminine beauty at a safe distance. A wealthy industrialist and a life-long bachelor, Freer acknowledged his “well-known objection to women”<sup>91</sup> and he once said “modern American woman, with her fancies of independence, rights, wrongs,

---

<sup>89</sup> Susan Hobbs, *The Art of Thomas Wilmer Dewing, Beauty Reconfigured* (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press in association with The Brooklyn Museum, 1996), 161.

<sup>90</sup> Kenyon Cox, “Art, the Carnegie Institute Exhibition,” *Nation* 84 (April 18.1907), 369.

<sup>91</sup> Quoted in Hobbs, *The Art of Thomas Wilmer Dewing*, 18, foot note 98.

extravagances, dress and other diabolical tendencies, is startling all sensible people - both male and female, around the world."<sup>92</sup> Hobbs notes that "Freer likely enjoyed the private side of art, which was rife with sexual innuendo, for it offered a measure of limited access to women and allowed him to join in with the male vibrato of others who admired feminine beauty."<sup>93</sup>

The first of Dewing's ideal beauties purchased by Freer, *The Piano*, 1891 (fig. 31), depicts an elegantly clothed woman, with a vacant expression, in a softly lit parlor seated at the instrument but not playing it. Here, and in other of his works, Dewing's somnolent women appear as mere decorations, adorning the luxurious surroundings that seem to engulf them.

Henry James in his 1880 novel *Portrait of a Lady* described his heroine, Isabel Archer, a spirited well-to-do young woman, of the same class as those envisioned by Dewing:

She was intelligent and generous; it was a fine free nature; but what was she going to do with herself? This question was irregular, for with most women one had no occasion to ask it. Most women did with themselves nothing at all; they waited, in attitudes more or less gracefully passive, for a man to come that way and furnish their destiny. Isabel's originality was that she gave one an impression of having intentions of her own."<sup>94</sup>

However, Isabel shows a spirit and attitude missing in Dewing's ethereal women and was perhaps more of a New Woman in spirit.

---

<sup>92</sup> From the Freer Gallery of Art exhibition Press Release dated July 14, 2005 for, "Pretty Women: Freer and the Ideal of Feminine Beauty," August 13, 2005 - September 17, 2006.

<sup>93</sup> Hobbs, *The Art of Thomas Wilmer Dewing*, 18.

<sup>94</sup> Henry James, *Portrait of a Lady* (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1997, first published 1881), 59.

James held a more enlightened view of women than most men of his time, who, in general, believed that women were frail and could not handle the pressures of daily life. In truth, these symptoms were arguably caused by the stress of repressing their true desires while fulfilling the limited roles they were allowed in society. In comparison, Eakins was a Victorian male so fearful of women that he portrayed them as lifeless and homely. Dewing appreciated their feminine beauty as passive creatures. Many of Eakins' and Dewing's models seemed to suffer from what was called neurasthenia, a misdiagnosis often applied to women unable to cope with the pressures of modern life. Hobbs has noted that Dewing's women are moreover often perceived as symbols of "capitalist consumption, in which the isolated, introspective female is usually reduced to a largely decorative role that endorsed her subservient position in a male-dominated society."<sup>95</sup>

As noted, Eakins painted female performers with anatomical verisimilitude but without empathy or appreciation for their beauty - most viewers find no charm or sex appeal in them. However, the early Eakins scholar and former Director of the Whitney Museum of American Art, Lloyd Goodrich, saw Eakins' refusal to flatter differently. He wrote:

*The Concert Singer* is at once a living image of a beautiful vital young woman, a creation in sculptural form, and a drama of light. In spite of his two year's work, it shows no sign of overlabor; on the contrary, it is one of his richest, most sensuous works – ripe, mellow, with a kind of bloom. These qualities are all the more moving because of its complete honesty, its freedom from prettification, and its powerful substance.<sup>96</sup>

---

<sup>95</sup> Hobbs, *The Art of Thomas Wilmer Dewing*, 51.

<sup>96</sup> Goodrich, *Thomas Eakins, Vol. II*, 86.

Eakins' brutal honesty emphasizes Weda Cook's receding chin, bulbous eyes, pointy, up-turned nose, pursed lips, extended neck, and ruddy complexion. He did not create a portrait; rather he executed an anatomical study of the singer's head, muscular neck, chest, and fleshy arms.

The details of the concert singer's mouth and throat are so precisely rendered that some scholars venture to guess which particular note or exact word of the song she is singing. Theodor Siegl and Goodrich, for instance, believe her mouth forms the "e" sound in the word "rest" from the phrase, "Oh rest in the Lord," although Gordon Hendricks believes she is singing the word "for" in the phrase, "wait patiently for him."<sup>97</sup> Weda Cook explained in a 1930 interview with the venerable Goodrich that each modeling session began with Eakins asking her to sing "O Rest in the Lord" for him as he studied her mouth and throat "as if through a microscope."<sup>98</sup> His "microscopic" examination and his anatomical studies enabled Eakins to accurately dissect the process of singing.

*The Concert Singer* continues to attract analysis. As recently as 2001, Leja declared that the plant leaning into the scene identifies this as a concert setting rather than an opera setting. Leja suggests that the carefully detailed palm frond was a deliberate device representing a "kind of diagram of vocal projections. The leaves fan out as if mimicking the spray of sound waves from the singer's mouth."<sup>99</sup> This painting is not so much a portrait of Weda Cook as much as it is an attempt by the artist to note the details of a sound producing instrument which just happens to be a woman. Her value rests not in her personality, but in

---

<sup>97</sup> Theodor Siegl, *The Thomas Eakins Collection* (Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia: The Falcon Press, 1978) 128; Gordon Hendricks, *The Life and Work of Thomas Eakins* (New York: Grossman Publishers, 1974), 193.

<sup>98</sup> Goodrich, *Thomas Eakins, Vol. II*, 84.

<sup>99</sup> Leja, "Eakins and Icons," 487.

her ability to project vocalization. In this respect, the painting highlights the performance of sound itself.

The unusual placement in the bottom left of a raised, disembodied hand wielding a baton reminds the viewer that a male authority figure controls the female performer on stage. It also invites comparison with works such as Degas' *Orchestra Musicians*, 1870-71 (fig. 32) and his *The Rehearsal of the Ballet Onstage*, ca. 1874 (fig. 33) where the conductor and musicians were included simply because of their expected roles in the performance.

In Eakins' *The Concert Singer*, the baton, the plant and flowers, and the hooded footlights compress space and help locate the performer standing on an unadorned elevated stage above the orchestra and the audience.<sup>100</sup> She is vulnerable, isolated, and exposed between the unseen audience and a stark backdrop.

Appearing self-absorbed and unmindful of her audience, Cook seems lost within the aria she sings. She wears a far-away gaze and appears inert; the only grace or power she projects is not from beauty or poise, but from her earnest commitment to the music. For Eakins, the effort of singing has drained her strength and her aspect is of one on display rather than of one in control of the moment.<sup>101</sup>

Eakins' brute realism does not convey Cook's charming femininity but instead conveys her physicality as she struggles to perform. This contrasts with artists such as Degas and Mary Cassatt and the felicity of their female subjects, who are quite aware of the attentive gaze of their admirers. Cassatt, the American expatriate who exhibited with the

---

<sup>100</sup> See Goodrich, *Thomas Eakins, Vol. II*, 84 regarding the bouquet of roses lying at the feet of Weda Cook which suggest that this was an encore performance. The roses may also have been included because in real-life, a colleague of Eakins, William R. O'Donovan, presented flowers to Cook almost daily in the two years she posed for the portrait.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

French Impressionists, presented the female spectator rather than the female performer. It is characteristic of French culture that her figures are more animated and comfortable with being looked at.

In contrast, Eakins presents a plain, unidealized performer on stage who seems oblivious to the eyes upon her. Lacking sexuality or any authority over the viewer's gaze, she emotes uncertainty. If painted by Sargent, all imperfections would have been erased and Cook would be rendered graceful, confident, and commanding, with the ability to move her listeners with the power of her voice. Cook's magnificent gown exudes more personality than does she herself; viewers are overwhelmed by her garment and underwhelmed by her confidence. Although a well-acclaimed professional performer, Cook is portrayed as a tamed True Woman and does not present the image of the New Woman. None of Eakins' women do.

Eakins contradicts standard expectations of a singer projecting a powerful persona while performing and instead suggests weakness. The singer seems ungainly and unsure of herself. The conductor's baton, analogous to an artist's brush, directs her performance and commands her to sing much as Eakins did in his studio. She controls nothing. Despite her status as a professional performer and as the focus of this painting, she is, as a female, naturally controlled by a man. The presence of the conductor's hand is subtle yet indicative of Eakins' perception of women.

Eakins' first model for the hand of the conductor was that of an art student holding a paintbrush, but the results were unsatisfactory and the artist in his quest for veracity, sought professional help from Charles M. Schmitz, the renowned conductor of the

Germania Orchestra. One of Philadelphia's leading musicians, Schmitz was Cook's music instructor and had been a student of Charles Stolte, who appeared as the cellist in Eakins' earliest work, *Singing a Pathetic Song*.<sup>102</sup> Goodrich suggests that Eakins enjoyed paralleling the painter holding a brush with the conductor holding a baton.<sup>103</sup> Perhaps Eakins saw himself as a conductor channeling potentially powerful female emotion into the safe, edifying vessels of music and art.<sup>104</sup> Here, his True Woman, an ideal created by men, is literally orchestrated by the artist.

As model for *The Concert Singer*, Cook posed for the painting sporadically over two years sometimes visiting Eakins' Chestnut Street studio as often as three or four times a week. She later explained that Eakins with "the persistence of a devil"<sup>105</sup> suggested on numerous occasions that she pose in the nude for a second painting, but Cook was opposed to this idea.<sup>106</sup> The onerous number of sittings coupled with the scandal the artist was then embroiled in at Drexel Institute led her to discontinue the sessions.<sup>107</sup> Eakins, forced to finish the painting without her help, placed empty shoes beneath a gown draped over a dressmaker's dummy.<sup>108</sup> This may explain the very unconvincing placement of her feet as they protrude from the hem of her dress. These elements help lend the portrait an unsettling air.

---

<sup>102</sup> Kirkpatrick, *The Revenge of Thomas Eakins*, 384.

<sup>103</sup> Goodrich, *Thomas Eakins, Vol. II*, 84.

<sup>104</sup> Weda Cook is standing alone on stage as the focus of the painting as the title, *The Concert Singer*, indicates, but the conductor's hand introduces an otherwise absent male presence. This small, but powerful inclusion may reflect Eakins' own obsession with the artist's hand as the device of creation.

<sup>105</sup> Kirkpatrick, *The Revenge of Thomas Eakins*, 383.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 90 & 352.

<sup>107</sup> Wilmerding, *Thomas Eakins*, 30.

<sup>108</sup> Goodrich, *Thomas Eakins, Vol. II*, 84.

According to the art scholar Adams, who expanded his study to include other paintings of women by Eakins, “Numerous clues suggest that these paintings (*Amelia van Buren, The Concert Singer, The Actress* – all women in pink) related directly to Eakins’ traumatic experiences with his mother.”<sup>109</sup> Eakins’ keen interest in anatomy magnifies Cook’s flaws and he possibly chose to age her beyond her twenty-four years. Here is another place where Adams departs from the more accepted scholarship on Eakins and notes that each of the “pink women” is made to appear close to his mother’s age at the time of her death in 1872 at age 52.<sup>110</sup>

Adams makes a somewhat drastic leap with his shocking conclusion that “in 1890, when Cook posed for *The Concert Singer*, she was only twenty-three, although Eakins made her look considerably older - - again, moving toward the age of his mother at the time of her death. He also caught her in a way that evoked bipolar illness. Singing, of course, is often very close to screaming. It seems likely that for Eakins, Weda Cook’s notes are simply a more controlled, more orderly form of his mother’s screams during her fits of mania.”<sup>111</sup> Adams concludes that “The disembodied hand of the conductor plays an important role in this fantasy. This seemingly unobtrusive element served to maintain order, keeping the frightening chaos of female emotions under masculine control.”<sup>112</sup>

The performers in *Singing a Pathetic Song* and the *Concert Singer* lack the confidence and *joie de vivre* of the performer in Everett Shinn’s 1908 *Revue* (fig. 15). They are also very different from performers in work by Robert Henri such as *Jessica Penn in*

---

<sup>109</sup> Adams, *Eakins Revealed*, 346.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 353.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

*Black with White Plumes* (fig. 10). Penn was merely a chorus girl in 1908 when Henri painted her as a nearly life-size figure striding forward with a heroic presence. Nor would Eakins have ever envisioned the exotic bird-like splendor of the performer in Henri's 1919 painting *Ruth St. Denis in the Peacock Dance* (fig. 12). Indeed, in the end, if one were to imagine Eakins' two singers as birds at all, they would be song birds in gilded cages. Eakins remained very much a nineteenth-century artist. This was his attitude toward the women he painted, and one could imagine his discomfort seeing women breaking the restraints of the limited roles available to them in Victorian society. Eakins paintings do not celebrate the feminine grace of the ideal True Woman; instead, they undermine any sense of womanly self-reliance and independence.

## CHAPTER TWO

### The Newer Woman Setting the Stage

**Robert Henri, *Jessica Penn in Black with White Plumes*, 1908,  
*Salome*, 1909, and *Ruth St. Denis in the Peacock Dance*, 1919**

Robert Henri, the nominative leader of the Ashcan School, made portraits of working-class actresses both in and out of costume that borrowed the self-assurance of the New Woman who had previously been portrayed as strictly upper class. As a male artist, Henri marveled at the vision of female performers engaged with their audiences (and with the viewers of the painting). He endowed these Newer Women with a lively sense of their own empowerment. Unlike Thomas Eakins, Henri embraced the revolutionary changes in American society that would permeate culture art in the twentieth century and his more enlightened attitude is evident in his portraits of women. A fine example is *Jessica Penn in Black with White Plumes*, 1908 (fig. 10), a full-length image of a tall, confident, aspiring actress from Des Moines, Iowa. Henri's *Salome*, 1909 (fig. 11) and *Ruth St. Denis in the Peacock Dance*, 1919 (fig. 12) also showcase powerful female performers radiating vitality.

Henri enrolled at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in 1886, the same year that Eakins departed the institution. Although the extent of their association was minimal, Henri incorporated Eakins' straightforward, unapologetic honesty into his own art and encouraged other artists to follow suit. Henri's treatment of the women he painted suggests he was far more comfortable with spirited women like feisty female performers. Penn, Salome, and St. Denis bear little resemblance to the listless, unhealthy looking women on Eakins' canvases. Henri felt no compulsion to accentuate flaws and physical

imperfections. Although Eakins strongly influenced Henri, the two artists very differently projected the strength, character, and status of the New Woman.

*Jessica Penn in Black with White Plumes* exemplifies the spirit of the working-class successor to the New Woman; she is a Newer Woman.<sup>113</sup> She is in mid-stride as she approaches the viewer gripping part of her long dress to ease mobility. Because she sports long white gloves, only the flesh of her face shows, yet she radiates naked sexuality and self-assurance. Her heavily-lidded eyes lend her a seductive air, but her gaze is neither somnolent nor submissive; she is alert and commands attention.

That Penn displays the Newer Woman's aura of confidence belies the reality of Penn's eventual career for although she had supporting roles in a few theater productions early in her career, and later danced in the chorus line in the Ziegfeld Follies, she never realized her stated ambition "to become the greatest dancer in the world."<sup>114</sup> Nonetheless, Henri helped her achieve a measure of immortality with this and some other portraits he painted of her, including *Young Woman in Yellow Satin*, 1907 (fig. 34) and *Young Woman in Black (Jessica Penn)*, 1902 (fig. 35). In a diary entry regarding Penn as a model, Henri wrote that, "She was one of the finest nudes I had ever seen"<sup>115</sup> and, given his many renditions of her (all clothed), she seems to have possessed all the positive traits Henri sought to celebrate concerning the Newer Woman in the burgeoning American twentieth century.

Throughout his life, Henri kept a diary, and the pages from his childhood are illustrated with cartoons and drawings. His continued interest in art inspired him to enter

---

<sup>113</sup> Robert Henri mistakenly spelled her first name "Jessica." She actually spelled it "Jesseca."

<sup>114</sup> Quoted in Bennard B. Perlman, *Robert Henri: His Life and Art* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1991), 57. From Henri's diary entry November, 7, 1902.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*

the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, where he studied under Thomas Anshutz (who replaced Eakins as Director) and Thomas Hovenden, both realistic painters of everyday life. His diaries from that time record his desire to study in Paris and mention a fellow student, a Mr. Fisher, who had “studied under the great masters of Paris. He says that a student can pay all expenses, fare over and back, tuition, material, board, etc. with \$500.00 per year and live well. American students are well received by both their own countrymen and the French students. Of course the language must be spoken! I would like to go after two years study here!”<sup>116</sup> And true to his plan, in the summer of 1888 Henri sailed for Europe.

Henri made several trips to Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and was greatly enamored of the works he encountered in museums in Holland and Belgium, the Louvre in Paris, and the Prado in Madrid, just as Eakins had been before him. However, like the artists Henri later mentored, he was more influenced by the Old Masters, particularly the Dutch artists Frans Hals and Rembrandt van Rijn and the Spaniard Diego Velázquez than by French Academic artists. Like the Old Masters, Henri, in his own art, excised unnecessary details to avoid distracting the viewer’s eye away from the figure. Their influence also showed in Henri’s bold, wide brushstrokes and in the fact that he imbued his subjects with candid alert attitudes and consciousness of being under the gaze of an unseen viewer.

Henri admired the French Realist Édouard Manet and the American John Singer Sargent, who also adapted the techniques of Hals and Velázquez to create dynamic portraits of contemporary nineteenth-century personalities. Whereas Sargent chose fashionable

---

<sup>116</sup> *Robert Henri Papers*, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., reel 885, frame 38.

aristocrats, a subject unappealing to Henri, Manet was a more direct influence on him, for they both shared an interest in the lives and attitudes of the common people. Henri, according to art historian Valerie Ann Leeds, “promoted the painting of life, building on a tradition of realism in portraiture established by Eakins. His refusal to beautify or focus on superficially pretty subjects earned him the epithet “Manet of Manhattan.”<sup>117</sup>

Upon his return from his first trip to Europe in 1891, Henri resumed his studies at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts and soon became a drawing instructor. He opened his studio for weekly discussions and art critiques and developed a devoted group of followers that formed the core of The Eight. Together over a period of several years, they all moved to New York City. Henri did so in 1900, and continued as the leader of this somewhat disparate group of artists. They chronicled the sometimes unpleasant and often challenging issues of a quickly developing modern city and its rapidly expanding infrastructure. Henri’s flock of artists helped expose derelict living conditions, crowded public spaces, the mixing of classes, and the new role of women emerging in society.

Following the end of the hard economic times of the 1890s and of the Spanish-American War, a generally optimistic mood prevailed in the country as the twentieth century began. Henri and his fellow artists reflected this outlook and peopled their canvases with lively faces projecting vitality and the positive spirit of the age. They sought to capture the frenetic pace of life in the modern city, but like Eakins, they also seemed to feel it their duty to frankly record the less alluring aspects of New York’s crowded thoroughfares and grimy alleys replete with refuse. Like many other New Yorkers, Henri

---

<sup>117</sup> Valerie Ann Leeds, “The Portraits of Robert Henri: Context and Influences,” *American Art Review*, Vol. VII, No. 2 (April-May, 1995), 92.

and his friends frequently attended musical and theatrical performances; with inspiration from French painting of the previous generation, they chose the spectacle of night clubs, café concerts, and music halls as subject matter for their own work, which indicated their indebtedness to Degas, Jean-Louis Forain, and Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec.

In their shimmering gowns and decorative plumage, entertainers were ideal subjects for American artists of modernity and, although she is in day wear rather than in costume, Henri's *Jessica Penn in Black with White Plumes*, illustrates how female performers projected the radiance of confident, working-class American Newer Women. Henri transformed Eakins' view of female singers as merely subjugated performers to empowered entertainers showcasing the new status of women in the early twentieth century. Penn swaggers forward with an ostentatious confidence mimicking the aristocrats and upper-class figures of the Grand Manner "swagger portraits" by artists such as the Flemish Baroque Master, Anthony van Dyck; the eighteenth-century English portraitist, Thomas Gainsborough; and even Henri's contemporary Sargent. The latter's 1897 painting of *Mr. and Mrs. Isaac Newton Phelps* (fig. 36), for example, features the young, beautiful, and wealthy Mrs. Phelps as the epitome of the ebullient New Woman. Her husband ably occupies a secondary role with the bemused countenance of one who fully realizes that his wife's commanding presence captures the full attention of potential onlookers.

The idea of female empowerment gained momentum during the years of the Progressive Era from the late 1880s to the early 1920s. The United States was then forging a new national identity and major changes occurred in industry, the economy, and politics. These changes initiated radical transformation in social structure, cultural values, and

gender relations and cast a new perspective on the role of women and their place in society. The Industrial Revolution of the nineteenth century produced a rise in income and a decrease in the cost of living. In the early twentieth century, labor unions succeeded in introducing the eight-hour work day and the forty-hour work week, thereby creating the “weekend,” although the term was not in common usage until after World War II.<sup>118</sup> All of these changes tremendously impacted opportunities for women. The long struggle for women’s suffrage, which began in the 1840s and did not succeed until the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920, brought attention to the plight of women in society and brought a new concept of women’s rights.

Victorian society referred to conventional women with terms such as “the weaker sex” and “the empty vessel.” The ideal of the New Woman challenged the limitations imposed by Victorian society and began to upset the balance of power in male dominated culture. Professor Gail Finney asserts that the New Woman:

Typically values self-fulfillment and independence rather than the stereotypically feminine ideal of self-sacrifice; believes in legal and sexual equality; often remains single because of the difficulty of combining such equality with marriage; is more open about her sexuality than the 'Old Woman'; is well-educated and reads a great deal; has a job; is athletic or otherwise physically vigorous and, accordingly, prefers comfortable clothes (sometimes male attire) to traditional female garb.<sup>119</sup>

---

<sup>118</sup> The concept of the weekend in America had its root in Labor Union’s attempts to provide for Jewish workers celebration of the Sabbath on Saturday. In the 1920s the Ford automotive factory and others implemented the five-day work week and over the next two decades, the rest of American industry slowly followed.

<sup>119</sup> Gail Finney, “Ibsen and Feminism,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Ibsen*, James McFarlane, ed., (Cambridge, England and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 95-96.

Finney offers a useful if narrow definition of the New Woman, highlighting the characteristics most feared by patriarchal society.

Employment opportunities for women in popular entertainment from vaudeville coquettes and chorus girls to lead actresses grew in the late nineteenth century as working-class salaries increased and work hours decreased. This encouraged the rise of vaudeville houses and music halls to meet leisure and entertainment needs in a restless society. Although the entertainment industry bore the taint of moral disapproval because a large segment of Victorian society equated female performers with prostitutes, it provided jobs and livelihoods for talented, pretty girls of the working class. As twentieth-century art scholar Tracy C. Davis writes, few other jobs were potentially more “financially rewarding for single, independent Victorian women of outgoing character, fine build, and attractive features.”<sup>120</sup> The chance to become an actress or a dancer granted young women the opportunity to enjoy more self-sufficiency and independence than women in other, less-maligned professions, but with it came the attending disdain of proper society for entertainers and the implied connection with immoral behavior.

The topic of young women becoming entertainers and representing a new type of woman with new freedoms was explored by both painters and literary artists of the day. The American Theodore Dreiser, an editor and a writer for various New York publications at the turn of the century, was a colleague of several of the members of The Eight who illustrated for magazines. At the time Dreiser was already writing his first novel, *Sister Carrie*, published in late 1900. It tells the story of the rise of Caroline Meeber, a young

---

<sup>120</sup> Tracy C. Davis, *Actresses as Working Women* (London: Routledge, 1991), 84.

woman from Chicago who struggled to survive, achieved comfort as a kept woman, found the strength to leave that life behind, moved to New York City, and eventually succeeded as an actress on the stage. In the end, Dreiser's fallen woman turned actress became an independent, working-class Newer Woman.

Many of Dreiser's readers were critical that Carrie, as a fallen woman, did not suffer enough from her moral transgressions. Reverend Hugh L. McMenammin wrote that "In that other day [the Victorian era] women retained at least a sense of shame, and though they fell, they found themselves ultimately on their knees sobbing out their broken-heartedness. The 'New Woman' has no sense of shame and she endeavors to save her self-respect by putting a halo on her wickedness. She attempts to hide her sordidness under fine phrases – "Art for art's sake,' 'To the pure all things are pure,' *Honi soit qui mal y pense*' ('Evil to him who evil thinks'), and the like."<sup>121</sup>

However, there was no "happily ever after" for Carrie, whose fate might best be summed up by the real-life comments of a "well-known actress" recorded in a December 1, 1901, *New York Times* article. This unnamed actress remarked that:

After a woman has reached a certain position as leading woman in a New York theatre she cannot advance any further, and she usually drifts backward. In the demand for newer faces she drops to second or third place, giving way to younger women. And the tragedy of it! Who knows so well as an actress the bitterness of realizing that one is not as young and as popular as she once was?"<sup>122</sup>

---

<sup>121</sup> Angela Howard and Sasha Ranaé Adams Tarrant, eds, *Redefining the New Woman, 1920-1963* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1997), 32.

<sup>122</sup> A.K., "Some Theatrical Afterthoughts," *New York Times* (December 1, 1901), <http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?res=980CE2DB1F3CEF33A25752C0A9649D946097D6CF> (accessed May 18, 2011).

In the closing pages of *Sister Carrie*, the heroine, no longer a sought-after actress, must now take the role of a mere spectator in life and, as the narrator tells her, “In your rocking chair, by your window, shall you dream such happiness as you may never feel.”<sup>123</sup> At the end, Carrie is left alone with her memories but without contentment. The fictional story of Carrie Meeber proved prescient regarding the real-life story of Henri’s model, Jesseca Penn, whose own journey from small town to the big stage was similar to the path taken by many of the young female performers in New York and in other major cities across America in the early twentieth century.

Penn was born in Des Moines, Iowa, in June, 1881, and before moving to New York, worked as a life-drawing model for the Des Moines Academy of Art, later known as the Cumming School of Art. Little is known of her early years, but she did pose for a number of artists and her likeness can be seen in a still-existent 1905 mural of early pioneers at the Iowa State Capitol by Edwin H. Blashfield. Blashfield, a well-known East Coast artist and a President of the Society of American Artists, painted academic canvases and epic murals, including the painting at the “collar” of the dome in the main reading room of the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. The mural consists of a dozen colossal figures representing the contributions to civilization made by various cultures. The series begins with Egypt, which contributed written records, includes such innovations as philosophy from the Greeks, civic law from the Romans, physics from Islam, literature from England, and the advancements in science from America. Penn’s likeness can be seen in several of the mural’s representative figures, including France, Greece, and Italy (fig. 37).

---

<sup>123</sup> Theodore Dreiser, *Sister Carrie* (Cleveland, OH: The World Publishing Company, 1946), 557.

By the time Henri painted *Jessica Penn in Black with White Plumes*, the women's suffrage movement had been active for sixty years, beginning with the first women's rights convention held in 1848, in Seneca Falls, New York and continuing as women entered the work force to fill positions such as factory workers, store clerks, and telephone operators. Henri, commenting on new liberties available to women, wrote in an article for the *New York Times*, "It seems to me that such a development on the part of woman should tend to make her more beautiful in figure and in mind; more womanly." He continued, "From a healthy mind must come a healthy conduct, and this inevitably develops a finer, stronger, and truer sex."<sup>124</sup> Henri's portrait communicates his ideas even more clearly than his words.

He demonstrated his admiration of Penn's striking appearance by paying careful attention to her radiant expression and to each detail of her fashionable ensemble. He wrote that, "Costumes today are far more beautiful in that they accentuate rather than distort the form" and he regarded a woman's choice of dress as "the result of her mentality and of frank pride in her physique."<sup>125</sup>

Henri's display of Penn's vibrant personality resembles numerous magazine and newspapers illustrations of the new American feminine ideal known as the "Gibson Girl" (fig. 6). According to historian Ellen Wiley Todd, "the coolly elegant Gibson girl began her twenty-year reign as America's most popular visual type, first in *Life* magazine, then in every

---

<sup>124</sup> Quoted in the *New York Times*, (October 29, 1913), <http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?res=9B04E3DA133FE633A2575AC2A9669D946296D6CF> (accessed May 22, 2011).

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*

imaginable artifact of American material culture.”<sup>126</sup> Named for her creator, Charles Dana Gibson, she was popular in the years between the early 1890s and World War I.

The Gibson Girl was graceful, confident, and authentically American. She engaged in physical activities that had traditionally been male only. She took up leisure activities that were limited to the upper class such as golf, tennis, and croquet. She was pretty but not exotic. She had a long thin neck, narrow waist, and her hair was piled high upon her head in the fashionable combination of a bouffant, pompadour, and chignon.<sup>127</sup> She was always beautiful and well-dressed. Whether in fashionable evening-wear or in day-wear she exemplified the self-assured independence of the New Woman. Her day-time dress included a white shirtwaist, fashioned after a man’s shirt with a stiff, high-necked collar and buttons down the front, and often a tie, bow, or brooch at the collar. According to the *Indianapolis Journal*, these fastidious women were wearing a shirtwaist outfit with a serge skirt that stopped at the ankles and was less burdensome. They liked it because it was “comfortable, because they can be made to fit any form, and because they are mannish.”<sup>128</sup> This type of clothing, which today might be called “active wear,” was initially worn only by upper-class women, but that soon changed as working-class women adopted the look.

At the time of the Gibson Girl’s initial debut, images of intelligent, professional, and athletic women were little known so she challenged the conservative Victorian image of passive, domestic womanhood, such as those by Thomas Wilmer Dewing. Instead of being

---

<sup>126</sup> Ellen Wiley Todd, *The “New Woman” Revised: Painting and Gender Politics on Fourteenth Street* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 5.

<sup>127</sup> A bouffant describes hair piled high, hanging loose on the sides, a pompadour is hair worn high and forward on the forehead, and chignon refers to curls that appear to have come loose from the updo.

<sup>128</sup> Quoted in Catherine Gourley, *Gibson Girls and Suffragists: Perceptions of Women from 1900 to 1918* (Minneapolis, MN: Twenty-First Century Books, 2008), 47 from the *Indianapolis Journal* (January 1, 1900).

surrounded by the traditional accoutrements of femininity such as flowers, musical instruments, and children, the more emancipated Gibson Girl read newspapers, held tennis rackets, flirted with (and dominated) gentlemen, smoked cigarettes, and, as the cover for the June 1895 issues of *Scribner's* illustrates (fig. 38), rode bicycles. Victorian gentlemen were simultaneously intrigued by her appeal and disturbed by her self-assurance, athletic prowess, and willingness to display liberated behavior.

The Gibson Girl was always stylish, dignified, and tall. She was not often seen causing actually physical harm to men, but aspects of her appearance resemble a menacing Amazon warrior. *Gibson's Typical American Girl*, a 1901 illustration for Life Publishing Co. (fig. 6), supports the often unstated but frequently alluded to dialect of a power struggle between the sexes. There is sometimes an element of disdain for men who are most frequently portrayed as smaller, older, and physically inferior to the New Woman. Such is the emasculated figure in Gibson's 1905 *Stepped On* (fig. 39).

The New Woman as a privileged and commanding Gibson Girl maintained proper decorum despite her demand for equal status with men as she moved into new areas previously closed to women. In contrast, the working-class Newer Woman was not necessarily always as properly behaved or as socially well-connected.

One of the intriguing aspects of Henri's portrait of Jesseca Penn is that although she is elegant and presently well-behaved, her expression and attitude suggest that this may not continue to be the case. Her potential for mischief is alluring. The exercise of comparing Penn with the Gibson Girl (fig. 40) provides an interesting contrast between an imaginary figment of a wealthy free-spirit and an actual twentieth-century showgirl.

Although Gibson's *Typical American Girl* and Henri's *Jessica Penn* are each full-length portraits of confident, statuesque women, gripping a fold of gown, there are notable differences. In lieu of a fancy hat, the Gibson Girl's hair is balanced on her head; her décolletage exposes her neck, shoulders, and much of her ample bosom; her gown is ostentatiously feminine with a floral pattern and frills about the hem; and her arms are bare. Penn, on the other hand is fully covered. However, the most pronounced differences between the two are their stances, postures, and expressions. The Gibson Girl stands three-quarters to the viewer the better to display her figure. Turned as she is, her back-side and her breasts are prominent; Gibson silhouettes her curves. She appears more firmly planted than Penn, who seems as if she could step out of the frame. Penn has a more self-assured, yet open expression on her face and makes direct eye contact, whereas the Gibson Girl appears haughty and aloof, with her eyes focused somewhere over the viewer's left shoulder.

Despite representing a more dynamic type of woman, the Gibson Girl remains a sex object while the Newer Woman, as embodied by Jessica Penn, seems to be a more equal and engaged participant in society; one with a sense of purpose.

Henri saw in Penn a combination of the affluent Gibson Girl's assumption of equality and the can-do confidence of the working-class Newer Woman who lacked easy access to association with the elite and their leisure-time pursuits such as tennis and bicycling. The Newer Woman's contemporaries might have used the then-popular label, the "Girl of Today." That term first appeared in a series of 1913 articles in the *New York Times* concerning

a contest to find a photograph of a young New York woman who epitomized this new ideal.

Henri was consulted by the newspaper as an expert on the subject and was quoted:

Naturally she [the girl of today] is vastly different from the girl of twenty years ago. These are revolutionary times in society, and a revolution has affected women very much, and to-day women are doing their part in furthering this revolution. They are becoming conscious of their right to claim recognition as human beings, and of the necessity of making that claim as mothers or as educators of their children, or as wage earners, and of taking an active part in the defense of woman against established prejudices and laws. They are more conscious of the important position they hold with regard to the home, the State, and themselves.<sup>129</sup>

An editorial, "Topics of the Time: Mystery Won the Decision," in the *New York Times* about the Girl of To-day seemed to specifically describe Penn as painted by Henri, noting that, "her costume is purely modern...she is neither gay nor sad" and "there is mystery in her eyes – there is mystery in the whole picture."<sup>130</sup> As one artist noted at the time, the most striking thing about the Girl of To-day was her eyes "and the expression of Americanism that radiated from them."<sup>131</sup> He could well be describing Penn.<sup>132</sup> Her seductive gaze casts a deeper spell than the Gibson Girl as seen, for instance, in a reproduction that appeared on a 1998 U.S. postage stamp (fig. 41).

---

<sup>129</sup> "New Ideals Shown by 'Girl of To-day,'" *New York Times* (October 29, 1913), <http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?res=9B04E3DA133FE633A2575AC2A9669D946296D6CF> (accessed May 22, 2011).

<sup>130</sup> *New York Times* (December 9, 1913), <http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?res=9F03E6DE1F3BE633A2575AC0A9649D946296D6CF> (accessed May 22, 2011).

<sup>131</sup> F.W. Ruckstuhl quoted in the *New York Times* (November 28, 1913), <http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?res=9C0DE6D61E3BE633A2575BC2A9679D946296D6CF> (accessed May 22, 2011).

<sup>132</sup> In addition to Robert Henri, several other influential artists were interviewed by the *New York Times* for their opinion on the traits that defined the modern-day girl. Edwin H. Blashfield, who used Jesseca Penn for his model several times, stated that the Girl of To-day "physically is a fine specimen."

It is difficult to appreciate, at a remove of one hundred years, just how revolutionary these new symbols of feminine power were at the time. The Victorian era had viewed openly sexual women as desirous to beguile or enchant men into abdicating their natural authority. New images of women like Jesseca Penn, the Gibson Girl, and the Girl of Today, with their mysterious sexual energy were perceived as subversive threats to traditional gender roles and could thereby destroy society. This gave rise to the idea of a fearsome creature known as the *femme fatale* or “deadly woman.”

The Gibson Girl was often presented as a *femme fatale*. Gibson’s *Stepped On* features a stately Gibson Girl within a landscape. She promenades on a lakeside path and leaves the pulverized figure of a tiny gentleman, whom she has just crushed under her foot, in her wake. His plight is emphasized by the sympathetic gaze of a cocker spaniel. Although its intent is humorous, this illustration communicates much about men perceiving the threat of the *femme fatale* as they observed New Women achieving a stronger, more equal status with them.<sup>133</sup>

The concept of the *femme fatale* goes back at least as far as Greek mythology and the tale of Pandora whose curiosity, a perceived feminine weakness, led her to open a box and release demons, allowing evil to plague mankind. She also appears in the Bible’s account of Eve consorting with Satan, causing the ouster of the sinful Eve and her mate Adam from the Garden of Eden. Another biblical tale of a woman as evil protagonist is that of Salome.

---

<sup>133</sup> *Gibson’s Typical American Girl*, first appeared in a 1901 image called *Stepped On*, where she stands before a pond with a lavish home in the background. Her image was later isolated, removed, and printed as part of a Postcard series by Detroit Publishing Co., 1905.

The story of the deadly temptress Salome was an especially popular theme in literature and art during the second half of the nineteenth century when it received renewed attention in both literature and art. Depictions of Salome increased as interest in the biblical story underwent a revival. In 1845, the German Heinrich Heine wrote an epic poem of Salome in which he added an erotic twist to the tale. In his revised version, the character of the mother recedes into the background and Salome's motives now revolve around John the Baptist's rejection of her own sexual advances and her vengeance becomes selfish.

Interest in the Salome myth continued in popular culture throughout the rest of the nineteenth century. For instance, in 1870, the French painter Henri Regnault received much acclaim with his *Salomé* (fig. 42). When describing his portrayal of Salome, Regnault said, "Yes, a caressing ferociousness is the foundation of her nature and she is, as you have perceived, a sort of tame black panther, but always savage and cruel."<sup>134</sup> Regnault emphasized her nature as a *femme fatale* by giving her dark eyes, a dark complexion, and dark tousled hair that alludes to the wild nature of the provocative dance she has just performed. This Salome looks directly at the viewer with a dangerous, self-satisfied air.

Oscar Wilde again revived interest in the biblical temptress with his French language, one-act play *Salomé*, which premiered in Paris in 1896, with Sarah Bernhardt in the lead role. His version, which introduced the "Dance of the Seven Veils," had been published two years earlier in English with more than twenty lurid illustrations by the British artist Aubrey Beardsley of a wicked enchantress staring in triumph at the severed head of John the

---

<sup>134</sup> Bryson Burroughs, "Regnault's Salome," *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, Vol. 11, No. 8 (Aug., 1916), 164.

Baptist (fig. 43). Wilde's play and Beardsley's highly stylized *art nouveau* ink drawings have "become so identified with each other as to be inseparable."<sup>135</sup>

Wilde's play served as inspiration for Richard Strauss' 1905 musical production of *Salome* which premiered in Dresden, Germany. Strauss added his own lascivious details including a shocking final scene in which Salome kisses the lips of John the Baptist's severed head. Although it enjoyed a successful run in Europe, when Strauss' *Salome* opened in New York in 1907 at the Metropolitan Opera, it shocked provincial American sensibilities with its explicitly sexual and violent nature and was canceled after one performance.

Henri and his wife frequented the theater and were in the audience when Strauss' *Salome* reopened two years later in 1909 at Hammerstein's Manhattan Opera House. The musical's high point, the "Dance of the Seven Veils," is the subject of one of Henri's two 1909 versions of a New York City dancer called Mademoiselle Voclezca, posing as Salome. One painting (fig. 11) is in the collection of the Mead Art Museum, Amherst College, Massachusetts, and the other is part of the John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art in Sarasota, Florida. Modern art historian Rebecca Zurier writes that these two paintings by Henri, both entitled *Salome*, are "characteristic of the Ashcan School, with its combination of overt sensuality and traditional literary references mixing high and low culture, popular and refined tastes."<sup>136</sup> Exuding an even more commanding attitude than either Chase or Sargent's paintings of the enchanting performer Carmencita, Henri's exotically and scantily-clad Salome stares down at the viewer with a smoldering gaze.

<sup>135</sup> Aubrey Beardsley and Oscar Wilde, *Salome* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1967), back cover note. The work was originally published by Elkin Mathews & John Lane, 1894.

<sup>136</sup> Rebecca Zurier, Robert W. Snyder, Virginia M. Mecklenburg, *Metropolitan Lives: The Ashcan Artists and Their New York*, exh. cat., National Museum of American Art (New York, London: W.W. Norton and Company, 1995), 19.

Henri initially entered the Amherst version, originally titled *Salome Dancer*, in the 1910 National Academy of Design Exhibition, where it was rejected despite his long-standing status as a full academician. Later that year, *Salome* was included in the Independent Artists Exhibition, but the painting was reviled by nearly everyone who saw it, including most of the art critics.

By itself, the fact that the figure is partially disrobed would have caused a scandalized response at that time in the United States, but with her brash body language and brazen, penetrating gaze Henri's insouciant *Salome* caused a sensation and shocked viewers. Henri's fellow member of The Eight, John Sloan, noted in his diary that the negative public reaction was not surprising, given the bold sexuality of the dancer and the repressed nature of the public.<sup>137</sup>

With the advent of the new century, American women began to take a larger role in society. Women found employment outside the home, dressed more provocatively, and demanded a more active role in society. The culture was rapidly changing, although it would be another eleven years before the 1920 passage of the Nineteenth Amendment granted American women the right to vote.

Although they did not have high status in society, female performers were less restrained than many other types of women and therefore projected a more powerful and independent personae. Several actresses, such as Sarah Bernhardt and the dancer Isadora Duncan, garnered respect in society with their successful careers. It is therefore not

---

<sup>137</sup> Quoted in Zurier et. al., *Metropolitan Lives*, 19, with footnote reference to the March 9, 1910 diary entry recorded in Bruce St. John, ed., *John Sloan's New York Scene: From the Diaries, Notes, and Correspondence, 1906-1913* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965).

surprising that artists such as Henri, Sloan, Everett Shinn, and several other Ashcan School artists painted women entertainers. The resulting paintings reflect, in varying degrees, the ascendancy of women as equally powerful members of society. These freshly painted images of sexually-threatening creatures implied a challenge to the patriarchal Edwardian Age, which still embraced Victorian ideals. Unconstrained women alarmed gentlemen as they entered into their realm and art patrons were often ill-prepared to confront these new realities on art gallery walls.

Henri may have exploited the fact that the woman he painted was playing the part of the mythical Salome to take creative license in shocking the spectator. His Salome thrusts her body forward and fixes the viewer with an unabashed stare in a self-possessed stance. In the Amherst version, the gossamer veils clasped by her fingertips allude to her erotic dance. These are eliminated in the second version. Her costume, in both cases, was quite revealing for the era. They sported embroidered decoration, sequins, and beads while exposing the model's belly and legs through chiffon pantaloons.

Henri pursued his interest in independent, working-class female performers with another full-length portrait of a dancer in his painting, *Ruth St. Denis in the Peacock Dance*, 1919 (fig. 12). St. Denis, best known as a modern-dance pioneer, performed on the vaudeville stage and taught the young Martha Graham who later transformed modern American dance in the mid-twentieth century.

American fascination with "Oriental Dance" blossomed at the 1893 Chicago World's Columbian Exposition where a bare-footed dancer with an exposed midriff performed a

belly dance or “cooch.”<sup>138</sup> Ruth St. Denis capitalized on this intrigue and created a series of avant-garde performances inspired by the Eastern cultures of Turkey, Egypt, and India. Henri attended the Palace Theater in New York City when St. Denis opened in February 1919, performing her intriguing “Peacock Dance” based on an exotic legend concerning a woman whose excessive vanity caused her to be transformed into a gorgeous peacock.<sup>139</sup> Henri depicted St. Denis in a graceful, sinuous pose, her bare arms and her waist accenting the lavish colors and textures of her exotic costume. Henri once more had a subject in common with Beardsley who also illustrated the “Peacock Dance” (fig. 44) in a book published with his other illustrations for *Salome* in 1894. Henri’s painting of St. Denis, unlike his portrayal of Salome, received acclaim at the National Academy of Design perhaps because St. Denis poses with bird-like grace and beauty in contrast to Salome, who confronts the viewer with a defiant countenance, exuding the confidence, independence, and entitlement of the Newer Woman.

During the first ten years of the twentieth century, Henri and his circle of artists in New York briefly enjoyed their zenith of recognition and acclaim as modern painters capturing the explosive growth of a vibrant new metropolis and standing at the juncture of art, literature, and performance at a time when female entertainers were emblematic of women’s growing status within society. Although most of them had studied in Europe and were closely aligned with the changes taking place there, they could not foresee how the

---

<sup>138</sup> Robert C. Allen, *Horrible Prettiness: Burlesque and American Culture* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 227.

<sup>139</sup> Henri to his mother, February 15, 1919. *Robert Henri Papers*, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University quoted in Valerie Ann Leeds, *My People: The Portraits of Robert Henri*, exh. cat., Orlando Museum of Art (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1994), 38.

introduction of new art from the continent followed by a World War would greatly diminish their relevance.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Acting Up in the London Music Hall

**Walter Sickert, *Little Dot Hetherington at the Bedford Music Hall, 1888-89*  
and *Minnie Cunningham at the Old Bedford, 1892***

Robert Henri mentored the young artists of The Eight and The Ashcan School in much the same way that his British contemporary Walter Sickert guided the London artists known as the Camden Town Group. Henri and Sickert also shared painting styles and choice of subject matter. These two clusters of artists were leading practitioners of avant-garde modernism in their respective countries and shared an affinity for creating images of public leisure including theater scenes.<sup>140</sup> However, unlike Henri who championed the New Woman, Sickert's paintings of female performers in works such as *Little Dot Hetherington at the Bedford Music Hall, 1888-89* (fig. 13) and *Minnie Cunningham at the Old Bedford, 1892* (fig. 14) underscore the apparent disinterest of British artists in documenting the advances of the British suffrage movement.

Comparisons of their theater paintings offer insight into the emergence of the New Woman in these two similar yet distinct societies. There are several indications that, in addition to being influenced by the same slightly older French artists, the members of The Eight and of the Camden Town Group may have cross-pollinated their interests as they encountered each other's paintings while traveling. For instance, Maurice Prendergast, the

---

<sup>140</sup> Although with paintings such as Walter Sickert's *L'Affaire de Camden Town, 1909* or *The Camden Town Murder or What shall we do for the Rent?*, ca. 1908, for example, the London artists often depicted the grittier aspects of an urban environment to an extreme never attempted by Henri and his circle of American painters.

oldest member of The Eight, was a friend of Sickert<sup>141</sup> and, the youngest member of The Eight, Everett Shinn, traveled to London and painted its music halls. Shinn was also in Paris in 1900 while the Durand-Ruel Gallery held an exhibition of Sickert's work.<sup>142</sup>

Sickert's painting *Little Dot Hetherington at the Bedford Music Hall* is of a performance by a young girl who shares no characteristics with the New Woman. Sickert also eschewed socio-political commentary in works such as *Minnie Cunningham at the Old Bedford*. This is not an empowered, self-confident female in command of the stage and Sickert gives no indication of the ribald comedy and sexual innuendo inherent in similar performances by adult entertainers. Cunningham was a woman who dressed and acted as a child while Little Dot was a child who thrilled audiences with her child-like costumes and "grown-up" behavior.

Unlike England, the United States had little tradition of theatrical performance as subject matter in fine art. Therefore, Henri and his followers broke new ground as they introduced scenes of popular entertainment while, in London, Sickert and the Camden Town Group were furthering a trend in British art dating back more than a century. Notable was William Hogarth who completed a series of six canvases based on John Gay's comic operetta, *The Beggar's Opera*, 1728-29.<sup>143</sup> Although Americans did not harken back to a similar artistic lineage in their own country, they were aware of British precedents, including Hogarth. Arguably, The Eight paralleled the Camden Town Group as they showcased the theater, its audiences, and its performers in images of urban life in what

<sup>141</sup> Mahonir Sharp Young, *The Eight: The Realist Revolt in American Painting*, (New York: Watson-Guption Publications, 1973), 128.

<sup>142</sup> See Rebecca Zurier, *Metropolitan Lives: The Ashcan Artists and Their New York*, (Washington D.C.: National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, 1995), 216, footnote 22.

<sup>143</sup> *The Beggar's Opera* premiered at Rich Lincoln's Inn Field Theatre in London, January 29, 1728.

were then the world's two largest cities, London and New York.<sup>144</sup> Although the woman's movement thrived on both sides of the Atlantic, the Newer Woman was largely ignored by British artists despite her near omnipresence in magazines and newspapers, on political posters, and in propaganda materials.

Hogarth, a figure of importance in the history of British theater paintings, included the concept of the "Madonna/Harlot Complex" in his works contrasting virtue and lust.<sup>145</sup> The alleged dual nature of the feminine character is illustrated in the climatic *Scene from The Beggar's Opera*, 1728-29 (fig. 45) as a highwayman stands in shackles between two women -- his wife, Polly Peachum and his mistress, Lucy Lockit -- while they plead for mercy before a judge. Art historian Pamela Gerrish Nunn labels this the "Hogarthian Concept" of the Victorian paternalistic notion of women as either quite moral (Polly in virginal white, a woman worthy of marriage and daughter of the lawyer) or decidedly immoral (Lucy, the working-class daughter of the jail keeper).<sup>146</sup> Such scenes of innocence versus depravity were often revisited by Hogarth and a host of other eighteenth and nineteenth-century English artists.

Sickert initially wanted to be an actor and worked for a time with a small theater company before enrolling in the University College of London's Slade School of Fine Art for a brief period in late 1881. The following year he became a painting assistant to the American

---

<sup>144</sup> In 1900, London had a population of approximately 6,480,000; New York's population was approximately 4,242,000, followed by Paris with 3,330,000; Berlin with 2,707,000, and Chicago with 1,717,000 people according to Tertius Chandler, *Four Thousand Years of Urban Growth: An Historical Census* (Lewiston, New York: St. David's University Press, 1987), 492.

<sup>145</sup> Many twentieth-century artists and writers were familiar with the work of the Victorian psycho-analyst, Sigmund Freud, who coined the term the "Madonna / Harlot Complex" to describe this long-held male interpretation of the dual nature of female character as either sacred or profane, virgin or whore.

<sup>146</sup> Pamela Nunn, *Problem Pictures: Women and Men in Victorian Painting* (Aldershot, Hants, England: Scolar Press, 1995), 60.

expatriate James Abbott McNeill Whistler, and was trusted to deliver Whistler's *Arrangement in Grey and Black: The Artist's Mother*, 1871 (commonly referred to as *Whistler's Mother*), to the Académie des Beaux-Arts Salon in Paris. Sickert carried letters of introduction to Édouard Manet and Edgar Degas from Whistler. Unfortunately, Manet was then terminally ill and not able to greet his British visitor. However, Degas received him and became a strong influence on the younger artist's compositional choices and emphasis on theatrical subjects, especially of female performers in the music halls of London's East End.

The late nineteenth hundreds were halcyon days for English music halls, then the preeminent venues of popular entertainment for many kinds of people. Robert Emmons, one of the first scholars to research Sickert's career, found that the artist viewed music halls as "a microcosm of the town" and enabled Sickert to observe a rich admixture of London society.<sup>147</sup>

Sickert began a series of paintings depicting London music halls, described by historian Aimee Troyen as containing "an earthy realism, and at times a vulgarity, approaching caricature" of the interactions between different social classes.<sup>148</sup> London's music halls did not attract respectable middle-class women, but instead catered to the interests of "servant girls" and "nicely dressed young women who made it their business to engage the attention of the better-off young men," according to art scholar Anna Gruetzner

---

<sup>147</sup> Robert Emmons, *The Life and Opinions of Walter Richard Sickert* (London: Faber and Faber, Ltd., 1941), 44.

<sup>148</sup> Aimee Troyen, *Walter Sickert as Printmaker* (New Haven: Yale Center for British Art, 1979), iv.

Robins who explains that music hall entertainment was “not of first class character.”<sup>149</sup>

Men far outnumbered female spectators, many of whom were most likely prostitutes.

Many working-class Londoners in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries lived in impoverished conditions with poor sanitation and their working conditions were not much better. The music hall offered its patrons respite. Emmons said it was “an enchanted palace, where they could forget their troubles in a warm world of magic and romance.”<sup>150</sup> Admission to the music hall was affordable for the lower classes at “two shillings for a red-plush covered seat in the stalls near the chairman’s table and sixpence for a place at the back.”<sup>151</sup> Those who could afford it sat at small tables on the main floor, while those of lesser means filled the cheap seats in the upper galleries.

Although many of them were regular theater-goers, before Sickert, Victorian English painters of fine art did not fully avail themselves of the opportunity to delve into the issues of changing cultural values, social relations, and gender roles that were present in a typical theater audience as many different types of people mixed together. Accordingly, Christopher Wood observed the theater was “rarely reflected in Victorian pictures, being a more fertile field for cartoonists and illustrators.”<sup>152</sup>

Both the London music halls and the vaudeville houses in the United States, which captivated the American Everett Shinn and some of the other members of The Eight, featured performances of variety entertainment, including comedians, magicians, dancers,

---

<sup>149</sup> Quoted in Anna Gruetzner Robins, “Sickert ‘Painter-in-Ordinary’ to the Music-Hall” in *Sickert Paintings* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992), 14.

<sup>150</sup> Troyen, *Walter Sickert as Printmaker*, 48.

<sup>151</sup> Gruetzner Robins, “Sickert ‘Painter-in-Ordinary’ to the Music-Hall,” 14.

<sup>152</sup> Christopher Wood, *Victorian Panorama: Paintings of Victorian Life* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1976), 195.

and singers. However, while New York vaudeville theaters tended to cluster near shopping and entertainment centers of the city, London music halls were located in four distinct districts with varying, separate class structures. Except for the occasional upper-class male thrill-seekers who deigned to descend from more vaunted environs to mix with the hoi polloi, audiences generally remained more segregated than did those in American theaters of the same era. In an 1899 article, the English writer Max Beerbohm lamented the passing of the “wasted glories” of the old music halls where “Reason, variety, refinement have crept gradually in, till one shall sigh in vain for the fatuous and delightful days. I insist that vulgarity is an implicit element of the true Music Hall.”<sup>153</sup> Like Beerbohm, Sickert preferred the rowdy music halls which were situated in the less fashionable parts of London to the legitimate theaters and music halls found in London’s trendy West End. There, Sickert found distinctly British versions of the Parisian *café-concerts* frequented by the French artists he so admired, especially Edgar Degas.

Low-class music halls piqued Sickert’s interest in the lives of ordinary people. Some art critics thought that Sickert was merely mimicking the themes of Degas, a criticism that would later be leveled at Shinn’s vaudeville paintings. Reporting on the New English Art Club’s 1889 exhibit, the critic for *The Scotsman* wrote that Sickert’s work was “refreshingly unconventional” and “wonderfully good,” but questioned his choice of subject matter. He wrote, “Possibly he had no very clear motive at all, except that music-halls are often painted by some of the French impressionists.”<sup>154</sup> Within days, Sickert sent a response to the Scottish paper declaring that interest in the theater was as relevant for British painters as

---

<sup>153</sup> Max Beerbohm, *More* (New York and London: John Lane Company, 1899), 121.

<sup>154</sup> Walter Sickert, “On Private Correspondence,” *The Scotsman*, April 15, 1889, 7.

for the French. “It is surely unnecessary to go so far afield as Paris,” Sickert wrote, “to find an explanation of the fact that a Londoner should seek to render on canvas a familiar and striking scene in the midst of the town in which he lives.”<sup>155</sup>

The Old Bedford music hall was Sickert’s most frequent haunt. Affectionately referred to as “the Family Theatre,” the Old Bedford hosted some of Sickert’s favorite performers.<sup>156</sup> Far from the glamorous West End theaters, the Old Bedford was located in the Camden Town section of London down a narrow alley behind Arlington Street and Camden High Street. Although decorated with elaborate plasterwork and huge mirrors, it was, as the leading Sickert scholar Wendy Baron describes, “a cramped and prepossessing building.”<sup>157</sup> Fellow artist William Rothenstein noted that Sickert would go to the Old Bedford almost nightly “to watch the light effects on stage and boxes, on pit and gallery, making tiny studies on scraps of paper with enduring patience and with such fruitful results.”<sup>158</sup>

In his paintings, Sickert placed performers on stage, musicians in the orchestra pit, social elite in the stalls or first circle, the merely well-to-do in the dress circle and upper circle, the working classes in the cheap seats of the gallery, and the top gallery with its impaired sightlines was reserved for the lowest classes. Often, if the house was not at full capacity, theater managers would allow people to sit in the upper galleries for free.

---

<sup>155</sup> Walter Sickert, “The New England Art Club Exhibition,” *The Scotsman*, April 24, 1889, 8.

<sup>156</sup> Located in the Camden Town section of London, the Old Bedford opened in 1861. Thirty-five years later it was destroyed by a fire and reopened in 1896 as the New Bedford. It closed permanently in 1950 and today, the building is gone.

<sup>157</sup> Wendy Baron and Richard Shone, eds. *Sickert Paintings* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 74.

<sup>158</sup> William Rothenstein, *Men and Memories: Recollections of William Rothenstein* (New York: Coward-McCann, Inc., 1931), 169.

Sickert's *The Old Bedford: Cupid in the Gallery*, ca. 1890 (fig. 46), focuses solely on the audience members, although Sickert does not depict them in great detail. There are suggestions of class distinction, but unlike the chic audiences in paintings by Degas of the Paris Opéra House, Sickert's audience members are mostly disheveled commoners with grubby faces. Spell-bound men and boys both seated and standing in the top galleries, peer down at the performance on a stage unseen by the viewer. Those in the cheap seats near the rafters were ironically dubbed "the gallery gods."<sup>159</sup> Despite their shabby appearance, Sickert seemed to revel in the raw honesty of their emotions. Instead of satirizing the poor as did some earlier Victorian artists such as Charles Keene, Sickert did not make sport of them; instead, he sought to convey their humanity.

Despite a seemingly more enlightened attitude toward the lower classes, Sickert did not appear to be overly concerned with their plight. Nor was he particularly concerned with the lives of the female performers he portrayed. He presented them as isolated figures on stage separated from the anonymous audience members who were safely ensconced in the crowd. For Sickert, the appeal was in the overall dynamic of the theater scene and not on the perspective of individual performers or spectators.

Sickert incorporated compositional arrangements that clearly owed much to Degas' series of *cafés-concerts* featuring energetic *chanteuses*. Dazzled by Degas' dramatic compositions, Sickert employed similar techniques when painting the London music halls. He borrowed Degas' deployment of unexpected angles, jarring perspectives, and fragmentation of space to create ambiguous views of theater scenes which emphasized the

---

<sup>159</sup> Lynn M. Voskuil, *Acting Naturally: Victorian Theatricality and Authenticity* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2004), 81.

backdrops, the deeply shadowed recesses, and the optical confusion produced by large mirrors.

Stage scenes had been one of Degas' favorite subjects and he often imbued them with sensuality. However, attitudes towards sexuality in Victorian England were far less liberal than in French society. This may help explain why Sickert's paintings were not sexually evocative but were instead full of psychological social tension between different factions of the audience and their reactions to what transpired onstage. In his presentation of female performers in London music halls, Sickert evinced little interest in the quality of performance or in the plight of the singer as a working-class Newer Woman. Instead, his female performers are merely part of the scenery, caught mid-song with open mouths and vacant expressions. *Little Dot Hetherington at the Bedford Music Hall* details the relationship between actor and spectator, notably with the extension of Dot Hetherington's arm pointing up at the box above the stage as she sings, (explained by the picture's extended title), 'The Boy I Love is Up in the Gallery.'<sup>160</sup>

The treatment of the play-acting between the make-believe of the performer and the real-life audience is reminiscent of Hogarth's *The Beggar's Opera* with its "charged exchange of glances between the leading actress and her noble protector in the audience."<sup>161</sup> Sickert enhanced Hogarth's naturalism by drafting his figures much like the American realist Thomas Eakins - with unyielding frankness. He applied a modern and

---

<sup>160</sup> From a popular refrain in George Ware's 1885 hit ballad. This song was made popular by another singer, Marie Lloyd and tells about a young performer singing to a tradesman who sits in the gallery cheap seats.

<sup>161</sup> E.D.H. Johnson, *Paintings of the British Social Scene from Hogarth to Sickert* (New York: Rizzoli, 1986), 271.

psychologically honest viewpoint resulting in a kind of realism previously unseen in British painting.

Little Dot (Florence Louise Hetherington) performed a specific type of popular British music hall act where young girls sang songs full of innuendo and double entendres. Sickert chose to ignore this. Dot Hetherington was something of a rarity in that she was actually playing her age (nine or ten years old).<sup>162</sup> Marie Lloyd, Katie Lawrence, and Minnie Cunningham, for instance, performed, as Baron describes, “behind a masquerade of childish innocence, sang songs far more provocative than the censorship laws would allow from straight performers.”<sup>163</sup> These singers, wearing little girls’ dresses, were actually petite adults with youthful voices and were called Serio-comics. Bawdy, humorous songs by Serio-comics in loose-fitting baby frocks delighted the crowds. Their success depended on the connection they could make with their audience as “innocent” young girls.

Little Dot’s pose is similar to that of a child actress in a charcoal and wash drawing by the American artist William Glackens, one of The Eight. The gesture of the raised arm reaching out deployed by Little Dot and by Glackens’ stage performer was common to a type of music hall and vaudeville melodrama. In *I’m So Glad You Found Me. Oh, Take Me Away!*, ca. 1901 (fig. 47), Glackens illustrates a contrived moment when an actor impersonating a proper gentleman shocks the audience by disrupting the performance as he leaps up and declares that the singer is his long-lost daughter. The drawing accompanies

---

<sup>162</sup> Anna Gruetzner Robins and Richard Thomson, *Degas, Sickert and Toulouse-Lautrec: London and Paris, 1870-1910* (London: Tate Gallery Publishing Ltd., 2005), 86.

<sup>163</sup> Baron and Shone, *Sickert Paintings*, 20.

the short story by Cyrus Townsend Brady, "A Vaudeville Turn" published in *Scribner's Magazine* in 1901.<sup>164</sup>

In Sickert's *Minnie Cunningham at the Old Bedford*, the performer is dressed in a child-like red pinafore and floppy hat, but was in fact in her late thirties.<sup>165</sup> The infantilizing trend for woman/child acts belies any sense of progress for the New Woman in British theater. The New Woman as a social construct existed in Britain in the 1870s, before she appeared in the United States.<sup>166</sup> During the latter years of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth century, women in both England and American were entering the work force and demanding equal rights. The British music hall was equivalent to the American vaudeville house, and they both provided an alternate source of employment for ambitious young women.

Gruetzner Robins notes that although she is singing an "ostensibly innocent but sexually insinuating song while wearing the costume and affecting the manner of a child," Minnie Cunningham, as a female performer earning a paycheck, was actually a working-class New Woman; labeled here as a Newer Woman.<sup>167</sup> However, Sickert used her image as merely a player in the scene and did not characterize the actress herself as possessing any of the personal bravado of the independent woman she was. Gruetzner Robins sees Cunningham as having been "an accomplished, mature woman of 39, with lovers and admirers among a sophisticated circle of painters and poets..."<sup>168</sup>

---

<sup>164</sup> Cyrus Townsend Brady, "A Vaudeville Turn," *Scribner's Magazine*, Vol. 30 (September 1901), 352.

<sup>165</sup> Baron and Shone, eds. *Sickert Paintings*, 20.

<sup>166</sup> Susan Casteras, *Images of Victorian Womanhood in English Art* (Cranbury, NJ and London: Associated University Presses, 1987), 144.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*

When asked about Sickert's painting of her, Cunningham responded that he made her look "too tall and thin."<sup>169</sup> Sickert may have unconsciously been influenced by images he had seen in magazines and advertisements of the stereotypical New Woman then in vogue. According to Gruetzner Robins, "The identifying characteristics of the New Woman were tallness and thinness, a caricature whose origin lay in the reactionary, pseudo-scientific theory that thinness was caused by genetic deficiency. Thus, lacking the full soft figure of the supposedly 'natural' woman, an unnatural sexuality was ascribed to the New Woman which destroyed her 'natural' biological urge to be a wife, mother, and homemaker."<sup>170</sup> Sickert did not concern himself with such matters. He seemed to be more interested in exploring tonal complexities and harmonies like Whistler than in exploring Cunningham's status as an empowered contemporary woman. Perhaps for Sickert, she merely provided a flat, red form against a somber complementary green background.

The visual disconnection between Minnie Cunningham and her audience results from a mirror reflection, although Sickert neglected to include the mirror's frame which would help the viewer decode the scene. The performer's image is an illusion, while her audience is presented in "real" space. The ambiguity is further enhanced by the fact that the performer is standing sideways, looking away from the audience, a relatively common device for music hall entertainers to underscore the climactic moment of a performance.<sup>171</sup>

Besides Degas, Sickert also borrowed from Manet, especially in the use of mirrors to infuse paintings with, as the scholar Charles Harrison describes, "the complex levels of its

---

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> Gruetzner Robins, "Sickert 'Painter-in-Ordinary' to the Music-Hall" in *Sickert Paintings*, 22.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

illusionary world and the fascinating details of inconsistencies of its artifice.”<sup>172</sup> Manet’s 1882 *Bar at the Folies-Bergères* (fig. 48) features a large mirror behind the barmaid as a means to alter and expand space with a complex tableau. Instead of a direct reflection, Manet skewed the perspective and warped the mirror to project two different images simultaneously: one with the barmaid as a modest woman, indifferent to the attentions of the top-hatted gentleman, and one in which she is a prostitute, negotiating the price for sex with a potential client. In a similar but more covert fashion, Sickert made the mirror a kind of puzzle which obscures and complicates spatial and psychological dimensions.

Although Sickert gleaned ideas from his French predecessors, he used mirrors in ways they did not. His mirror images dominate his canvases, thereby leaving his viewers much less sure of exactly what they see at first glance. The viewer feels the sort of initial confusion experienced when leaving daylight and entering a darkened theater. Sickert’s theater paintings are thus not easily apprehended; such effects can produce uneasiness and delight at the same time.

Upon further examination of *Little Dot Hetherington at the Bedford Music Hall*, at what first appears a straightforward view of a young performer and her audience becomes, in fact, a complex composition reflected in a large gilded mirror on the theater wall.<sup>173</sup> The viewer watches through a mirror instead of looking directly at the stage. Sickert was not content to simply paint the mirror within the architectural interior; instead, he nearly camouflaged the edges so that its reflections disorient the viewer. Sickert left only a few

---

<sup>172</sup> Charles Harrison, and Paul Wood, eds., *Art in Theory 1900-1990: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1992), 56.

<sup>173</sup> The performer, Florence Louise Hetherington, nicknamed “Little Dot,” was a child performer who first appeared on stage at the age of six. In addition to variety performances, she played a part in Lewis Carroll’s “Alice in Wonderland.” See Gruetzner Robins and Thomson, *Degas, Sickert and Toulouse-Lautrec*, 86.

visual clues that the performer, the figure in the wings, the orchestra, and the audience are all mirrored rather than seen firsthand. Only the empty chairs in the foreground share space with the viewer, who is apparently invisible in the mirror. The bottom edge of the mirror frame might easily be mistaken for an ornate balcony railing or even the edge of the stage.

Whether the mirrors in the Old Bedford were perfectly aligned to display the performer and audience or whether Sickert deliberately changed angles to suit his compositional intention is not clear. The reflection disorients and introduces an illogical, nearly abstract, aspect to the painting. Sickert's use of the looking-glass mirrors the make-believe world of the stage as opposed to the reality of the theater audience. The viewer might expect the mirror to faithfully reproduce the scene, but Sickert subverted this expectation underscoring the artificial façade of the theater and its more meaningful truths. "What the picture seems to represent," according to Harrison, "is not what the world looks like, but rather what seeing feels like."<sup>174</sup> *Little Dot Hetherington at the Bedford Music Hall* misleads; the vision of the performer is not real, instead, she is a reflection. Sickert reminds the viewer that all performances are by their nature illusionary.

Although Sickert's role as a mentor closely paralleled that of Henri, his work as a painter was more similar to Henri's protégé Shinn, who found theatrical performances compelling subjects for many of the same reasons, none of them being social progress. The things that attracted Sickert and Shinn included the drama of theatrical lighting, the colorful costumes and stage backdrops, and the opportunity to record a broad range of interaction

---

<sup>174</sup> Harrison and Wood, eds., *Art in Theory*, 191.

between the stage and the audience at a time when the New Woman was a new archetype in society.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Taking the Spectacle Seriously

#### Everett Shinn, *Revue*, 1908

The American artist whose interests seem most closely to parallel those of Walter Sickert is Everett Shinn. Sickert painted scenes of English music halls. The equivalent to that type of working-class entertainment in America was vaudeville; one of the subjects that most appealed to Shinn. More than any other artist in Robert Henri's circle, Shinn loved the theater. It was the subject of many of his paintings and pastels.<sup>175</sup> Shinn most often featured one particular type of vaudeville stage performer: the somewhat contradictory figure of a fashionably attired young woman flirtatiously showing just enough flesh to titillate. In Shinn's 1908 *Revue* (fig. 15) a figure costumed in a white evening dress stands at the edge of the stage illuminated by footlights. Shinn's many paintings of female performers enabled him to combine his three strongest interests: art, the theater, and the opposite sex.<sup>176</sup> His portrayals of vaudeville coquettes disclose much of Shinn's Victorian sensibilities. His paintings project an attitude of amused tolerance towards working-class women as they attained more equal status, provided they maintain proper decorum.

The struggle for suffrage and equal rights occasionally brought wealthy socialites and working-class women into contact with each other during protest marches and

---

<sup>175</sup> Everett Shinn started his career as a newspaper illustrator and throughout his life was primarily a painter, but he also devoted much of his time and energy to pursuits such as acting, playwriting, and set design. For more on Shinn's biography see Janay Wong, *Everett Shinn: The Spectacle of Life* (New York: Berry-Hill Galleries, Inc., 2000), 9-15.

<sup>176</sup> Shinn wrote several screenplays including a 1915 vaudeville skit or a French *Revue* entitled, "Vive le Bon Bon." However, it seems that none of his plays were produced on the professional stage.

demonstrations where they became aware of their common desire to challenge the constraints of a patriarchal society. Working-class women on the vaudeville stage often chose personas in their routines that broadcast new possibilities and freedoms for all classes of females in society. Some degrees of progress in this struggle can be ascertained by examining paintings of American popular entertainment by artists such as Shinn and Henri, who were themselves trying to foment change within the art establishment. Despite being older than Shinn, Henri demonstrated a more forward-thinking and accepting perception of the newly empowered female who could now unabashedly acknowledge and satisfy her appetites. Shinn's treatment of the female performer yields clues concerning competing elements in the mind of this gentlemanly yet amorous Victorian artist, who in his art and letters described the Newer Woman as both properly virtuous and simultaneously powerful and sexy.

The ebullient working-class performer in *Revue* is Shinn's version of the Newer Woman. She is commanding and sexually appealing but lacks the latent aggression of the well-bred Amazonian Gibson Girl who overwhelmed men. Shinn's archetype represented the ideal of many men of the time who hesitantly accepted the growing empowerment of women, possibly in part because the accompanying liberation of their sexuality made women seem (or actually be) sexually available. Shinn might also have been nostalgic for the more submissive behavior displayed by the nineteenth-century ideal of the True Woman. Overall, Shinn's Newer Woman was something of a hybrid in that she appealed to men with her bold sexuality cloaked in a non-threatening guise, and appealed to women with her fresh combination of vitality and independence.

*Revue* and its vivacious female performer caught the attention of the wealthy art patron and sculptor Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, who purchased the painting along with three other works from The Eight's 1908 exhibition at the Macbeth Galleries in uptown New York. Whitney already admired Shinn and had acquired his *French Music Hall* in 1905.<sup>177</sup> More than twenty years later, *Revue* would become part of the original collection of the Whitney Museum of American Art.

Whitney's choice of *Revue* is interesting because the painting features an image of the working-class Newer Woman, yet she is concocted as a well-dressed and feisty figure of male fantasy. Whitney was a free-spirited socialite who exuded a forthright self-confidence not displayed by women of previous generations. She epitomized the New Woman.<sup>178</sup> Although married, Whitney still represented an upper-class version of the New Woman, free to enjoy the liberties granted to her by wealth and by newly available social prerogatives. She moved through society with advantages and freedoms not necessarily available to less privileged, single, working-class women. Whitney was, in sum, the type of highly visible, idealized feminist who inspired countless middle and upper-class women as they pursued education, new social freedoms, and even athletic activities.

*Revue* may have appealed to Whitney for its reflection of her own novel sense of empowerment as a woman. Shinn's painting is of a charming, sultry performer illuminated

---

<sup>177</sup> Laural Weintraub, *Fine Art and Popular Entertainment: The Emerging Dialogue Between "High" and "Low" In American Art of the Early Twentieth Century* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI, Dissertation, The City University of New York, 1996), 120.

<sup>178</sup> Eight years later, in 1916, Henri painted an informal portrait of Whitney lounging on a divan in a pose reminiscent of a classical odalisque. Her bohemian-style outfit with silk jacket and pants was virtually unknown in woman's fashion at the time and certainly identified her as an independent, New Woman.

by the footlights as she commands the stage while lifting the hem of her dress just enough to display her daintily-clad foot and part of her shapely leg in a silk stocking.

Although not of the working class, Whitney and her behavior, unfettered by Victorian values, embraced the new freedoms recently available to young women as they gained confidence and earned their own money as factory workers, shop clerks, secretaries, or, as in Whitney's case, as artists. A less onerous job possibility for attractive young women with a modicum of talent was to become a stage performer in the many theaters, vaudeville stages, and opera houses in cities across the nation. Although it was a profession generally looked down upon by the rest of society, many young girls harbored dreams of performing on the stage and, from its beginnings, vaudeville provided some young women an alternative to employment in factories and garment shops. On the one hand, entertainers could earn more for less grueling work but, on the other, the attending social stigma which consigned female performers the role of "fallen women" would threaten their status as respectable women. Girls were warned of the moral dangers of the acting profession in etiquette pamphlets and women's magazines such as the *Bazaar Book of Decorum*, which advised against "emulating the arts of the painted woman."<sup>179</sup>

Some advertisements for vaudeville called it "wholesome entertainment" but Shinn's female performer pushed the boundaries of "wholesome." With a wasp-waist and an hour-glass figure, probably the result of a tight corset worn beneath her shimmering white gown, the woman in *Revue* wears long white gloves, a pearl necklace, a sparkling choker around her neck, and is crowned with a red, white, and black feathered hat. Her left

---

<sup>179</sup> Karen Halttunen, *Confidence Men and Painted Women: A Study of Middle-Class Culture in America, 1830-1870* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), xiv.

arm extends to a long white staff while her right hand lifts the hem of her dress to reveal her lacy undergarments, stockinged leg, and a delicate white satin slipper. This pose is seemingly for the benefit of the only other figure visible in the scene, a formally attired musician in the orchestra pit. Caught in an apparent intimate exchange with the musician, the flirtatious gesture is, of course, viewed by the entire audience. Shinn's focus is on the performer, omitting her audience apart from the lone musician. Simultaneously chaste yet seductive, she embodies the vaudeville starlet he so enjoyed.

Shinn, whose nearly obsessive interest with live performance began when he was a young artist in Philadelphia, included none of the blunt realism, microscopic detail, and rather misogynist tone of Thomas Eakins, whose deflated singer in *Singing A Pathetic Song* (fig. 8) effuses ennui as she performs refined bourgeois parlor entertainment. Eakins' *Concert Singer* (fig. 9), although beautifully gowned, is also somehow depleted. Her demeanor reinforces the staid decorum required of nineteenth-century American female concert performers. Eakins' work contains none of the bawdy spectacle of French entertainment seen in Edgar Degas' *Singer with a Glove, (Chanteuse de Café)*, ca. 1878 (fig. 30), boisterously belting out a song of sexual innuendo and double entendre. Although very much influenced by Degas, whose work he saw when he traveled to Europe in 1900, Shinn's vaudeville performers are never quite so blatant. Shinn occupies ground somewhere between Eakins and Degas: his vaudeville entertainers are vibrant and sexy but they are never vulgar.

The coquette in *Revue* stands before a non-descript backdrop, and only a few clues along the margins of the canvas indicate that she is on stage. She is isolated except for the

partial figure of a nearly anonymous musician in the lower left corner, reminiscent of the conductor in Eakins' *Concert Singer*, where the maestro's controlling hand and baton are all the viewer sees of him as he wields power over the marionette-like singer.

Shinn's enigmatic musician is engaged and works in concert with the female upon the stage but does not control her actions, as Eakins' disembodied conductor does. This distinction is important because Shinn seems to acknowledge the growing autonomy of women in society as his performer commands the stage, the attention of the musician, and that of the viewer who is part of her unseen audience. In sum, this Newer Woman literally stands with men at her feet.

Shinn owes more to Degas than he does to Eakins in both subject matter and technique. For instance, flirtatious interplay between female performers and the musicians in the orchestra pit emerges often in Degas' work, such as *Cabaret Scene, 1876-77* (fig. 49), but does not occur in Eakins' scenes. Both Degas and Shinn devote much attention to costumes and props in their theater scenes but with different intentions. Shinn's performers wear white dresses indicative of virginity and purity much like wedding or debutante gowns; these tightly corseted costumes drew attention to the figure but never exposed flesh. His vaudeville vixens in paintings such as the 1912 *Footlight Flirtation* (fig. 50) and *The Singer, 1902* (fig. 51), wear long white gloves and carry a Bo-Peep type staff or a dainty parasol, common vaudeville stage props. Other accessories such as hand-held fans for the ladies and top hats and canes for the gentlemen helped set the tone of mock gentility and aped Victorian manners. For instance, umbrellas had, for thousands of years, going back to the ancient Egyptians, been associated with wealth and royalty. In

nineteenth-century paintings, umbrellas, suggestive of the phallus, continued to be emblems of male authority.<sup>180</sup> Several of Shinn's male performers, such as the gentleman on-stage in his 1910 *The Monologist* (fig. 52), don top hat and umbrella. By including these refined emblems in vaudeville acts, entertainers hoped to add a touch of class (with a hint of the bawdy) to their performance.

Accoutrements, from flower bouquets to hand-held fans visible in Degas' ballet and *café-concert* scenes, such *Cabaret Scene* of 1876-77 (fig 49), were elements in an elaborate code used to convey the desires of gentlemen and the receptive levels of female singers and dancers. As one American visitor to the *café-concert* recorded in 1870, "A person wishing to make the acquaintance of one of these fair demoiselles sends a bouquet with his card to her. If she appears with it on the stage she thereby signifies her willingness to accept Monsieur's attentions."<sup>181</sup>

Most women carried hand-held folding fans in Victorian and Edwardian society on both sides of the Atlantic. However, European women had long deployed fans not only as a respite from warm environments, but also as instruments in a complex system of communication, for fans had a lexicon of gestures associated with them.<sup>182</sup> While American

---

<sup>180</sup> Katherine Morris Lester and Bess Viola Oerke, *Accessories of Dress: An Illustrated Encyclopedia* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2004), 405.

<sup>181</sup> James D. McCabe, Jr., *Paris by Sunlight and Gaslight: A Work Descriptive of the Mysteries and Miseries, the Virtues, the Vices, the Splendors, and the Crimes of the City of Paris* (Philadelphia, Chicago, and Boston: National Publishing Company, 1869), 693.

<sup>182</sup> As early as 1711, a columnist for *The Spectator* wrote that, "Women are armed with fans as men with swords, and sometimes do more execution with them." Used as a means of courtship, fans could telegraph their possessors' desires or displeasures to men from the stage or between audience members across the crowd in venues such as the Paris Opera. Each placement and gesture had a specific meaning and both sexes were well versed in the various meanings. In 1740 the *Gentleman's Magazine* featured an advertisement promoting the "Speaking Fan" and listed a series of different motions to correspond with letters of the alphabet while in the nineteenth century, the Parisian fan maker, Pierre Duvelleroy printed a list of gestures and their meanings. See Valerie Steele, *The Fan: Fashion and Femininity Unfolded* (New York: Rizzoli

girls may have fluttered their pretty fans flirtatiously at young men, American society did not typically use the fan as a device for communicating such complicated messages.<sup>183</sup> For instance, in a chapter entitled “Art of Conversation” from her 1896 book, *Social Life or The Manners and Customs of Polite Society*, Maud C. Cooke mentions the fan merely as a possible impediment to communication as she advises young women to “not cover the lips with the hand, or a fan, while speaking.”<sup>184</sup> To do so shows nervousness and a lack of social training.<sup>185</sup> Cooke does not acknowledge the fan as a possible instrument of semaphore.

Therefore, the fan’s inclusion in American paintings was simply as a common fashion accessory of the period. However, in Shinn’s 1903 painting *In the Loge* (fig. 16), the open fan on the balcony railing held by the woman in a red cloak may symbolize the wanton frivolity of a loose woman in contrast to the coat of one of the virtuous girls in white. The plain coat suggests a respectable woman’s sensible interest in warmth, obviously necessary on this winter day, over flashy accessories.

In *Revue* and several of his other paintings featuring female entertainers such as *Footlight Flirtation* (fig. 50) or *The Singer* (fig. 51), Shinn, like Sickert, was not concerned with imparting much real information about the identity of his performers. These are not really portraits of specific people, but are instead generic types of working-class Newer

---

International Publications, Inc., 2002), 12-13 and Bernadette Fort and Angela Rosenthal, eds, *The Other Hogarth: Aesthetics of Difference* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001), 128-134.

<sup>183</sup> See Minnie Myrtle, “The Ladies and Their Fans,” *New York Times* (June 30, 1854), <http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?res=9502E3D6153DE034BC4850DFB066838F649FDE> (accessed July 19, 2011). Myrtle comments, for instance, on the use of fan to hide behind and twirl when flirting with young men but makes no mention of their use as a device to communicate specific messages.

<sup>184</sup> The author, Maud Cooke is not related to Maud Cook, sister of Weda Cook – both of whom were painted by Thomas Eakins.

<sup>185</sup> Maud C. Cooke, *Social Life or The Manners and Customs of Polite Society* (Buffalo, New York: The Matthews-Northrup Company, 1896), 48.

Women trying hard to succeed in the entertainment industry. Shinn viewed them as sexy female characters fulfilling a role within the spectacle of the variety performance. Instead of recording a specific evening's performance or featuring an identifiable, well-known celebrity such as Nora Bayes, perhaps the most famous singer in vaudeville, or Eva Tanguay, a singing comedienne beloved not so much for her voice but for her "wild personality," Shinn focused on presenting his ideal woman.<sup>186</sup> He even wrote of his sentiments in a letter to a patron saying, "The picture you have is one of our vaudeville theaters in those days of smothering skirts. She has no particular identity. However, without fixing her on a known personality, she is, or the picture in its entirety is, my personality plus the forgotten vaudeville performers which inspired it."<sup>187</sup> The vivacious showgirl in *Revue* bears none of the restrictive rigidity or passivity of Eakins' concert singer or the languor of Thomas Dewing's privileged beauties, but her simply rendered face and nearly nonexistent nose are almost cartoon-like lacking the detail and depth of character of Henri's portrait of Jesseca Penn, a real-life Newer Woman.

Shinn, unlike Eakins, portrayed women as attractive, radiant, and commanding onstage. He did not display the same compulsion to control and degrade women as the elder artist but did view women primarily as sex objects and not equal to men. The female performer in *Revue*, for instance, seems to command the stage with her sexual wiles, but maintains her decorum as a pseudo-proper lady. She appears as a seasoned stage professional. In contrast, the young woman in *The Singer* comes across as an ingénue, lost

---

<sup>186</sup> M. Alison Kibler, *Rank Ladies: Gender and Cultural Hierarchy in American Vaudeville* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999) 41.

<sup>187</sup> Letter dated February 14, 1940 from Everett Shinn to Ralph H. Norton quoted in Wong, *Everett Shinn: The Spectacle of Life*, 82 (foot note 276, pg 108).

in her exuberant performance. Shinn's paintings present a variety of types appealing to assorted tastes and resemble the pin-up photographs of Hollywood starlets or the calendar girls of Alberto Vargas and George Petty, popular during the 1940s and 1950s.

Shinn, one of Henri's acolytes, was perhaps not as enlightened as Henri in his attitude towards the independent, powerful New Woman. Shinn's purpose was thus different from his colleagues Henri and John Sloan, who each produced paintings of specific, well-known performers such as Ruth St. Denis, Jesseca Penn, and Isadora Duncan.

Shinn's many stylings of his "type" of woman, radiating a kind of sexy innocence, seem to mirror his own feelings toward women and his response to the changing dynamics of traditional gender roles as more women entered the workforce, the suffragette movement thrived, and the Gibson Girl and the New Woman threatened the structure of male-dominated society. Shinn painted female performers as emblems of his archaic Victorian sensibility towards women at a time when standards of propriety were rapidly changing. He did not paint Gibson Girls wantonly engaged in athletics or striding through society unescorted by male chaperones. The Gibson Girl represented the privileged class, while Shinn's version of the New Woman was a working-class Newer Woman, dedicated to making a living as a performer and lacking the money or time for political, athletic, or academic pursuits. However, instead of presenting the realities and the sometimes harsh working conditions and challenges of life faced by a single woman working as an entertainer, Shinn highlighted the sparkling personality on stage rather than the weary performer backstage.

Shinn's attitude concerning women was quintessentially that of a "modern" Victorian gentleman with all the attending contradictions. Shinn's performers possess feistiness behind their demure façades that suggest a conflict between his desire for a passive sex-kitten and his admiration for the powerful self-determination of the New Woman. He seemed to believe that the proper place for a woman in society was upon a pedestal constructed of virtue and respectability where she was venerated and contained. *Revue* communicates his struggle between desire to keep women in submissive roles while simultaneously being enticed by the greater sexual availability of the free-thinking, independent Newer Woman.

Shinn's most oft-imagined female performer combines the coy True Woman with the more forward Newer Woman. She confidently performs solo with no male partner to lead her or direct the festivities. His presence would previously have been *de rigueur*. She commands attention from both men and women in the audience, albeit for different reasons. Men desire her and women aspire to be like her. The working-class women in the vaudeville audience might have more easily related to the live three-dimensional performer up on the stage as opposed to the images of the two-dimensional Gibson Girl they saw illustrated in popular magazines.

Shinn's paintings of vaudeville coquettes with their girlish charms suggest an underlying sexuality and strength and help illustrate the transformation of American art from the romantic artifice of the nineteenth century to the more challenging and somewhat bleaker realities of the twentieth century. His art moreover attests to how social decorum

and manners were seen to be in jeopardy of deteriorating as the balance between gender roles began a century-long battle for equality.

The performer in *Revue* is daintily and conventionally attired yet she projects delight in awareness of her sensual appeal to men, while she maintains confidence in her status as the sole object of attention. Shinn recorded contemporary popular entertainment as women displayed more confidence onstage (and in other aspects of their lives). He liked the modern dresses with lower necklines but he seemed to wish they were worn by the proper Victorian ladies of his youth, when women wore full-length gowns and a glimpse of leg above the ankle was considered risqué. He sought to dress the True Woman in the Newer Woman's clothes.

Shinn, as an artist, crafted a virginal onstage ingénue capering about in a naughty manner. However, he was by no means the only painter or writer to obsess on the duality of the Madonna / Harlot complex. This dualism recalls the contrasting characters Polly Peachum and Lucy Lockit in William Hogarth's *The Beggar's Opera*, 1728-29 (fig. 45) where the good girl "Madonna" represents virtue and the bad girl "Harlot" represents lust. These opposing desires mark the core of the conflict the New Woman posed for men who felt they could only marry a "good girl" (read, virgin) they could respect and love while, they simultaneously desired a "bad girl" cognizant of her own carnality and thus able to quench male sexual desire.

Alluring female performers appear in Shinn's paintings only on the stage. He did not detail backstage sexual intrigue as did Degas in many of his images of the French ballet. Instead, Shinn created sexual tension with images of provocative "virgins." The type of

vaudeville starlets he painted, in plumed hats and frilly diaphanous stage costumes, featured prominently in vaudeville entertainment. Their performances occupied, as scholar Albert McLean states, “the middle ground between [Charles Dickens’] “Little Nell” and the *femme fatale* and kept vaudeville just within the realm of ‘purity.’”<sup>188</sup> Like Degas, Shinn emphasized the sexuality of female entertainers, but he confined his point of view to the parameters of the proscenium arch of the stage. Degas, in contrast, pulled back the curtain on the intrigue of predatory top-hatted gentlemen soliciting dancers behind the scenes. Several other French painters found these often nefarious relations compelling due to the dangers they presented for the dancers who depended on these gentlemen for financial support. These backstage interludes could be the first perilous steps toward becoming prostitutes or “fallen women.”

Unlike the British infatuation with images laden with moral parables about fallen women, Americans of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were little interested in the subject. Some few exceptions to that indifference are found in works by John Sloan, George Luks, and William Glackens, all of whom included lower-class women with loose morals in some of their paintings. However, these artists only hinted at the possibility of such women being prostitutes and not just working-class girls casually taking advantage of older, wealthy male admirers.

Sloan’s 1912 *Sunday Afternoon in Union Square* (fig. 53), for example, illustrates heavily made up women in bright clothes attracting improper attention as men turn to leer and young girls whisper. His 1917 *Hell Hole* (fig. 54) is the back room of Tom Wallace’s

---

<sup>188</sup> Albert F. McLean, Jr., *American Vaudeville as Ritual* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1965), 97.

Greenwich Village “dive bar,” *The Golden Swan*, at the corner of Sixth Avenue and West Fourth Street.<sup>189</sup> This was a hangout for writers, artists, the theater crowd, and less savory patrons. Sloan has women casting suggestive glances while trying to sell their “goods” or, having succeeded, actively straddling their targets.

The restaurant in the 1906 painting by George Luks, *Café Francis* (fig. 55), advertised as “New York’s Most Popular Resort of the New Bohemia,” owned by James B. Moore was a more upscale venue where opportunistic but more attractive lower-class “Charity Girls,” as they were disparagingly referred to by women of high society, kept company with men and accepted favors such as clothing or perfume. What they gave in return was negotiable. In this way, they can be compared to the young dancers of the Paris Opéra (fig. 73), who were solicited by sophisticated, wealthy older men.

Charity Girls took advantage of their good looks, pretty figures, and loose reputations to gain entrée into some of the more fashionable establishments.<sup>190</sup> Many Charity Girls undoubtedly accepted gifts in return for the pleasure of their company, but, with women such as Margaret Sanger speaking publicly on birth control and publications such as *The Masses* reporting on issues of free love and reforms in divorce-laws, the possibility of extra-marital sex was not unheard of.<sup>191</sup>

---

<sup>189</sup> David W. Scott and E. John Bullard, *John Sloan, 1871-1951: His Life and Paintings, His Graphics* (Boston: Boston Book and Art Publisher for the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 1971), 152.

<sup>190</sup> James W. Tottis, *Life’s Pleasures: The Ashcan Artists’ Brush with Leisure, 1895-1925* (London and New York: Merrell Publishers Ltd., for Detroit Institute of Arts, 2007), 79.

<sup>191</sup> Sheila Rowbotham, *A Century of Women: The History of Women in Britain and the United States* (London: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1997), 36. For more on Margaret Sanger, a young nurse, educator, and socialist who introduced the term “birth control,” opened the country’s first birth control clinic in 1916, and founder of the American Birth Control League which transformed into Planned Parenthood see Rowbotham, 62, 109-114.

An illustration entitled *The Unemployed* (fig. 56) by Sloan on the cover of the March 1913 magazine *The Masses* features a wealthy older man seated in a private box at the theater. In his company, an overdressed Charity Girl sits with her chair turned away from the stage and her big feet awkwardly askew, indicating that, beneath her dress, her legs are splayed in a very unladylike manner. She obviously lacks the social graces of a more well-bred young woman, who would most likely only be with a man that age if he were her father.

*The Masses*, a progressive monthly magazine of social criticism published from 1911 to 1917, carried articles about political corruption, labor strikes, working-class economics, and women's rights. The editors were legitimately concerned with women's issues but were not above exploiting working-class Charity Girls by featuring images of them on the cover to sell magazines. In print, at least, they dealt with the subject of prostitution in nonjudgmental, neutral tones, suggesting that it was an inevitable result of poor economic conditions and upper-class greed. With their liberal bias they advocated rejection of what they viewed as lingering, restrictive Victorian moral standards.

While a few of the Ashcan artists dealt superficially with the subject of the fallen woman, their contemporaries, the American writers Theodore Dreiser and Stephen Crane, went into much greater detail and sensationalized the sordid aspects of her life. Dreiser and Crane both ascribed to a movement in literature known as Naturalism, an off-shoot of Realism, which flourished in American, British, and French literature from the 1880s to the 1940s and exposed the unpleasant realities of urban life by taking on such subjects as poverty, race, disease, and prostitution.

At this early stage of his career, Shinn thrived as a well-connected member of New York society and had many influential and important friends, including Dreiser, whom he probably met around 1900 when they both worked for the *New York World*. Shinn described their relationship as a “close office friendship” which continued as they worked together at other publications including *Ainslee’s Magazine* and *Broadway Magazine*.<sup>192</sup> Dreiser had just published *Sister Carrie*, which chronicles the rise of Caroline Meeber, a young woman from Chicago who becomes a successful New York performer.

*Sister Carrie* carefully charts the underlying forces and social conditions that shaped the lives of his characters as they confront realities of the modern world. Crane, who in 1893 published his first book, a novella called *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*, influenced the younger Dreiser. Maggie, an outcast single woman, resorted to prostitution to survive the harshness of big city life on her own, and although the “fallen woman” was not entirely unknown in American literature, such an immoral heroine shocked American readers and challenged their ideals of decency. However, the fact that Carrie and Maggie as “fallen women” did, to varying degrees, suffer for their “immoral choices” made such “low” subject matter more palatable to righteous Americans.

Dreiser’s character, Carrie, drifts through the cruel city, first in Chicago and then later in New York. The author states that such a forlorn woman faces two possibilities: “either she falls into saving hands and becomes better, or she rapidly assumes the cosmopolitan standard of virtue and becomes worse.”<sup>193</sup> She is motivated to find a

---

<sup>192</sup> Joseph J. Kwiat, “Dreiser’s *The ‘Genius’* and Everett Shinn, the ‘Ash-Can’ Painter,” *PMLA* 67 (March 1952), 18.

<sup>193</sup> Theodore Dreiser, *Sister Carrie* (Cleveland, OH: The World Publishing Company, 1946), 2.

comfortable life and develops a selfish streak to achieve her goal. Dreiser wrote, “She wanted pleasure, she wanted position, and yet she was confused as to what these things might be.”<sup>194</sup> Although seeming to parallel the life of Henri’s model Jesseca Penn, Carrie’s story could also easily reflect the life of any one of the virginal yet provocative stage performers on Shinn’s canvases. As friends, the writer and the painter may very well have attended vaudeville shows together.

When Dreiser’s book appeared, many readers were scandalized that, despite the character’s poor choices and deviant behavior, she succeeded and survived. Some self-appointed arbiters of social propriety demanded that fiction provide moral comeuppance for characters who challenged standards of morality. One of those was the publisher’s wife, Mrs. Nellie Doubleday, a prominent New York matron who represented, as historian Marcia S. Moyer put it, “the still powerful and lingering Victorian social fabric.”<sup>195</sup> The character Carrie as a working-class New Woman was the polar opposite of everything Mrs. Doubleday represented. Scholar Donald Pizer wrote that “In Carrie’s emotional isolation, Dreiser was anticipating the clearly presented theme in [his next novel] *The “Genius”* that an emotional economy and selfishness are necessary for the survival of the artists as artist.”<sup>196</sup>

Dreiser based the main character, Eugene Witla, the artist of his 1915 novel *The “Genius,”* on Shinn and the stellar success of his early career from about 1905 to 1910, when The Eight were the feted stars of the New York art world before the Armory Show of

---

<sup>194</sup> Ibid., 159.

<sup>195</sup> Yoshinobu Hakutani, ed., *Theodore Dreiser and American Culture: New Readings* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2000), 39.

<sup>196</sup> Donald Pizer, *The Novels of Theodore Dreiser: A Critical Study* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1976), 71.

1913 completely changed the landscape of American art.<sup>197</sup> Shinn wrote in a letter that Dreiser “touched on my art activities, incidents and almost precise identification of some of my pictures.”<sup>198</sup> He added that “Witla’s emotional side is far and away from mine” but “I nevertheless feel that Dreiser looked on my work and the magazines I worked for as fitting material for his character.”<sup>199</sup> In a later book, Keith Newlin notes that “In fashioning his genius, Dreiser has been careful to portray not just a great painter, but a great American painter, who pictures the drama and vitality of contemporary urban life.”<sup>200</sup> Witla, like Shinn, was also a promiscuous womanizer and Newlin continues that “no one woman could have satisfied all sides of Eugene’s character.” Shinn was married four times and at least one of his marriages ended because of his infidelities.<sup>201</sup>

Shinn may have enjoyed the notoriety of his association with the character in *The “Genius.”* However, his colleague John Sloan defended Shinn’s reputation when he noted that Dreiser chronicled an “artist who paints the life of the city, rises to the top of the advertising world and lives like a millionaire. Meanwhile, all his life, he has had an obsession for young girls, and finally one of these adolescent affairs wrecks his career... Now it may be true that Shinn has had a checkered career, working in the theater and

---

<sup>197</sup> According to Joseph J. Kwiat, “Dreiser’s ‘*The Genius*,’” 17, Kwiat received a letter in 1947 from Shinn acknowledging that he was the inspiration for Dreiser’s fictional artist. In 1952, a year before his death, Shinn made marginal notes in Kwiat’s copy of the novel *The “Genius”* commenting on the passages in the novel and how they related to the artist’s life.

<sup>198</sup> Kwiat, 17.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>200</sup> Leonard Cassuto and Clare Virginia Eby, *The Cambridge Companion to Theodore Dreiser* (New York and Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 130.

<sup>201</sup> Keith Newlin, ed., *A Theodore Dreiser Encyclopedia* (Westport, CT and London: Greenwood Press, 2003), 394.

Hollywood, making money, spending and losing it, but I don't think Dreiser borrowed much of Shinn's character as an artist."<sup>202</sup>

Shinn, who was twenty-four in the year 1900, formed his character and set his attitudes in the nineteenth century. He embodied a Victorian attitude that took male privilege and prerogative for granted. He made no attempt to divest himself of the world view common to men of his generation who assumed the natural superiority of the male. Yet Shinn was paradoxically a key figure in New York's early twentieth-century bohemian artistic circles which claimed to advance a modern perspective replete with new rights for women and new roles for them in society. Despite his cherished ideals concerning women's subservience to men and their sexual appetites, Shinn also exalted the possibilities of interacting with newly powerful women as equals, and this is apparent in the images he created. Much of Shinn's art focused on vaudeville entertainment, which provided an excellent opportunity to observe the actions and behavior of the Newer Woman in public, whether onstage or in the audience.

---

<sup>202</sup> Edith DeShazo, *Everett Shinn, 1876-1953: A Figure in His Time* (Clarkson N. Potter, Inc., Publisher, New York, 1974), 147-48.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### The Newer Woman in the Audience

Everett Shinn, *In the Loge*, 1903

A highly idealized vision of the Victorian gentleman and his adherence to a rigid code of proper behavior provided the template for Everett Shinn's own image of himself. While he did not overtly display this mentality in creating images of female performers, his nineteenth-century values were founded on the belief that women must naturally acquiesce to male authority. In his paintings, Shinn simultaneously reveled in the changed appearance of the Newer Woman while seeking to present her behavior in terms of the True Woman of an earlier era. Shinn subscribed to the mindset of the New Woman as a threat to the male identity and he may have reassured himself with his abilities to construct less frightening images of female performers who were sexually appealing but still under control and still subject to the male mind. He maintained this mindset when he pictured audience members with *In the Loge* of 1903 (fig. 16). To truthfully document such scenes he had to note changes occurring as audiences increasingly filled with working-class women who now came to the theater unescorted, and therefore were more autonomous than women of the previous generation.

Everett Shinn was stage-struck. He loved all aspects of writing, acting, directing, and painting sets for the theater. As an artist, he painted the action onstage, the musicians in the orchestra pit, and the people in the audience. Shinn was attracted to New York vaudeville houses in much the same way that Walter Sickert was attracted to London music

halls. Both artists found these venues to be convenient microcosms of their contemporary societies as the barriers between social classes began to dissolve.

While all spectators viewed the same performance, the wealthiest patrons could purchase exclusive box seats or comfortable seating in the orchestra section, while middle and working-class spectators typically purchased less expensive seats on the floor and in the upper galleries. Vaudeville theater tickets cost just ten or fifteen cents for a daytime matinee seat in the balcony or one to two dollars for a box seat during an evening performance, with the majority of seats costing twenty-five to fifty cents.<sup>203</sup> By the turn of the twentieth century, vaudeville tickets were offered at prices for almost any budget and made this new form of American entertainment affordable for the working classes. Vaudeville, like the London music halls, offered a different priced seat for each sized pocketbook.<sup>204</sup> In New York around 1900, the price difference between the cheapest ticket and the most expensive was approximately one dollar at legitimate theaters in the Theatrical Syndicate, but only varied by about 50 cents at Keith's vaudeville houses, with a three-leveled price scale.<sup>205</sup> As a result, the demographics of turn-of-the-century audiences in these venues were as varied as the range of tickets offered.

Shinn's painting *In the Loge* depicts only a handful of spectators in the balcony. By limiting his focus to single audience members, Shinn isolated and highlighted the kind of dual characteristics in the spectators that he combined in his images of female stage performers. The two fresh-faced girls in *In the Loge* dress in white, representing innocent

<sup>203</sup> Patricia McDonnell, *On the Edge of Your Seat: Popular Theater and Film in Early Twentieth-Century American Art* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002), 73.

<sup>204</sup> M. Alison Kibler, *Rank Ladies: Gender and Cultural Hierarchy in American Vaudeville* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 27.

<sup>205</sup> Iain Mackintosh, *Architecture, Actor, and Audience* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993), 129.

“Madonna”- type figures. Next to them, a heavily made-up Harlot- type figure lurks cloaked in red. Nearby, two young men leer at the women and ignore the performance. These two males bear some resemblance to Walter Sickert’s gallery gods.

*In the Loge* is a scene from a time when the number of leisure venues for lower and middle-class workers had increased especially for vaudeville shows. The painting records ongoing adjustments in the mores of conduct for both sexes. *In the Loge* (a title Shinn may have borrowed from artist Mary Cassatt) is a view of some of the characters who frequented vaudeville houses and offers the opportunity to consider the vaudeville audience as a new entity. The two unchaperoned girls sit on the edge of their seats dressed in crisp, white shirtwaists and represent working-class Newer Women, who often filled the less expensive seats in vaudeville theaters.

The girls give their complete attention to the performance and disengage from all external stimuli including the intentions of those seated near them. They focus fully on the activity on the stage. Enthralled with the performance they are oblivious to the predatory gaze of two young men in the shadows or to the somewhat sinister figure in the red dress.

*In the Loge*, along with several other of Shinn’s vaudeville paintings dealing with women’s presence in the audience, offers a look at the increasing number of unescorted women attending such performances. With the chance to participate in society without male guardians came new freedoms and new threats. The penetrating, voyeuristic gaze of dominant men continued to be subtext in these paintings, but women were increasingly portrayed as able to cope unperturbed by the male gaze. The audience, as the modern art theorist Jonathan Crary suggests, tended to “cancel out or exclude from consciousness”

much of their surrounding environment.<sup>206</sup> For an audience, their undivided attention allows for a kind of escape from the stresses and responsibilities of daily life. This momentary departure from the concerns and pressures of everyday urban life is perhaps why city people have always sought diversion in performance.

*In the Loge* features three distinct types of people (the girls in white, the woman in red, and the young men), each looking in different directions, attentive to different things. The only information the viewer can surmise of the performance is expressed in the faces of these young ladies. While the young women focus on the action, the two male figures in the shadows surveil them. Shinn scholar Janay Wong notes, “Fascinated by people caught in the act of looking, Shinn features the audience members not only watching the performance, but also observing each other.”<sup>207</sup>

The artificial intimacy of a theater audience offered the multitude tremendous freedom to enjoy people watching. The theater provided several sightlines for an artist: the audience watching the actors and stage, the performers looking out at the spectators, and the spectators watching each other. The restrictive decorum of the previous era allowed few opportunities for different levels of society to interact but now, with more approachable women in the mix, men had more chances to stare at women and, as social dictates realigned, the male gaze became more blatantly obvious. This phenomenon is mentioned by the fictional Broadway star “Sister Carrie” in the Theodore Dreiser novel of the same name. The lead character Carrie said, “The walk down Broadway, then as now,

---

<sup>206</sup> Jonathan Crary, *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001), 1.

<sup>207</sup> Janay Wong, *The Early Work of Everett Shinn (1897-1911): Art at the Crossroads of a New Century* (Dissertation, The City University of New York, 2002), 207.

was one of the remarkable features of the city. There gathered, before the matinee and afterwards, not only all the pretty women who love a showy parade, but the men who love to gaze upon and admire them.”<sup>208</sup>

Shakespeare said, “The play’s the thing” but, for any theatergoer, the phenomenological experience of attendance is much wider than the performance itself.<sup>209</sup> The spectators, too, play roles and act their parts. Apart from the stage, another performance begins before the curtain rises as people take their seats and continues until the audience leaves the theater and disperses. This secondary performance involves dressing up, putting oneself on display, mingling with the crowd and, as scholar Gay McAuley describes it, “seeing the play through the filter of another’s gaze.”<sup>210</sup> The custom of looking and being seen was discreetly evident in the genteel society of nineteenth-century French theatergoers, but was more manifest and perhaps less “polite” for the American spectator. Yet they understood the reason they were there – to see and be seen as well as to enjoy the show. The young men in Shinn’s *In the Loge* unabashedly stare at the women, ignoring the activity below. Meanwhile, the woman in red looks askance, perhaps at her companion seated beside her, out of the picture plane, or perhaps scours the crowd for her next conquest.<sup>211</sup>

The excitement of the unescorted young women *In the Loge* echoes that of French Impressionist Pierre Auguste Renoir’s demure young girl in *At the Theater, The First Outing*,

---

<sup>208</sup> Theodore Dreiser, *Sister Carrie* (Cleveland, OH: The World Publishing Company, 1946), 340.

<sup>209</sup> Quoted in *Hamlet*, Act 2, scene 2.

<sup>210</sup> Gay McAuley, “Theatre, Film, Performance: the Role of the Spectator” (paper presented at Sydney Society of Literature and Aesthetics Conference, Sydney University, June 2000).

<sup>211</sup> The fact that prostitutes solicited clients in the theater was noted by Albert E. Smith, a former employee of Tony Pastor, the “father of vaudeville.” See Robert W. Snyder, *The Voice of the City: Vaudeville and Popular Culture in New York* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2000), 22.

1876-77 (fig. 57) who leans forward so as not to miss anything. The flowers in her lap may be symbolic of her budding sexuality as she enters adult society. Renoir's naïve mademoiselle is likewise unaware of the attention she attracts. Shinn employs symbolism to underscore the good character of his girls; the two little cupids carved into the ornate balcony are aligned directly below the two young women, while the less well-defined carving just under the heavily-made-up woman in red appears to be a bunch of grapes, suggestive of bacchanalian excess.

Cassatt, the American woman who exhibited with the Impressionists, also presented images of women occupying a loge at the Paris Opéra. Whereas Renoir, as noted by one scholar, chose to "enshrine conventional gender stereotypes, with the women figures as passive objects of desire for male consumption," Cassatt instead invested women in several more diverse roles.<sup>212</sup>

Cassatt purposefully set out to subvert the consecrated prerogative of males to frankly gaze upon and evaluate the physical attributes of all nubile females they encountered no matter what the setting. Despite her apparent lack of overt advocacy of women's rights, Cassatt was the epitome of the New Woman in that she never married and succeeded in forging a career in what was largely a male-dominated profession. She was not vocal concerning her views, but her oeuvre, in marked contrast to her male contemporaries, had none of their frequent misogynistic overtones. Often she chose as subjects bold females who behaved as naturally equal to men in social settings such as the

---

<sup>212</sup> Ernst Vegelin van Claerbergen and Barnaby Wright, eds, *Renoir at the Theatre: Looking at La Loge*, exh. cat., Courtauld Gallery (London: Paul Holberton Publishing, 2008), 80.

theater. As historian Nina Rosenblatt notes, Cassatt caused a “disruption of the pleasure of the gaze that sustains women as *spectacle*.”<sup>213</sup>

The 1882 Cassatt painting, *The Loge* (fig. 58), presents two proper ingénues on the cusp of womanhood with different levels of comfort with the flame of interest they have sparked: one sits upright with a bundle of flowers on her lap, open to admiring stares, while her companion hides behind her fan with arms crossed defensively across her torso blocking visual access to her form. The social code required women to avert their gaze. Men openly gaped as was acceptable behavior in European society. Paintings and literature of the time delineate the status quo of “proper” behavior. For instance, in Jane Austen’s *Mansfield Park*, Edmund said to his cousin Fanny Price, “You must really begin to harden yourself to the idea of being worth looking at. – You must try not to mind growing up into a pretty woman.”<sup>214</sup>

Cassatt’s *Woman with a Pearl Necklace in a Loge*, 1879 (fig. 59) is of a more mature woman who self-assuredly reclines rather than sits erect avoiding contact with the back of the chair as proper young girls were taught in finishing schools. Exuding confidence, she lowers her fan and showcases her beauty although her demeanor suggests that she is a woman to be reckoned with. Both *The Loge* and *Woman with a Pearl Necklace* feature properly decorous women who had arrived early to the Paris Opera in order to see and be seen. Strikingly different is Cassatt’s 1878 *In the Loge* (fig. 60), where an unescorted woman breaks with the code of proper feminine behavior, disrupting long-established gender roles.

---

<sup>213</sup> Nina Rosenblatt, review of *Review of Visual and Other Pleasures*, by Laura Mulvey, *Film Quarterly*, Vol. 42, No. 4 (Summer, 1989), 59-60.

<sup>214</sup> Jane Austen, *Mansfield Park*, (New York: Barnes and Noble Books, re-published, 1999), 149.

As she sits forward, with an elbow on the balcony railing, she peers through her opera glasses at the crowd; she mimics the action, pose, and even the evening wear of a gentleman across the way who stares back at her. Her transgressive display might get a pass in that she may be somberly dressed because she is in mourning and attending a matinee performance. In general, more liberties were afforded widowed women and perhaps Cassatt purposely raised issues of gender confusion by adding masculine details to the mourning attire such as the white cuffs and collar so similar to a man's tuxedo. Additionally, the placement of the fan, an indispensable accessory for a proper lady of the day, might suggest a phallus.

In her paintings, Cassatt gathers a variety of feminine Parisians, from innocent demoiselles to more experienced women; yet she avoids the *demi-monde*. Whether they are passive or forward, each of these women commands her surroundings with no male pretenders. As scholar Ruth Islin states, here is "a refined bourgeois woman actively looking in a public space of entertainment without transgressing etiquettes."<sup>215</sup> Cassatt's women viewed the hallways and balconies used by members of the audience as a stage and themselves as performers.

The tension between the dictates of proper decorum necessary to achieve respected status as a lady versus the temptation of the theater as a forum for flirtation has been much discussed by scholars of art history. Every aspect of their appearance, including their hair, makeup, dress and shoes, was in service to the fact that as they attended the theater they

---

<sup>215</sup> Quoted in Ernst Vegelin van Claerbergen and Barnaby Wright, eds., *Renoir at the Theatre: Looking at La Loge*, exh. cat., Courtauld Gallery (London: Paul Holberton Publishing, 2008), 80; Ruth Islin, "Was There a New Woman in Impressionist Painting?," in Sidsel Saria Sondergaard, ed., *Women in Impressionism, from Mythical Feminine to Modern Woman*, exh. cat. (New York and Carlsberg Glyptothek, Copenhagen, 2006-07).

were on display for the edification of their male contemporaries. One issue of discussion is the artists' attempt to document how cultural rules were followed or disregarded. Another issue is that these artists were very much looking upon the scene with male eyes. As is so often the case, there was a double standard in play. Men enjoyed carte-blanche to gaze upon the female body while women were expected to provide no acknowledgement and to avert their gaze. Not only could a woman's provocative glance suggest immoral behavior, but a woman in France looking too intently at gentlemen could actually be charged with soliciting prostitution.<sup>216</sup>

Women were subjugated by being under constant male surveillance. Awareness of herself as a creature under observation dominated the mindset of the upper-class Victorian woman. The cinema historian Laura Mulvey aptly describes this awareness. According to her, the male artist unconsciously forces the viewer to see the female subject of the painting through the lens of the male gaze. In her seminal 1975 article Mulvey wrote:

In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its phantasy on to the female form which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote to-be-looked-at-ness. Woman displayed as sexual object is the leit-motif of erotic spectacle: from pin-ups to striptease, from Ziegfeld to Busby Berkeley, she holds the look, plays to and signifies male desire.<sup>217</sup>

Constant male observation monitored women's actions, behavior, and words. Primarily, the Victorian male gaze identified young women as potential objects of sexual

---

<sup>216</sup> Stephen Kern, *Eyes of Love: The Gaze in English and French Culture, 1840-1900* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 14.

<sup>217</sup> Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Screen*, Vol. 16, No. 3 (Autumn, 1975), 6.

conquest. Eakins' singers were aware of, but not comfortable with, being looked at. Whereas Henri's *Salome* and *Jessica Penn* not only enjoyed the attention, they reveled in it. Unlike Cassatt's females on display in the loge, Shinn's unescorted female vaudeville spectators evolved beyond being passive "eye candy" to the point where they felt empowered to actively participate in the male arena, even if they were not fully aware of all the implications.

Unlike the well-heeled men in Cassatt's views of the Paris Opera, the young Americans in Shinn's *In the Loge* are not privileged gentlemen assessing ladies in a socially accepted manner. Instead, they are leering ruffians inappropriately violating acceptable decorum. One might argue that the difference is merely a matter of degree but here the male gaze differs from that seen in French painting because these women, despite being working class, are not subject to double standards. They are fending for themselves in a mildly unsavory setting. In American society, young men might be expected to behave better, but their crude actions were not as well regulated by social approbation as they would have been in France. French artists commented on abuse of power and privilege in society, while Shinn's intent was not really to raise awareness. He just wished to invest the scene with the minor intrigue of young men misbehaving.

Shinn's young women *In the Loge* are models of the working-class New Woman, a.k.a. the Newer Woman. The newly independent female spent her own well-earned money at theaters unaccompanied by a brother, father, husband, or boyfriend. This new character in American society, whose identity was independent from her male relatives and free from roles like mother, wife, or daughter, was also known by labels other than the

“New Woman,” for example, the privileged but adventurous Gibson Girl and her counterpart, the charming, rosy-cheeked Christy Girl. They were named for their creators Charles Dana Gibson and Howard Chandler Christy. These new twentieth-century incarnations of the New Woman share characteristics with Shinn’s stage performers. Janay Wong, referring to figures in Shinn’s *Broadway: Late in the Afternoon*, 1899 (fig. 61) blends these labels and calls his young women “Gibson Christy Shinn Girls.”<sup>218</sup>

The Gibson Girl and the Christy Girl projected images of wholesome, intelligent young women attractive to men because of their beauty and inspiring to women for their independent spirit. Perhaps male artists crafted these figures to ease their own anxieties with the New Woman, the threat of the suffragette, and the working-class Newer Woman. The “Gibson Christy Shinn Girl” was a softer more male-friendly version of the forceful New Woman at a time when she encroached on the male sphere and caused gender roles to shift.

Shinn’s young women *In the Loge* embody some of the same traits of the titular character in Stephen Crane’s 1893 novel, *Maggie, a Girl of the Streets*. After leaving her seat in the loge, Maggie reflected that “The theater made her think. She wondered if the culture and refinement she had seen imitated, perhaps grotesquely, by the heroine on the stage, could be acquired by a girl who lived in a tenement house and worked in a shirt factory.”<sup>219</sup> Crane described the various urban environments Maggie experiences,

---

<sup>218</sup> Wong, *The Early Work of Everett Shinn*, 189.

<sup>219</sup> Laural Weintraub, *Fine Art and Popular Entertainment: The Emerging Dialogue Between “High” and “Low” In American Art of the Early Twentieth Century* (Dissertation, The City University of New York, 1996), 38.

including shared room where she sleeps, the factory where she works, the busy streets she travels, and the theaters where she finds diversion.<sup>220</sup>

Shinn offers this scene of women at the theater as a cautionary tale. His sensibilities were very much those of a Victorian gentleman who both delighted in societal change and regretted its inevitability. His work embodies contradictory attitudes toward the evolution of the role of women in modern society. He seems to harbor both a protective and a predatory attitude regarding the nubile female, both in the audience and onstage, as she exhibited her figure and expanded her cultural outlook. Perhaps he wished to keep her safe from the designs of all men with the exception of himself.

For the first time in American history, women earned independent income and thus freedom from the constraints of family life where fathers and husbands controlled household spending. Kathy Peiss, historian of American women's issues, writes that, "Young, unmarried working-class women, foreign-born or daughters of immigrant parents, dominated the female labor force in the period from 1880 to 1920. In 1900, four-fifths of the 343,000 wage earning women in New York were single, and almost one-third were aged sixteen to twenty."<sup>221</sup> In most cases, income went for household expenses, but a female factory worker or shop clerk earning between six and seven dollars in a week could often manage to save some spending money for entertainment, and theatrical entrepreneurs

---

<sup>220</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>221</sup> Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (Philadelphia: Temple Press, 1986), 34.

seized upon this new phenomenon and made changes to the variety shows specifically to attract working-class women.<sup>222</sup>

Americans at this time began to have more leisure time than earlier generations thanks to adoption of the eight-hour work day and the forty-hour work week. The Progressive Movement believed that free time benefited a worker's physical health and mental well-being. Benjamin F. Keith, a progressive reformer, made vaudeville into a kind of wholesome entertainment extravaganza previously unknown in American theater and thereby attracted women and their money.<sup>223</sup> Vaudeville theaters, like department stores, ice cream shops, and other commercial spaces, were deemed safe public places for women to spend their free hours as leisure was no longer considered idle fancy but a necessity for one's health. Furthermore, Progressive Reformers lobbied for "regulation of commercialized recreation through legislation and cooperative agreements with amusement entrepreneurs."<sup>224</sup> The city government considered leisure time important enough to create The New York Public Recreation Commission charged with regulating "all places of public amusement where young girls congregate, such as dance halls, cabaret restaurants, motions pictures shows, dancing academies, theatres, etc."<sup>225</sup>

To cater to single working girls with their own spending money, Keith barred alcohol, eliminated coarse material by performers, and even offered such enticements as free dishes, sacks of coal, bags of flour, and fashionable paper dress patterns. In his show business trade publication, *Keith News*, he marketed directly to single women patrons and

---

<sup>222</sup> Wong, *The Early Work of Everett Shinn*, 188.

<sup>223</sup> Peiss, *Cheap Amusements*, 142.

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*, 179.

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid.*

suggested young women form a “theatre club, to go every Saturday afternoon.”<sup>226</sup>

Although women did attend evening performances, with some theaters even featuring “Ladies’ Nights,” daytime matinees were especially popular for unescorted women. By 1910, single working women made up one-third of the vaudeville audience.<sup>227</sup> Male businessmen encouraged their attendance not so much out of concern for women’s equality but because of their desire for profits. Women were gaining economic power in a growing consumer culture.

In addition to providing his patrons an affordable ticket price and a comfortable place to enjoy the show, Keith also assured that their sensibilities would not be compromised. He introduced and enforced rules of proper stage behavior for his performers. Posted signage backstage announced “Such words as liar, slob, son-of-a-gun, devil, sucker, damn and all other words unfit for the ears of ladies and children, also any reference to questionable streets, resorts, localities, and bar-rooms are prohibited under fine of instant discharge.”<sup>228</sup>

Well-mannered behavior was also expected of theater patrons who were handed cards requesting that, “Gentlemen will kindly avoid the stamping of feet and pounding of canes on the floor, and greatly oblige the management. All applause is best shown by the clapping of hands. Please don’t talk during the acts, as it annoys those about you, and prevents a perfect hearing of the entertainment.”<sup>229</sup> These codes of behavior introduced more refined etiquette than was previously acceptable in low-class saloons, where

---

<sup>226</sup> From “The Girl Behind the Pen,” *Keith News* (October 17, 1910) quoted in Kibler, *Rank Ladies*, 32.

<sup>227</sup> Peiss, *Cheap Amusements*, 143.

<sup>228</sup> Janay Wong, *Everett Shinn: The Spectacle of Life* (New York: Berry-Hill Galleries, Inc., 2000), 78.

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*

promiscuous bargirls performed raunchy song and dance routines and the ill-kempt crowd heckled performers, voiced displeasure, shouted insults, and talked loudly among themselves. To ensure better behavior and to encourage attendance by middle-class and working-class patrons, especially young women, these new, fashionable New York theaters, such as *Keith's New Union Square*, also provided uniformed ushers to monitor and maintain order. They also required ladies to remove their hats and gentlemen not to smoke.<sup>230</sup>

The removal of hats sounds like a reasonable request, but hats were then *de rigueur* in ladies' fashion and were often quite large as pictured by Harrison Fisher on the cover of a 1907 *The Ladies' Home Journal* (fig. 62). A cartoon in *Puck* titled, "What he saw at the Matinee" (fig. 63) illustrates one patron's annoyance with the large hats blocking his view of the stage. Likewise, Shinn's *Girl in Red on Stage* ca. 1905 (fig. 64) demonstrates the obstruction caused by elaborate hats worn by two stylish female spectators. Their bold silhouettes fill nearly half the composition, overshadowing and eclipsing the stage. The perspective is from the audience as the bright stage light spills out into the dark audience and onto the faces of these women, giving them the appearance of ghostly apparitions, as one of them turns to look over her shoulder at the viewer. These somewhat menacing heads in the foreground nearly obliterate the view of the singer onstage. The ominous effect is leavened by the warm, sensual light that suffuses this intimate scene.

---

<sup>230</sup> McDonnell, *On the Edge of Your Seat*, 74.

In Shinn's painting *Footlight Flirtation* of 1912 (fig. 50), a lady engages in the complicated process of removing her hat.<sup>231</sup> Well-dressed women wore hats and only the most uncultured soul ventured out in public without her hat securely pinned in place. As identifying markers of the independent Newer Woman, an oversized hat, as historian Jean V. Matthews suggests, "virtually forces the wearer to hold her head up and look straight ahead."<sup>232</sup> They represented, according to Matthews, "a new and bolder style of self-presentation."<sup>233</sup> Elaborate wide-brimmed hats, festooned with ribbons, flowers, strips of lace, and feather plumes, sat atop piles of woven hair and were secured with several pins, up to 18 inches in length, skewered through hair and fabric. Therefore, their removal in the theater was an arduous task which left ladies feeling partially undressed.<sup>234</sup>

In his book, *The Beautiful and Damned*, F. Scott Fitzgerald described the members of an American audience as running the gamut from genteel upper crust to "the credulous." Fitzgerald provided a portrait of a typical plebeian spectator in America ca. 1922:

*Sentimental, underpaid, overworked people with hyphenated occupations: book-keepers, ticket-sellers, office-managers, salesmen, and, most of all, clerks – clerks of the express, of the mail, of the grocery, of the brokerage, of the bank. With them are their giggling, over-gestured, pathetically pretentious women, who grow fat with them, bear them too many babies, and float helpless and discontent in a colorless sea of drudgery and broken hopes.*<sup>235</sup>

---

<sup>231</sup> *Footlight Flirtation* brought the highest price for a Shinn work when it sold at auction in 2002 for \$3,639,500 quoted in Geoff Gehman, "Image Through Images; How Bethlehem Steel's Art Collections Followed the Rise and Fall of a Giant", *The Morning Call* (Allentown, PA, December 14, 2003), E1.

<sup>232</sup> Jean V Matthews, *The Rise of the New Woman: The Women's Movement in America, 1875-1930* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2003), 60.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid.

<sup>234</sup> Robert W. Snyder, *The Voice of the City: Vaudeville and Popular Culture in New York* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2000), 32.

<sup>235</sup> F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Beautiful and Damned* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1922), 69-70.

With new rules of etiquette came the construction of several “big-time” vaudeville houses imitating the opulent architecture and lavish décor of European-style opera halls with marble entryways, stained glass, heavily ornate molding, shimmering chandeliers, large gilt-framed mirrors, and lush upholstery - all harkening back to Gilded Age affluence. The sophisticated theatrical atmosphere of the new houses helped vaudeville bridge the social gap that had divided American upper and lower-class audiences. Vaudeville presented a new kind of refined variety amusement attractive to the new middle class as leisure entertainment became a commodity and an important part of the modern, urban lifestyle.

During the latter half of the nineteenth century, theater production evolved into more extravagant spectacles that magnified the stimulation and turmoil of a changing society. The middle class acquired increased economic wealth and society became less rigid as women slowly gained more rights and certain previously restrained sectors of the lower classes achieved increased upward mobility. In the audience, the spectators, whether male or female, were no longer content to remain detached observers. The audience became more animated as they were seduced by the colors, lights, and music of the theater until they felt that they were part of the show. The once impregnable barrier between stage and spectator effervesced as the theater became a participatory event meant to arouse and overwhelm the senses of the theater-going public with surprising, highly-charged entertainment.

The alchemy of the bond established between performers and spectators during a successful production is essential to complete the theater experience both groups desired to achieve as they face each other. The audience, comprised of solitary spectators brought

together by a common experience, naturally reacts. Through the act of responding to the performance, the spectators become a unified community, made up of individuals that co-exist as a single entity. This “mass of [individual] gazes,” as Herbert Blau states, “does not exist before the play but is initiated or precipitated by it; it is not an entity to begin with but a consciousness constructed.”<sup>236</sup> The let-down that occurs when that bond fails to coalesce was noted by Virginia Woolf in her diary when she wrote, “No audience. No echo. That’s part of one’s death.”<sup>237</sup>

---

<sup>236</sup> Herbert Blau, *The Audience* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 25.

<sup>237</sup> Virginia Woolf and Leonard Woolf, *A Writer’s Diary: Being Extracts from the Diary of Virginia Woolf* (London: Hogarth Press, 1953), 323.

## CHAPTER SIX

### Gentlemen Spectators in the Wings

Everett Shinn, *The Rehearsal*, 1915

Everett Shinn may have divulged more of his own personality in his paintings than the other artists surrounding Robert Henri. Although entitled *The Rehearsal* (fig. 17), Shinn's 1915 pastel drawing is really about the well-dressed, privileged American gentlemen in the audience, and it seems clear that the artist strongly identifies with these figures. He aspired to be and evidently conducted himself as a ranking member of high society.

*The Rehearsal's* intimate, detailed scene includes a flamboyant vaudeville showgirl during a dress rehearsal of a flamenco dance at the Irving Palace Theatre in New York.<sup>238</sup> She does a run-through of her Spanish-styled routine before several sophisticated gentlemen in formal evening wear which includes top hat and tails. The performer commands the attention of two gentlemen while a third flirts with a woman who sits beside him; apparently she is another dancer. The two women wear Spanish costumes, complete with crested hair combs known as *peinetas* and lace veils known as *mantillas*. *The Rehearsal* is a glimpse of vaudeville after hours and the flirtatious interaction between powerful, wealthy males and working-class female performers and reveals Shinn's own blend of idealistic and chauvinist interpretations of gender relations in the United States in the early twentieth century.

---

<sup>238</sup> Everett Shinn vertical file, Frye Art Museum, Seattle, WA.

Shinn identifies with the gentlemen spectators enjoying the luxury of a nearly empty theater, having removed their coats, gloves, and shiny black top hats -- all emblematic of their elevated social status. The exotic dancer onstage flounces towards the conductor, yet her gaze falls on the central figure of the composition, a dapper gentleman with a confident air and a striking profile gripping a white cane with his other arm cocked on his hip.

This dandy is the renowned stage and screen actor John Barrymore, who epitomized the American gentleman but was privately regarded as a cad.<sup>239</sup> Tallulah Bankhead, a southern belle, a famous Los Angeles journalist, and a one-time target of his amorous intentions wrote in her autobiography, "It wasn't for his acting skill alone that John was famous or notorious...he was the contemptuous conqueror, the outrageous brigand, to whom the girls paid homage. Homage? What a euphemism!"<sup>240</sup>

Shinn's handling of Barrymore and his entourage and his possible identification with their predatory aspect is illuminated by a close reading of his correspondence with his wealthy benefactor, Poultney Bigelow. These letters, written some twenty years after *The Rehearsal*, suggest that Shinn considered these top-hatted dandies closely aligned with his own identity as a proper American gentleman with a mindset from an earlier era of unquestioned chauvinistic male authority. Shinn's composition and subject matter are akin to those of nineteenth-century French painters such as Edgar Degas, and they provide a perspective for comparisons between Impressionist scenes of rich men's predation upon

---

<sup>239</sup> Ibid.

<sup>240</sup> John Kobler, *Damned In Paradise: The Life of John Barrymore* (New York: Atheneum, 1977), 146.

dancing girls and the somewhat more innocent American take on similar interludes by Ashcan School artists.

Although the role of women in late nineteenth-century Parisian society underwent change, the primarily American and British notion of the New Woman was largely unknown in France. She first arrived there in the guise of wealthy young American and English visitors. This may explain why the New Woman incarnated as a different creature in French society with no legacy to the working classes. The French version was a well-educated woman who conflated the New Woman with feminism and resisted the gender dictates of society. The New Woman in France was mostly considered “an alien import challenging French *mœurs*,” in the words of scholar Mary Louise Roberts.<sup>241</sup>

Generally, women in French society, regardless of social rank and wealth, were second-class citizens. A few notable French women, such as the actress Sarah Bernhardt and Marguerite Durand, founder of the women’s newspaper *La Fronde*, did introduce disruptive ideas to gender norms during the late nineteenth century. However, they were still nonetheless viewed as “eccentric exceptions” in a society that deemed the shift away from arranged marriages to relationships based on mutual attraction as a significant advancement in women’s progress.<sup>242</sup> One of the major accomplishments of early French feminists was general acknowledgement of marriage as a choice for young women rather than a predetermined goal. Although they agitated for change in societal conventions, they failed to ignite the kind of rebellion by working-class women that was then occurring in

---

<sup>241</sup> Mary Louise Roberts, *Disruptive Acts: The New Woman in Fin-de-Siècle France* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), 20 and 23.

<sup>242</sup> Rachel Mesch, “Housewife or Harlot? Sex and the Married Woman in Nineteenth-Century France,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (January, 2009), 65.

England and the United States. French upper-class wives and mothers wielded some power reflective of their status, but lower-class women had no such leveling device.

The New Woman in France, like her counterparts in England and America, was primarily a figure seen in illustrated publications, which produced countless images depicting her as a larger-than-life, independent woman threatening to male dominance in gender relations. In fine art she was virtually ignored. Degas and other French artists working in the last decades of the nineteenth century, such as Édouard Manet and Jean-Louis Forain, paid particular attention to gender relations between privileged males and underprivileged females, but their images, rather than suggesting empowerment for working-class women, reinforced their powerlessness and subservience to men.

Shinn's *The Rehearsal* owes much to the influence of Degas and has its antecedent in the French artist's *The Rehearsal of the Ballet Onstage*, ca. 1874 (fig. 33), which also features top-hatted gentlemen watching a dance rehearsal. Such pairs of top-hatted gentlemen enjoying theater were seen frequently in late nineteenth-century French paintings but were infrequent inclusions in American painting. Although French and American top-hatted gentlemen resembled each other, they adhered to different social codes, and artists in the two countries portrayed their behavior and character quite differently. French and American gentlemen both held certain privileges unavailable to lower-ranking men, but French society indulged male promiscuity to a greater degree. Some French gentlemen, known as *abonnés*, subscribed to the Opera; one of the more elite

sects was the Jockey Club.<sup>243</sup> This elevated level of patronage, which did not exist in American theater, granted gentlemen the tacit privilege of backstage access to the young dancers with whom they hoped to form liaisons. These male theater subscribers, more admiring the female performers than the performance itself, mingled with the dancers in their private vestibule (*foyer de la danse*), an ornate room just behind the stage where dancers stretched, practiced, and chatted with lovers before, during, and after the performance.<sup>244</sup> Coveted access to this comfortable, semi-private environment allowed the top-hatted gentlemen virtually unrestricted access to the performers. They propositioned young dancers that were, as art historian Eunice Lipton states, “lively, a little dangerous and, above all public.”<sup>245</sup> This premium-level patronage seemed to encourage more lecherous attitudes and more sexual liberty with the dancers whose individual careers they subsidized. Accordingly, as observers and recorders of their modern world, some French artists keenly documented the attendant backstage intrigue. These paintings are about male dominance and the consumption of women and not at all about women’s empowerment which is not even hinted at. In nearly all these paintings the ingénues passively receive the attentions of the predatory gentleman and display no postures that communicate self-determination.

In Shinn’s *The Rehearsal*, Barrymore and his American gentlemen friends are privileged roués and relatively benign, respectable figures especially in comparison to the

---

<sup>243</sup> Ann Dils and Ann Cooper Albright, eds. *Moving History / Dancing Cultures: a Dance History Reader* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2001), 212.

<sup>244</sup> Jill DeVonyar and Richard Kendall. *Degas and the Dance* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, 2002), 20 and 22.

<sup>245</sup> Eunice Lipton, *Looking into Degas, Uneasy Images of Women and Modern Life*, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, Los Angeles, 1986), 80.

predatory top-hatted figures lurking in the shadows and pursuing nefarious schemes in works by the French artists. Gentlemen in top hats were obsequious figures in French theater paintings; as irresistible compositional elements, they fulfilled two objectives: their barely submerged lust bestowed an air of gravity on the scene, while their black and white formal attire strongly contrasted with the colorful costumes of the dancers. The top hats were striking focal points. Manet's *The Masked Ball at the Opera*, 1873 (fig. 65) is a vignette of a large crowd at an annual ball held in the foyer of the old Paris Opera House, where upper-class men, without their wives, loom over the young working-class dancers, called *petits rats*.<sup>246</sup> Many of the eager dancers sought the comfort and protection that a top-hatted gentleman could afford them. As the amorous gentlemen circle their prey, lustrous silk top hats slice through the crowd like shark fins knifing ocean waves.

Frenchman Pierre Auguste Renoir offered a more innocent glimpse of interactions between upper-class gentlemen and lower-class performers with *Leaving the Conservatoire* (fig. 66) painted in 1877. Renoir's rosy-cheeked dancer, Nini Lopez, stands with a rolled musical score in her hands as an older top-hatted man introduces a young gentleman to her while her friend looks on with an expression of support and encouragement. The viewer is privy to the first moments of a possible tryst. This interlude projects sweetness and no declaration of the sordid behavior inherent in so many similar scenes by other French painters.

---

<sup>246</sup> Susan Goldman Rubin, *Degas and the Dance: the Painter and the Petits Rats, Perfecting Their Art* (New York: H.N. Abrams, 2002), 6.

Although Degas often treated gentlemen with respect, deference to their class, and a refined sense of propriety and dignity, he also portrayed the more imperious entitlement of top-hatted gentleman as they home in on the *danseuses*. Superficially, many of Degas' images merely show dancers in motion on stage or making final adjustments to their costumes, relacing their slippers, and stretching before making their entrance. However, on closer inspection, Degas was also interested in the rapacious behavior of top-hatted gentlemen "callers."

Dancers as sexual beings appeared in many of Degas' paintings, often with a seamy subtext as paramours linger in the wings during a performance and closely watch their favorite performers. For example, in Degas' 1879 fan-shaped composition, *Dancers* (fig. 67), the gentleman is a lurking, nearly invisible, enigmatic figure with a truncated body. Degas often emphasized the unsettling nature of the top-hatted gentleman amid the luminous figures of the dancers by rendering him as a disturbing silhouette bestowing a sinister air to the scene. *The Curtain* (fig. 68) from 1881 contains a gentleman standing upright and rigid in contrast to the glamorous, twirling dancers, ignoring his presence while in Degas' 1890 *Dancers, Pink and Green* (fig. 69), a backdrop bisects the figure of the gentleman hovering above the oblivious dancers as they secure their costumes and adjust their hair. Degas placed these apparently omnipresent men on the margins of the composition, where they do not always immediately draw the attention of the viewer; however, once seen, they cannot be ignored. This placement underlines their possession of these attractive, vulnerable women who, in most cases, had risen from poverty to a

tenuous middle ground as a dancer able to eke out a living only as long as she maintained youth and attraction.

Behind-the-scenes exploits were open secrets in the ranks of the cultured class; paintings like this scandalized society because they exposed what had previously been discreet backstage interactions. Many of the married *abonnés* kept mistresses while simultaneously enjoying sexual dalliances with young dancers. Legal prostitution entwined with French mores and the role of the mistress emerged as an acknowledged public figure during the Second Empire from 1852-1870.<sup>247</sup> These women were known as *demi-mondaines* and *grandes horizontales* and French artists introduced them to public consciousness through the medium of oil paint. On canvas, gentlemen engaged in activities that belied the dignity and respect usually accorded well-dressed males. These paintings are about sex and powerful entitled men preying upon vulnerable lower-class dancers struggling to make a living. Much like prostitutes in brothels, ballet dancers were objects of desire and were assumed to be available for sexual exploitation.

While many of his compositions involve views from the wings, Degas also looked to backstage halls and dressing rooms for illicit behavior. Both Degas' 1876-77 lithograph *The Cardinal Sisters Talking to Admirers* (fig. 70), and the 1878 monotype *Pauline and Virginia Conversing with Admirers* (fig. 71), depict dancers dallying with gentlemen who nearly smother them.<sup>248</sup> In several of Degas' scenes, a bearded gentleman and friend of the artist, Ludovic Halévy, and Madame Cardinal meet in the corridors of the Opéra to arrange liaisons

---

<sup>247</sup> Valerie Steele, *Paris Fashion: A Cultural History* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 159.

<sup>248</sup> These images are part of more than thirty prints illustrating a satirical collection of librettos, *La Famille Cardinal*, published in 1883 by Ludovic Halévy.

with her daughters.<sup>249</sup> Degas caricatures the male patrons with a certain irony, given his own upper-middle class status.

Degas approached the activities of top-hatted men differently than Forain, his admiring acolyte and close friend. Like Degas and others, Forain, a well-known caricaturist in satirical Paris publications, investigated the offstage intrigues of ballet dancers at the Opéra. But rather than study the dancer's body in motion as Degas sometimes did, Forain nearly always chose to illuminate the relationships between dancers in light of their negotiations with their admirers. His satirical narratives negated Degas' nonjudgmental approach and instead virulently indicted the top-hatted predators. Forain examined this unusual societal structure that placed dancers (and other working girls) in the very precarious position of trading sex to ensure economic survival. In *On the Stage*, 1912 (fig. 72), for example, Forain demonstrated the wealthy men's possession of, and corrupt control over, young ballerinas as a gentleman forcibly grasps a dancer's chin and holds her in his thrall. Her body is rigid with defiance but she is literally in the man's clutches.

Forain's 1899 *In the Wings* (fig. 73) takes a closer, more jaundiced perspective of the attention these obsequious men visited upon their favorite dancers. In the foreground, a deliberately unsettling image of a balding, big-bellied man with a heavy brow and a thick beard stares at the prominent breasts of a dancer with her hands clasped and her eyes averted as another top-hatted gentleman, with a shadowed face, peers over her shoulder. She is trapped between them. In the background, two more gentlemen leer at another

---

<sup>249</sup> For more on Ludovic Halévy, who wrote about young Opéra dancers, see Annette Dixon and Richard Kendall's essays in *The Dancer: Degas, Forain, Toulouse-Lautrec*, exh. cat. (Portland, OR: Portland Art Museum, 2008), 25 and 58.

dancer. The threat of the male gaze is explicit. Historian Sean Nixon notes, “coded as visual spectacle” the man is presented as the active “bearer of the look,” a.k.a. the male gaze.<sup>250</sup>

The imbalance of power in French society is obviated by female passivity, like a rabbit frozen by the approach of a fox.

Forain reminded the viewer that these assignments transpired between performer and patron, forcing upper-class wives to stoically accept the infidelities of their husbands. Forain’s 1879 fan-shaped composition, *Evening at the Opera* (fig. 74) pairs the image of gentlemen cavorting with dancers in the wings with the image of their wives seated in the loge. The fan-shaped composition performs two objectives for the artist; first, the arc of the fan creates a narrative bridge between disparate regions of the theater and the divergent behaviors of the gentlemen. Second, it also alludes to the practice of fashionable women deploying fans as signaling devices to send specific messages across the opera house to male admirers.

Like Degas, Forain showed the dancers’ mothers arranging liaisons. These stage mothers sometimes brokered deals, under the pretense of securing the daughter’s dancing lesson fees, selling the virtue of their daughters to ensure the economic survival of the rest of the family. Perhaps most disturbing was the pride some mothers took in their daughter’s success as virtual prostitutes. Forain’s *Negotiations in the Wings*, ca 1898 (fig. 75), shows the dressing-room dealings of a mother speaking with a prospective patron for her daughter, who stands aside and looks away. The mother, with a facial blemish possibly indicative of syphilis, may symbolize her daughter’s presumed fate. The ungentlemanly

---

<sup>250</sup> Sean Nixon, *Hard Looks: Masculinities, Spectatorship and Contemporary Consumption* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1996), 16.

behavior of society barons soliciting dancers was institutionalized in French but not American culture.

Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, as new wealth increased the ranks at the top echelons of American society, *nouveaux riches* families looked to Europe for models of sophistication. The age of steam power made Trans-Atlantic travel faster and more affordable and more Americans ventured to Europe returning home wearing *haute couture*. Although Americans aped European manners, American gentlemen never acquired the dispensation to as openly pursue female performers. This type of public behavior was not sanctioned in the United States. For Degas and the French artists, the top hat was an icon of philandering conduct by the *fin-de-siècle* Parisian bourgeoisie. But for East Coast Americans, the top hat remained a stalwart standard of high fashion and elevated status associated with proper gentlemanly decorum. The top-hatted gentleman in American theater paintings of the early twentieth century did not exhibit the same scandalous behavior and did not symbolize the menace of his counterpart in French paintings from an earlier generation. The culture of patronage, well established in French society, was not adopted in America, and the genteel, top-hatted gentlemen in Shinn's *Rehearsal* are not presented as dark figures.

By the turn of the century in both Europe and America, the top hat was merely an emblem of the distinguished gentleman and French painters' focus on the lecherous proclivities of wealthy men waned as their interest in modern art led to compositions exploring color and expression rather than capturing glimpses of contemporary society. Untainted by a close association with wanton entitlement, the top hat in American painting

reigned as marker of distinction, as in the case of John Singer Sargent's flattering and upstanding 1904 *Portrait of Lord Ribblesdale* (fig. 76). The gentleman in question radiates "precisely the attitude the top hat was intended to convey," in the words of writer John Berendt.<sup>251</sup>

Top hats are featured in Shinn's *Matinee, Outdoor Stage, Paris, 1902* (fig. 77) and in his humorous scene of assorted theater aficionados lined up in *At the Stage Door, 1915* (fig. 78). Shinn also featured entertainers who used top hats as badges of comic pseudo-respectability in such works as *The Magician* of 1906 (fig. 79), *The Monologist* of 1910 (fig. 52) and in *London Music Hall, 1918* (fig. 80), where a top-hatted comedian nearly tumbles into the pit as he ridicules a musician who missed a cue. For Shinn and other Americans, the top-hatted gentleman may have been seen as humorous or even provocative, but never menacing. Only in scenes specific to French ballet did Shinn feature lecherous top-hatted gentlemen. The culture of patronage coupled with predation, so well established in French theater, was not present in America, and the top-hatted gentlemen in Shinn's *Rehearsal* are presented as gentlemen despite their blatant quest for sexual conquest.

Perhaps the closest analogy to the behavior of the French top-hatted gentlemen on the American art scene can be found in William Glackens' 1905 *Chez Mouquin* (fig. 81) and George Luks' 1906 *Café Francis* (fig. 55), which shed light on impoverished young women engaging in salacious behavior in New York's bohemian nightspots as they traded on their youth and sex appeal to gain favor and entrance to the nightlife on the arms of wealthy, older men. These so-called "Charity Girls" were willing to possibly sully their reputations in

---

<sup>251</sup> John Berendt, "The Top Hat," *Esquire*, Vol. 109, no. 2 (Feb. 1988), 26.

exchange for presents such as clothing and jewelry or merely for meals in numerous fashionable restaurants, nightclubs, and theaters on the edges of New York high society. Unlike prostitutes, these girls accepted gifts and the attention of privileged men rather than cash.<sup>252</sup> As one Charity Girl admitted, “When she needed a pair of shoes she had found it easy to ‘earn’ them in the way that other girls did.”<sup>253</sup> In both paintings, *Café Francis* and *Chez Mouquin*, this new type of semi-independent woman, in this case with questionable morals, dines in the company of the well-known restaurateur, James B. Moore, who frequently squired buxom young women whom he referred to as his “daughters.”<sup>254</sup>

Although wealthy American men certainly had affairs, enjoyed the company of Charity Girls, and kept mistresses, and many female performers had licentious natures, the assumption that all performers were potential prostitutes was not as enshrined in American theatrical culture. As previously discussed, Shinn and other members of the Ashcan School were not as interested in revealing sexual intrigue as had been the French Impressionists. Perhaps this is because American artists were not as prone to sensationalize sexual exploits and thereby betray the nature of gentlemen they viewed as being members of their own class. Or possibly, such behavior was not as prevalent or as readily displayed and accepted in the world of the New York theater. Dalliances with female performers may have taken place, but these relations were not recorded on canvas. While Shinn kept his art uncomplicated by the travails of men grappling with the consequences of their sordid

---

<sup>252</sup> For more on the Charity Girl, see Kathy Peiss, “Charity Girls and City Pleasures,” *OAH Magazine of History*, Vol. 18, No. 4, Sex, Courtship, and Dating (Jul., 2004), 14-16.

<sup>253</sup> Quoted in Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (Philadelphia: Temple Press, 1986), 110.

<sup>254</sup> James W. Tottis, *Life's Pleasures: The Ashcan Artists' Brush with Leisure, 1895-1925* (London and New York: Merrell Publishers Ltd., for Detroit Institute of Arts, 2007), 79.

escapades, his personal life was more complex. For instance, he married four times and found himself more conflicted regarding his behavior toward women compared to the attitudes of his benefactor, Poultney Bigelow. Shinn was a friend and frequent guest of Bigelow, a wealthy journalist, historian, and adventurer with a mansion north of the city on the Hudson River.

As an artist and a patron of the theater, Shinn was certainly interested in pretty young female performers, yet he showed no desire to document backstage activities. Of course, Shinn's seemingly innocent portrayal of showgirls may reflect his own self-image as a proper gentleman, but the letters he exchanged with Bigelow, from around 1915 until the late 1940s, suggest a more lecherous side to his nature. For instance, in a letter to Bigelow from Shinn dated November 6, 1928, the artist discusses his upcoming birthday and the hope that "nude ladies will parade..men [sic] will groan and beds will stagger and life will be a song of amorous joy."<sup>255</sup> Shinn includes a drawing (fig. 82) of a gentleman in top hat representing Bigelow holding a pair of "nickel drawers" embroidered with the words "United we stand divided we fall." Shinn draws himself facing Bigelow with a nude woman perched on his shoulders.

Beginning in the 1910s, Shinn regularly received hand-written invitations to visit the Bigelow estate, Malden-on-Hudson. They were often peppered with lines such as, "bring any companion whom you deem worthy of sharing the big bed."<sup>256</sup> On one of these visits in October 1942, when Shinn's fourth marriage was ending, he brought along Miss Jane

---

<sup>255</sup> Poultney Bigelow papers, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations, Letter from Shinn to Bigelow, November 6, 1928.

<sup>256</sup> Everett Shinn files of the Smithsonian's Archives of American Art (AAA), Washington D.C. Letter from Bigelow to Shinn, July 11, 1943.

Huttenloch, a 1938 graduate of Syracuse University and a budding magazine illustrator subsidizing her income as a typist at an insurance company; Huttenloch was a Newer Woman.

In 1942, it had been nearly a century since Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott had organized the first Woman's Rights Convention in 1848 in Seneca Falls, New York, and only twenty-two years since women had gained the right to vote.<sup>257</sup> It was also the first full year of United States' involvement in World War II, which would prove to be a major milestone as even more women filled numerous previously male-only jobs.

Shortly after she and Shinn visited Bigelow, Huttenloch received a letter from the old gentleman which suggested that he was looking for more than just the vicarious thrill of knowing that intimate relations transpired under his roof. He confessed in the letter, "I fell in love with you – of course – platonically – But I dreamed of you! – Were I half a century younger!!"<sup>258</sup> Bigelow concluded with an invitation for the couple to return and asked, "Can you and Everett share the same bed?"<sup>259</sup>

Such lurid inference from a man in his upper eighties offended Huttenloch and she shared the letter with Shinn who felt compelled to admonish Bigelow in a stern, but delicately worded four-page, typewritten letter which opened with the words, "This...is going to be the toughest and most unwanted thing I have ever done in my life."<sup>260</sup> He began by telling Bigelow in strong, occasionally graphic terms just how upset he was by this affront to the code of gentlemanly behavior. Shinn implored his friend to "halt your

<sup>257</sup> The first National Woman's Rights Convention was held two years later in 1850 in Worcester Massachusetts. Women gained the right to vote with the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment.

<sup>258</sup> Shinn files, Smithsonian's AAA, Letter from Bigelow to Huttenloch, October 14, 1942.

<sup>259</sup> Ibid.

<sup>260</sup> Shinn files, Smithsonian's AAA, Letter from Shinn to Bigelow, October 25, 1942.

galloping amorousness with those women that I have forewarned you to stay away from” and continued, “I know your playful spirit...yet dangerous one.”<sup>261</sup> “Poultney,” he wrote, “you can’t deny it an inference that you wished her to get that in your dreams you had been intimate with her. Else why speak of dreaming? No, Poultney, you hoped that she might think that you had dreamed an orgasm.”<sup>262</sup> Shinn said he was defending “a woman I deeply love and RESPECT.”<sup>263</sup> “It has been said many times,” he continued, “that you treat all women and girls as tramps and by some stupid social law have not their names engraved in the social register.”<sup>264</sup> He warned Bigelow, “I shall never bring Jane again if she is to be treated as a tramp” and “It would seem that I bring her to you as payment for your hospitality...This latter sentiment I strongly feel. I pray that you explode my impression.”<sup>265</sup> This was the first of several letters the men exchanged concerning the incident.

Shinn stated that writing the letter was “the toughest and most unwanted thing I have ever done in my life,” but that he was willing to risk destroying this friendship he so clearly valued.<sup>266</sup> As a result of his divorces and a decline in his sales he was then living in the Bedford Hotel on East Fortieth Street and could no longer really afford the urbane life he had always aspired to. Despite his displeasure with Bigelow’s crass sexual advances toward his girlfriend, Shinn couched his language in as diplomatic and solicitous a tone as possible. He wrote, “This letter deals with a dirty idea and I don’t like it but if our friendship cannot stand my honest opposition to your amorous demands on my wives and women and

---

<sup>261</sup> Ibid.

<sup>262</sup> Ibid.

<sup>263</sup> Ibid.

<sup>264</sup> Ibid.

<sup>265</sup> Ibid.

<sup>266</sup> Ibid.

girls that I take so grateful to visit you, you then must see that I must strike back or be relegated beyond your home boundaries, excluded.”<sup>267</sup> Shinn asked that Bigelow forgive him for the letter three times before concluding, “Always your friend despite the chance of your throwing me out of your life.”<sup>268</sup> As a self-described gentleman, Shinn needed to defend his idea of chivalry yet he wished to maintain Bigelow’s patronage.

Bigelow’s quick response was a curious blend of friendliness and sarcasm, “Your letter,” he wrote, “has come and given me immense comfort. In you I have a real friend, who has the courage of his convictions – who tells me the truth as he sees it. Thank you ever so much, I shall hope to profit by your sage remarks....”<sup>269</sup> However, Bigelow’s condescending attitude towards women came out when he criticized Huttenloch for showing his letter to Shinn. “It was very feminine,” Bigelow wrote, “to show you my innocent letter to her – a foolish act – a blunder!”<sup>270</sup> Bigelow did not apologize to Shinn or to Huttenloch. He did admit, however, that for a man of eighty-eight, “all young girls like Jane are objects of curiosity.”<sup>271</sup> And he lamented that Shinn had “accused me of being a lecherous beast unfit for decent society.”<sup>272</sup>

Three years later, in December of 1946, Bigelow again referred to the incident with the words, “it never occurred to me that anyone, least of all Everett Shinn, could misconstrue my most natural admiration for one whom I was meeting for the first time and who naturally awakened interest because of her escort - my old and trusted friend,

---

<sup>267</sup> Ibid.

<sup>268</sup> Ibid.

<sup>269</sup> Shinn files, Smithsonian’s AAA, Letter from Bigelow to Shinn, October 29, 1942.

<sup>270</sup> Ibid.

<sup>271</sup> Shinn files, Smithsonian’s AAA, Letter from Bigelow to Shinn, March 22, 1943.

<sup>272</sup> Ibid.

Everett.”<sup>273</sup> Bigelow concluded another letter with the information that, “Your eloquently scorching letter dated October 25, 1942 has just been re read and religiously returned to a fireproof box for posthumous biographers curious in psycho-analysis.”<sup>274</sup> Clearly, the incident was never entirely forgotten.

Even though Shinn enjoyed titillating exchanges with Bigelow about younger women, he also desired to be seen as well-mannered and genteel. His conflict between proper decorum and cad-like behavior colored the way he presented female stage performers in numerous drawings and paintings. His obvious infatuation with female entertainers remained fixated on innocence and purity mixed with hints of sexuality. Moreover, the purveyors of vaudeville, a style of entertainment that flourished only in America, appealed to the country’s puritan sensibilities by advertising their product as being wholesome and sophisticated, but they were sly enough to satisfy more base interests with racy acts featuring sexually-provocative ingénues. This all gave Shinn a venue combining in one place his love of painting, the theater, and attractive young women.

*The Singer* (fig. 51), painted by Shinn in 1908, embodies his contradictions. The performer, clad in virginal white, skips lightly across the vaudeville stage in bonnet, ruffles, and ribbons. She appears innocent, but simply by performing before an audience she indicates a certain sexual availability. Shinn did not objectively depict her performance. Instead, he reimagined it through the filter of his nostalgia for the Victorian woman as the personification of the male desire for a tame, acquiescent bed partner with no ambitions of her own. *The Singer* is another one of Shinn’s ideal Newer Women.

---

<sup>273</sup> Shinn files, Smithsonian’s AAA, Letter from Bigelow to Shinn, December 10, 1946.

<sup>274</sup> Shinn files, Smithsonian’s AAA, Letter from Bigelow to Shinn, June 29, 1946.

The more sophisticated performer in Shinn's 1908 *Revue* (fig. 15) projected sex appeal to her male audience and inspiration to her female audience with her bravado as the Newer Woman of the twentieth century. Despite her youth and her innocent, lady-like façade, she completely controls the performance and is obviously a seasoned stage performer. In contrast, the young woman in Shinn's *The Singer* appears to be a bubbly newcomer to the stage still transported by the exuberance. Both showgirls perform without a male partner which would have been rare a generation earlier. Now young women ventured out in public on their own, singly or in pairs, without a male escort or a matronly chaperone. This new era was represented onstage by the advent of solo female performers.

Shinn created sexual tension with the enticing behavior of his lady-like coquettes on stage, showing both the sweet and the sultry sides of their personalities. Vaudeville starlets, in plumed hats and frilly diaphanous costumes, were regularly featured and occupied a middle ground between the ingénue and the *femme fatale*. They embodied the oxymoronic role of the Madonna / Harlot. Most of Shinn's female performers possess these twin characteristics and suggest conflict between his need for a woman he could control and his acceptance of the empowered New Woman.

Shinn's ebullient vaudeville performers mix their charms with stirrings of independence and awakening sexuality. These new traits parallel the transformation of American art from the romantic artifice of the nineteenth century to the more challenging and somewhat bleaker realities of the twentieth century when societal manners were,

certainly in Shinn's view, in jeopardy of deteriorating as the balance of power between genders began a century-long battle for equality.

Shinn, as a gentleman, had certain boundaries. Although he was willing to objectify women as targets of male lust with his images of vaudeville coquettes, he wished to maintain a certain air of propriety. His thoughts were those of a Victorian gentleman who both delighted in the spectacle of societal change and regretted its inevitability. Throughout his correspondence with Bigelow, Shinn contradicts his high regard for women with his view of them as sexual playthings. Shinn seemed to harbor both a protective and predatory attitude towards these vaudeville coquettes who danced across his canvases, and his letter written to defend the honor of Jane Huttenloch suggested that he felt Bigelow lacked the attendant graces to support the first part of this duality.

The correspondence between Shinn and Bigelow provides a window into the nature of their friendship with Shinn's self-regard as a gentleman artist and their mutual chauvinism during an era of flux in relations between men and women in American society. Shinn openly engaged in sexually charged discussions with Bigelow and they traded books on the art of lovemaking that were "of course banned by the police"<sup>275</sup> and photographs "not fit for the very genteel."<sup>276</sup> However, Shinn did not wish to include his female companions in such discussions and made this clear when he wrote to Bigelow, "Can I be assured that there will be NO reference to sex, phallic symbols, nudist camps, sharing the Royal suite, etc.?"<sup>277</sup>

---

<sup>275</sup> Shinn files, Smithsonian's AAA, Letter from Bigelow to Shinn, December 31, 1934.

<sup>276</sup> Shinn files, Smithsonian's AAA, Letter from Bigelow to Shinn, December 7, 1933.

<sup>277</sup> Shinn files, Smithsonian's AAA, Letter from Bigelow to Shinn, October 25, 1942.

These two lascivious old men enjoyed the company of younger women, but Shinn, as evidenced by his rather convoluted letter, held standards that he refused to compromise, even at the cost of losing a dear and valued friend. Although it was very important to Shinn to maintain a certain sense of propriety, which he found lacking in Bigelow's words and behavior, clearly, he was primarily interested in women as sex partners not as equals. In a 1946 letter he wrote, "to hell with women...they cause more trouble between men and friends than any pleasure they give."<sup>278</sup>

Until the end of Shinn's life, Bigelow's invitations continued, and so did frequent references to sex and the unforgotten incident between the two gentlemen. Bigelow wrote in 1946, "Come alone or bring some good looking sleeping partner.... All our shortcomings are forgiven and we remember only the good hours."<sup>279</sup> Finally he wrote in 1948, "I gladly admit your being wholly in the right and myself equally in the wrong."<sup>280</sup> Bigelow sought to humor Shinn and his sense of propriety, but dusted it with sarcasm as he wrote, "You are as ever, dear Everett, a true gentleman whether drunk or sober or crazed by love or hate – and as I remain as usual yours in serene poise."<sup>281</sup>

By all appearances, Shinn was a proper modern America aristocrat, yet he may have had an old-fashioned view of women as inferior and only pretended to respectfully engage with them as equals in order to mesh with his aspiration to be a gentleman. Shinn's behavior, his paintings, and his correspondence combined to paint him as something of a roué with a lustful nature. While he did at times acknowledge women's emerging sense of

---

<sup>278</sup> Poultney Bigelow papers, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations, Letter from Shinn to Bigelow, December, 12, 1946.

<sup>279</sup> Shinn files, Smithsonian's AAA, Letter from Bigelow to Shinn, November 25, 1946.

<sup>280</sup> Shinn files, Smithsonian's AAA, Letter from Bigelow to Shinn, June 29, 1948.

<sup>281</sup> Ibid.

self-determination, Shinn also clung to the earlier generations' high regard for passive women. "When a woman possesses a man," he wrote to Bigelow in 1946, "she scratches off the very thing she enticed to her. . . she [sic] cuts the life line she has tossed to the poor wretched thing."<sup>282</sup> Unlike Robert Henri, who presented images of stage performers as powerful *femme fatales* (Salome), exotic charmers (Ruth St. Denis), or independent New Women (Jesseca Penn), Shinn did not promote the causes of the New Woman but something about the Newer Woman caught his eye.

Shinn and Bigelow lived much of their lives in the twentieth century, yet they both remained essentially Victorians shaped by the values of the nineteenth century, especially in their consideration of women, whom they venerated as long as they displayed lady-like behavior and remained compliant. Like so many other nineteenth-century fellow travelers, they cloaked their devilish natures in the guise of respectability afforded by tails and top hats while they sought to seduce working-class female performers.

---

<sup>282</sup> Poultney Bigelow papers, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations, Letter from Shinn to Bigelow, December 12, 1946.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### Cheap Amusements, Chorus Girls, and the Not-So-New Woman

Walt Kuhn, *Trude*, 1931  
and *Plumes*, 1931

Born in Brooklyn in 1877, a year after Everett Shinn, Walt Kuhn lived in New York all of his life. He befriended Robert Henri and several members of The Eight as they arrived from Philadelphia. Although he did not exhibit with them in 1908 at the Macbeth Galleries nor in 1910 with the Independent Artists Exhibition organized by Henri and John Sloan, Kuhn was nonetheless a close ally of The Eight and the Ashcan painters. Like Shinn, he harbored a life-long attraction to the spectacle of theater, but his paintings did not reflect his passion until later in his life when, in 1925, he began creating bold, straightforward portraits of acrobats, clowns, and chorus girls. In 1931, Kuhn painted *Trude* (fig. 18) and *Plumes* (fig. 19), which each present the female entertainer as an updated Newer Woman who very matter-of-factly uses her sexuality as an asset to earning a living. *Trude* and *Plumes* introduce a new vision of the hard-working female performer projecting the reality of her offstage weariness. Despite their elaborate costumes, they are mentally removed from the artifice of the theater as they slouch and stare at the viewer with tired eyes. Their postures are completely different from how they hold their bodies while onstage. Kuhn's working-class Not-So-New Women seem unhindered by any desire to gain equality and acceptance in the sphere of male-dominated society; they are too busy just making a living.

These Not-So-New Women intended to earn equal pay but, rather than expending themselves for the feminist cause, they reserved their strength for the next performance.

In 1903, after returning from studies in Europe and a sojourn working as a cartoonist in San Francisco, Kuhn settled in Manhattan. His early work, much of which he destroyed, was steeped in his exposure to European art and to Henri's influence.<sup>283</sup> He was a founding member of the Association of American Painters and Sculptors, the organization responsible for mounting the Armory Show of 1913. As secretary of the exhibit committee, he traveled through Europe several times between 1910 and 1913, securing art for the exhibit. As a result, Kuhn began to experiment with modern European styles in his own art. He explored the bright color palette of the Fauves, painted in patches and swaths of color like Cezanne, and he experimented with Cubism. The Armory Show introduced avant-garde European art to the American public and made the canvases of Henri and his circle, who had been feted as the leaders of modernism in American art, suddenly seem somewhat irrelevant.<sup>284</sup>

Kuhn was one of the first American artists to introduce modernist techniques to the United States, but despite his initial attraction to and championing of developments in modern European art such as Fauvism, Futurism, Cubism, and the Nabis, he later rejected their tenets, which he considered overly intellectual, "sissified,"<sup>285</sup> and suffering from "effete elitism."<sup>286</sup> Instead, Kuhn determined to make art compliant with his view that the

---

<sup>283</sup> Philip Rhys Adams noted in the exhibition catalogue for *Walt Kuhn, A Classical Revival*, organized by Amon Carter Museum of Western Art, Fort Worth, 1978, "More intensely self-critical than even Cezanne, Walt destroyed well over half of his finished works."

<sup>284</sup> Garnett McCoy, "The Post Impressionist Bomb," *Archives of American Art Journal*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (1980), 17.

<sup>285</sup> Kathleen Spies, "Baseball, Apple Pie, and Burlesque Queens: Nationalism in Walt Kuhn's Portraits of Showgirls," *Journal of American Culture*, 31, No. 1 (2008), 36.

<sup>286</sup> Kathleen Spies, *Burlesque Queens and Circus Divas: Images of the Female Grotesque in the Art of Reginald Marsh and Walt Kuhn, 1915-1945* (PhD diss., Indiana University, 1999), 4.

American character was more bold, brash, overtly sexual, “masculine,” and dismissive of intellectualism than anything produced in Europe.

For artists such as Kuhn, who wished to project an aura of cultural relevance and adhere to the modernist tenet of recording contemporary scenes of urban life while simultaneously dealing with the female figure, scantily clad showgirls provided ideal subjects. “The working-class background of most chorus girls,” notes twentieth-century historian Lois Banner, “...made them ‘street wise’ before they ever entered the profession. Even if such was not the case, the nature of the occupation fostered self-reliance and independence.”<sup>287</sup> Kuhn rendered his show girls as strong and forthright, virtues he equated with the American spirit much like the simple pine tree he chose as the emblem for the Armory Show. Kuhn’s vision of healthy, robust American chorus girls was not unprecedented; a cartoon of a buxom chorine in an 1897 *Puck* magazine, entitled “Unpleasant Assurance” (fig. 83) could be the image of Trude’s mother. Kuhn declared his artistic patriotism in a letter to his wife Vera - “America is the new soil...Paris is a hot-house where they raise beautiful orchids and other wondrous plants but the rugged old pine grows best in arid climes.”<sup>288</sup>

For Kuhn, the showgirls he presented in *Trude* and *Plumes* were hardworking, no-nonsense Americans who he saw as “sympathetic figures that echo larger issues of the human condition.”<sup>289</sup> Kuhn created captions for each of these paintings and they were included in a 1940 catalogue by Paul Bird entitled *Fifty Paintings by Walt Kuhn*. He

---

<sup>287</sup> Lois Banner, *American Beauty* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1983), 183.

<sup>288</sup> Spies, “Baseball, Apple Pie, and Burlesque Queens,” 35.

<sup>289</sup> Although this quote comes from the wall label for Kuhn’s 1944 *Clown with Folded Arms*, from the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, it captures the attitude present in all his paintings of entertainers.

emphasized Trude's confident and determined pose in declaring, "The show must go on. Blond, clean, and striking a powerful stance, proud Trude remains, as either principal or chorine, victorious."<sup>290</sup> For *Plumes*, Kuhn noted the contrast between the headdress and the figure, explaining, "These plumes spring from 'show business.' Fragile feathers on solid shoulders. Beauty supported by the commonplace."<sup>291</sup> Kuhn, according to art scholar Kathleen Spies, introduced "a new brand of modern American womanhood...opposed to the dainty, coy, or frail femininity associated with Europe and the nineteenth century."<sup>292</sup> His revamped version of the Newer Woman proclaimed the values of the nation at the time.

As did several other Ashcan artists, Kuhn attended all kinds of theatrical performances and experienced the height of vaudeville's popularity, which peaked just before World War I, when it was perhaps the most popular form of public entertainment in America. Kuhn, infatuated with show business since his teens, had been a delivery boy taking rental costumes to New York theaters, lingering backstage with performers and watching shows from the wings. Throughout the first two decades of the twentieth century, he subsidized his "fine" art career by work as a cartoonist for publications such as *Puck* and *Life* magazines and as a costume and stage-set designer. Kuhn also wrote, produced, and directed vaudeville acts and theatrical reviews.<sup>293</sup> He became more and more involved with show business to the point where, as art historian Frank Getlein notes, "It is hard to say whether he regarded himself primarily as a painter who made a little extra

---

<sup>290</sup> Paul Bird, *Fifty Paintings By Walt Kuhn* (New York and London, Studio Publications, Inc., 1940), 18.

<sup>291</sup> *Ibid.*, 19

<sup>292</sup> Spies, "Baseball, Apple Pie, and Burlesque Queens, 40.

<sup>293</sup> Lisa Phillips, "Walt Kuhn: The Entertainers," exh. cat. (New York: Whitney Museum of Art, 1987), n.p.

money dabbling in the theater or as an aspiring director-producer who had some talent in painting.”<sup>294</sup>

Beginning in 1914, the disruption of the Great War caused significant changes in the lives of Americans, delaying the suffrage campaign and also changing the nature of leisure time entertainment. Vaudeville reached its highest popularity in 1900, when there were twelve houses in New York City, while in Boston nearly 40,000 patrons, or fifteen percent of the city’s entire population, attended a vaudeville performance each week.<sup>295</sup> During the next twenty years, as more and more movie houses opened, vaudeville’s popularity experienced a gradual though steady decline. Vaudeville survived World War I but then experienced a precipitous fall after the mid-1920s. In 1925, the vaudeville circuit had grown to include 1500 theaters across the United States, but by 1930 there were only three hundred vaudeville houses remaining. Several sources list the death knell of vaudeville as occurring with a final show at New York’s Palace Theater in 1932. By that time, motion pictures had replaced vaudeville as America’s favorite form of entertainment and by the end of the decade; approximately sixty-five percent of Americans went to the cinema at least once each week. These “picture shows” (with their cheaper-than-vaudeville tickets) provided Hollywood allure and escape from the hardships of the Depression and the looming threat of another war.

As the movie industry boomed, the silent films on the silver screen replaced the songs and spoken comedy routines on vaudeville stages. Speaking parts for women in

---

<sup>294</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, *Walt Kuhn, 1877-1949*, exh. cat. (New York: Kennedy Galleries, 1977), n.p.

<sup>295</sup> Robert Allen, *Horrible Prettiness: Burlesque and American Culture* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 190.

vaudeville sketches diminished and many lowbrow female performers now primarily engaged in erotic display rather than singing or bantering with male comedians. Audiences became increasingly comfortable with female performers who were seen but not heard. High-end popular entertainment, such as the Ziegfeld Follies and other “Girly Revues,” featured glamour queens gracefully sweeping onto stages such as the New York Theater’s rooftop garden in elaborate costumes, only to assume fixed poses before the admiring gaze of the audience.<sup>296</sup> In contrast, lower-class venues presented flashy chorus girls dancing awkwardly across burlesque stages. Whether catering to prosperous or working-class crowds, these chorines performed silently as mute Not-So-New-Women.

The years between the two World Wars witnessed dramatic changes for female stage performers which significantly departed from turn-of-the-century ideals of the New Woman. The showman Florenz Ziegfeld, according to historian Robert C. Allen, “carefully removed from his brand of feminine sexual spectacle all the markers of its working-class associations,” limiting “his chorus lines to svelte young women who seemed not fully to have blossomed into womanhood.”<sup>297</sup> Ziegfeld’s girls were mute, class-neutral, and, of course, beautiful. Ziegfeld’s criteria for hiring showgirls included statuesque figures with shapely legs. Ziegfeld wanted a very specific type of girl: “bust 36 – waist 26 – hips 38.”<sup>298</sup> And, thin ankles were especially important to him because they were at eye-level to the

---

<sup>296</sup> The New York Theater, located at Forty-fifth Street in Times Square, was formerly The Olympia Theatre, also known as Hammerstein’s Olympia, an opulent, richly decorated theater, music and concert halls and a roof garden.

<sup>297</sup> Allen, *Horrible Prettiness*, 245-6.

<sup>298</sup> Marjorie Farnsworth, *The Ziegfeld Follies*, (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1956), 81.

audience.<sup>299</sup> He dressed his all-American beauties in sexy, sparkly costumes topped with elaborate, oversized headdresses in showcases of the new imaginary American feminine ideal. Jesseca Penn, who was portrayed by Henri as a self-assured and fashionable New Woman, danced for the Ziegfeld Follies. While Henri emphasized her confident and independent nature, Penn did not represent real womanhood but rather a fantasy of femininity that has never really existed in American, or any other, society.

In 1920, women finally gained the right to vote in the United States and other developments were afoot. Prohibition, largely instigated by women, paradoxically ushered in, for some segments of the population, a wild era of organized crime, alcohol-fueled parties, and significantly shorter hairstyles and hemlines for women who discarded corsets and other “foundation” garments in favor of brassieres.<sup>300</sup> Quickly, the image of the empowered, ambitious New Woman (and her working-class incarnation the Newer Woman) with her long hair piled high on her head receded from public view. The most popular new image of contemporary women was the fun-loving “Flapper.” Flappers seemed to be apolitical and uninterested in advancing women’s rights. The women’s movement was also weakened by a rift between the more militant feminist and the more civic-minded reformers. This divide, coupled with post-war prosperity in the Roaring Twenties interrupted the trajectory of the Newer Woman.

The rise of the Flapper in the 1920s was anomalous to the thirty-year trajectory of the New Woman which had begun in the 1890s. She stood outside the progress of iconic

---

<sup>299</sup> Kenneth Irwin and Charles O. Lloyd, *Ruth Etting: America’s Forgotten Sweetheart* (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2010), 67.

<sup>300</sup> For more information on the history of the brassiere see Jean Farrell-Beck and Colleen Gau, *Uplift: The Bra in America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), xi-xiii.

female performers representing American women at various steps during the quest for equality. Historian Joshua Zeitz defines the Flapper as “the notorious character type who bobbed her hair, smoked cigarettes, drank gin, sported short skirts, and passed her evenings in steamy jazz clubs, where she danced in a shockingly immodest fashion with a revolving cast of male suitors.”<sup>301</sup>

Perhaps there are few paintings of female entertainers as Flappers because dressing and acting the part of a Flapper was in itself a performance therefore canceling the use of that persona as a starting point for a character on stage. Flappers themselves were already in performance every time they enjoyed the nightlife. Her flippant manner and disregard for traditional behavior overshadowed the hard-won gains of the New Woman and the Newer Woman but, given how startling and vivacious an image the media projected of the Flapper, it is little wonder that this “flashy” creature eclipsed the New Woman and her successors during the 1920s.

The archetype of the Flapper went virtually unseen on the canvases of the Ashcan School artists who, in general, were products of an earlier age. Her style of dress, type of haircut, and behavior were of little interest to these artists. The Flapper did, however, grace the pages of magazines and books by writers such as F. Scott Fitzgerald, and the silver screen in movies starring actresses such as Clara Bow and Louise Brooks.

---

<sup>301</sup> Joshua Zeitz, *Flapper: A Madcap Story of Sex, Style, Celebrity, and the Women Who Made America Modern* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2006), 5-6.

With the horrors of World War I behind them, Americans seemed, as the 1920 presidential candidate Warren Harding phrased it, eager to “return to normalcy”<sup>302</sup> and good times with an exuberance possibly inspired by alcohol, with its new cache of being forbidden by law. Women could vote and, not coincidentally, the Temperance Movement, led by women, succeeded in establishing Prohibition. The wide-spread availability of previously novel inventions such as electric lights, airplanes, and relatively inexpensive automobiles brought a level of achievement and prosperity previously unknown to Americans. Meanwhile, the stock market seemed inclined to go up forever and America was optimistic.

In 1925, Kuhn experienced a near-fatal stomach ulcer which caused him to reassess his artistic goals. He resolved to rededicate himself to his work as a painter with many portraits of circus and stage entertainers, a subject that would constitute fully half of his remaining work. His series of matter-of-fact, decidedly weary, resigned showgirls are distance successors to Thomas Eakins’ rather morose female performers. But while Eakins considered his singers as physically (and mentally) unable to cope with a man’s world, Kuhn documented the price paid for a job well and competently done. In some ways, his portraits were prescient of the hard times that would befall the nation during the Great Depression.

When Kuhn began painting female entertainers, the era of vaudeville was fading and the Roaring Twenties were in full swing. The frilly feminine soubrettes featured in works by Shinn were no longer thriving on stage, and Kuhn instead presented brash chorus girls in

---

<sup>302</sup> David E. Shi, *The Simple Life: Plain Living and High Thinking in American Culture* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 217.

skimpy, ill-fitting costumes. Kuhn found a new approach with his candid snapshot-like glimpses of lowbrow showgirls in costume but not performing. Kuhn acknowledged something about the strength of the American character by celebrating expressions of determination and candor in such quiet moments.

Despite the 1929 stock market crash which necessitated the closure of many “legitimate” Broadway theaters, scholar Robert C. Allen notes, “Ironically, the Great Depression provided stock burlesque a few years of prosperity in the 1930s.”<sup>303</sup> Vacancies in Broadway theaters allowed burlesque houses, featuring chorus girls, comics, cooch dancers, and even strippers, to leave working-class neighborhoods and interlope on the Great White Way.

As the Depression continued, people needed diversion and burlesque was an excellent antidote, being plentiful and generally affordable. Burlesque shows at the time ranged in price from 15 cents to \$1.50.<sup>304</sup> By the mid-1930s, wages and work hours had decreased, resulting in a forty percent decline in take home pay. Prior to the stock market crash, unemployment was just above three percent in the United States, but in 1930, it rose to nearly nine percent. That number nearly doubled in 1932 and by 1933 almost twenty-five percent of America’s workforce was unemployed.<sup>305</sup> However, opportunities abounded for pert, young women willing to do burlesque routines. *Variety* reported in 1936, that of all the show business industry, burlesque had the lowest unemployment rate, but certainly not

---

<sup>303</sup> Allen, *Horrible Prettiness*, 248.

<sup>304</sup> *Ibid.*, 250.

<sup>305</sup> Robert Margo, “Employment and Unemployment in the 1930s,” *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (Spring 1993), 43.

the highest pay.<sup>306</sup> Most burlesque dancers then earned about the same wage as factory workers at around \$550 per year, while salesgirls, working in a more “respectable” profession, earned up to about \$800 each year. But, of course, the possibility of earning much more than that lured many to show business. Some headliners received upwards of \$5000 a year.<sup>307</sup> Times had changed since the early twentieth century. According to historian Lois Banner, “In 1904 there were ten thousand unemployed chorus girls in New York City and the *New York World* that same year gave even a gloomier estimate: for each opening, they contended, sixty thousand women applied.”<sup>308</sup> A generation later, there were many more job opportunities for female performers in New York City which had grown from a population of about three million in 1900, to nearly seven million in 1930.

In the 1930s, female performers reappeared in fine art, but now they were tough figures indicative of the harsh economic conditions; dejected and demoralized, they are Not-So-New Women. Kuhn’s paintings show a new kind of independent performer who had forsaken dreams of glamour and fancy dresses for the everyday reality of earning a living while parading her body in skimpy, ill-fitting costumes. Kuhn’s *Trude* and *Plumes* offer blunt portraits of somber, working-class chorines in costume but not on stage. He moreover pictured a new kind of independent woman who worked long hours and had dispensed with illusions about the thrill of show business but was still able to earn a steady paycheck in a depressed economy.

---

<sup>306</sup> Allen, *Horrible Prettiness*, 250.

<sup>307</sup> U.S. Department of the Interior, Census Office, *Sixteenth Census of the United States, Population, The Labor Force*, Vol. 3, Part 4 (Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1940), 436.

<sup>308</sup> Banner, *American Beauty*, 183.

In the caption Kuhn provided for *Lavender Plumes*, another showgirl portrait from 1938, he defined his type of Not-So-New Woman by saying that “she is a hard-working American girl whose day includes four shows, then home to house-work and chores for mother. [She bears the] weight of responsibility with the pinions of American freedom.”<sup>309</sup> With features reminiscent of Eakins’ performers with slumped postures in ill-fitting outfits, Kuhn’s chorus girls are industrious yet worn-down versions of the New Woman.

For the rest of his career, which continued for some twenty years until 1949, Kuhn invested his decidedly unglamorous views of female performers in routine, everyday moments with shades of an inwardly directed and psychologically edgy reverie. When he created very frank portraits of female performers, Kuhn followed a tradition of realism that extended back to the work of The Eight and their concern for unvarnished urban scenes, and also back to Eakins and his refusal to adhere to traditional standards of flattery concerning feminine beauty. However, Kuhn displayed more empathy than Eakins. Although Kuhn did not seem to bear his female subjects any malice, his work does resemble that of Eakins in that he did not enhance physical beauty. Had Kuhn tried to be a “formal” portrait painter, he might have had as little success as Eakins did in that endeavor.

The faces of Kuhn’s chorus girls show exhaustion, but unlike Eakins, he did not emphasize homeliness. Lisa Phillips, former Curator of the Whitney Museum, notes the difference, “There is a paradoxical quality that gives Kuhn’s entertainers an emotional strength: a somewhat sad facial expression coupled with a sense of classical composure; an inert figure painted in a dissonant, yet dynamic color combination; an excruciating

---

<sup>309</sup> Bird, *Fifty Paintings*, 43.

tawdriness elevated to a sophisticated aesthetic experience.”<sup>310</sup> His sadly sweet portraits of showgirls with no-nonsense facial expressions frankly acknowledge their sexuality as they display their bodies. Their costumes sparkle but they do not. In these portraits of showgirls, Kuhn expressed his own personality described by Garnett McCoy, author of “The Walt Kuhn Papers,” as that of a “strong-minded, occasionally harsh, always honest, [and a] passionately independent individual.”<sup>311</sup>

According to Spies, Kuhn’s paintings of “down-to-earth, lowbrow showgirls,” which he painted “in an era preoccupied with Americana and national character,”...”carried a ring of authenticity and national identity.”<sup>312</sup> Following his illness, Kuhn resolved to create a body of work that would declare his vision of an American style of painting that was in sync with his feelings about the strength of the national character. With Kuhn’s paintings, such as *Trude* and *Plumes*, his simple, straightforward portraits of female performers personify his goals with their poker-faced expressions and their solitary defiant postures, evoking the influence of Eakins, are also reminiscent of heroic Greek sculpture.

Kuhn had an interesting approach to creating portraits. He kept a large supply of costumes which he provided for the models, sometimes choosing them himself and at other times allowing the models to make their own selections. His studio on East 180<sup>th</sup> Street was like a vast dressing room filled with costumes, hats, headdresses, and various other theatrical props such as swords and batons. Somewhat surprisingly, Kuhn himself carefully applied the heavy and exaggerated cosmetics, including lipstick, eyeliner, and false

---

<sup>310</sup> Phillips, “Walt Kuhn: The Entertainers,” n.p.

<sup>311</sup> Garnett McCoy, “The Walt Kuhn Papers,” *Archives of American Art Journal*, Vol. 5, No. 4 (Oct., 1965), 6.

<sup>312</sup> Spies, “Baseball, Apple Pie, and Burlesque Queens,” 34.

eyelashes, to the model's faces. One of his models later described the elaborate process, explaining that the artist "spent a good twenty minutes or half an hour each day putting it on me. He brought out all of his rouges and colors and sat me down, and very slowly began spreading them all over my face."<sup>313</sup> Kuhn designed the costumes and his wife, Vera, sewed them. Sometimes he asked her to take measurements to better fit individual models, but more often he preferred costume elements that were either too large or too small, with tops askew, falling shoulder straps, and great drooping plumes of feathers on outlandish headdresses. He, in effect, cast and costumed his own elaborate productions, but the subjects of his portraits always appeared offstage. He preferred to look behind the curtain in moments when the "mask" is removed.

In their downtime, Kuhn's tired yet beautifully appointed performers inhabit a backstage limbo – somewhere between their dressing rooms and the spotlight. With his candid portraits of plumed and bejeweled performers, Kuhn gave them a humanity not as triumphant as did Henri, but one equally as strong and willful. They may transcend common existence when dancing and twirling in front of a full house yet they seem drained and solitary when offstage, but with an inner strength.

Kuhn conveyed respect and empathy for a hard-working showgirl in *Trude*, a full-length portrayal of Gertrude Lower, a chorus girl from the Broadway musical *Showboat*. Much like Henri's paintings *Jessica Penn* and *Salome*, it recalls much of the style of the Old Masters by compressing space in a narrow depth of field before a simple backdrop in a scene nearly devoid of props, furniture, or other décor to compete with the figure for the

---

<sup>313</sup> Bennard B. Perlman, "Innocence in Greasepaint," *Art & Antiques* (Feb. 1990), 102.

viewer's attention. With hands on her hips, she wearily mimics the more swaggering pose of the Gibson Girl; Trude is an overworked chorine. She stands arms akimbo with one foot forward and is nude, save for a spangled red and white brassiere and a piece of black lace worn like a loin cloth. The effect is clear: she is in no way enticing or seductive as she looks slightly past the viewer with a resigned, disengaged expression.

Kuhn's *Plumes* is a three-quarter portrait of another chorine which is more reminiscent of eighteenth-century French portraits of actors such as the *Pierrot* (commonly identified as *Gilles*) (fig. 84), a stock character in *commedia dell'arte* painted in 1718 -1719 by Jean-Antoine Watteau. Both Kuhn's *Plumes* and Watteau's *Pierrot* are immobile, withdrawn, and bear the signs of wearisome careers as low entertainers. Yet like Watteau more than two hundred years earlier, Kuhn instilled pride and pathos in his marginalized figures.

Mabel Benson, the model for *Plumes* is poised and still, but she has a mildly, anxious vibrancy. In heavy make-up, she is seen in an unguarded moment between shows and projects a very low level of the energy she expends onstage. The charisma and vitality required for performance is checked here with just a glimmer of it in her visage. Hers is a portrait of a distinctly American combination of grit, resolve, and resignation.

Kuhn saw in his model a duality of vulnerability and strength, but did not gloss the difficulty of Benson's situation. She wears stage makeup that, in Kuhn's close-up, masks some of her femininity, exaggerates her flaws, and gives her a garish, even grotesque appearance. Her gaudy blue eye shadow, thickly applied mascara, and blood-red lips make her seem unapproachable; she does not invite the viewer to participate in this quiet

moment. She is burdened by an elaborate, ornate plumed headdress, and her sagging posture and sullen expression contribute to a sense of depletion. Yet Kuhn's chorus girl is not entirely defeated because, as a 1977 exhibition catalogue entry points out, "His keen perception penetrates beyond the heavy circus make-up to expose the tragic yet dignified emotions within."<sup>314</sup>

One main element of Kuhn's portraits is the dichotomy between the make-believe representation of their sexuality in skimpy costumes and the absolute negation of sensuality, seduction, and feminine appeal in the performer's overall demeanor and lack of connection with the viewer despite occasionally occurring eye contact. A Sotheby's entry for his 1932 full-length painting *Sibyl* declared that in Kuhn there is a "slippery distinction between accessibility and remoteness, private and public persona."<sup>315</sup>

Unlike Shinn, Kuhn did not communicate any prurient interest in female performers through his art. And no extant correspondence suggests he felt any. There is no hint of Shinn's fixation on sexual titillation in Kuhn's portraits. Although using a far different approach from Shinn, Kuhn may have just as much projected his own preoccupations onto the model. It is entirely possible that neither artist truly understood nor really much cared about what his female performers thought of the lives they led.

Kuhn, a realist, worked in a very basic style in keeping with his background as a cartoonist. As a result, his faces are simply rendered. Kuhn's protagonists seem monolithic and stationary and the viewer does not necessarily know what these women actually look

---

<sup>314</sup> *Walt Kuhn*, exh. cat., (New York: Kennedy Galleries, April 13-May 7, 1977).

<sup>315</sup> Sotheby's catalogue entry for Walt Kuhn's 1932 painting *Sibyl* which sold on December 2, 2010, <http://www.sothebys.com/fr/ecat.notes.N08684.html/127> (accessed January 5, 2011).

like based on Kuhn's images. Kuhn held "auditions" and carefully selected his models, but he was not interested in portraits of famous performers.<sup>316</sup> Instead, he painted the models' faces and figures as if they were flowers in vases or pieces of fruit in a still life. To him they were constructions of color, texture, and form. His pragmatism is reinforced by his caption for *Plumes*. Kuhn suggested the viewer "Think of a vase or bulb with a large graceful flowering. Or think of a fountain with arching sprays of beautiful color..."<sup>317</sup> His figures, though objectified, are not sexually appealing and were not received favorably by critics desirous of beauty. As Spies points out, "Photographs of his actual models from the artist's personal papers and from a photographic spread of the artists at work in *Collier's* stand as testimony that the young, very attractive women Kuhn chose as models were transformed through pose, lighting and make-up into the figures that critics sometimes described as 'vulgar,' 'tawdry,' and even 'ugly.'"<sup>318</sup>

Kuhn underlined the true nature of life in the theater for over-worked, under-paid stage performers. The figures in both *Trude* and *Plumes* retain a modicum of dignity and self-possession, but for them the thrill of show business is long gone and essentially non-existent. Neither of these performers has much left to give. As a fellow artist who worked extensively in the entertainment industry, Kuhn, unlike Shinn, set aside the superficial illusion of "showbiz" in his quest to fabricate candid images of unguarded entertainers made-up and costumed but not onstage. However, both of his performers are successful in that they are show business professionals in New York City. To have gotten this far, Kuhn's

---

<sup>316</sup> Perlman, "Innocence in Greasepaint," 69.

<sup>317</sup> Philip Rhys Adams, *Walt Kuhn, Painter: His Life and Work* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1978), 137.

<sup>318</sup> Spies, "Baseball, Apple Pie, and Burlesque Queens," 38.

chorus girls had to demonstrate that they were capable of “turning it on” when they take the stage.

Shinn and Henri each presented happy, outgoing versions of the Newer Woman, whereas Kuhn was more interested in the female performer as a still life during downtime when her face was blank and her thoughts were inward. Kuhn’s showgirls have none of the energy and vitality usually expected of an entertainer. They may have believed the old adage that “the show must go on,” but Kuhn caught them at moments when the toll of hard work had drained their spirits. This is what makes Kuhn’s images unique and enduring.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### Moving Violations, Strippers, the Tease, and the Blue Woman

Reginald Marsh, *Down at Jimmy Kelly's*, 1936

Edward Hopper, *Girlie Show*, 1941

The work of Thomas Eakins, his concern for realism, and his determination to record accurate scenes of contemporary city life greatly influenced Robert Henri and Everett Shinn, who in turn influenced the artists of the Ashcan School. Henri and Shinn created many of their images of the Newer Woman as female performer before World War I, when the country still reveled in the promise of the new century. However, by the early 1930s when Walt Kuhn painted weary chorus girls, the mood of the country, then in the throes of the Great Depression, had drastically altered. Kuhn's contemporary, Reginald Marsh, was not technically an Ashcan School painter (he was connected with the Fourteenth Street Group), but he studied at New York's Art Students League under John Sloan, a leading member of the Ashcan group.<sup>319</sup> Sloan helped inspire Marsh's determination to create a near-encyclopedic record of the "Big Apple" and all its diverse inhabitants.<sup>320</sup>

When Marsh sketched the theater he tended to focus on burlesque strippers, performers whose likenesses had not previously been seen in fine art.<sup>321</sup> They danced before predominantly male audiences. Quite distant from the Newer Woman seen on the

---

<sup>319</sup> Marsh was more specifically part of the Fourteenth Street School, a group of artists who followed in the steps of the Ashcan School. The Fourteenth Street group lived in the neighborhoods surrounding New York's Union Square, were associated with The Arts Students League either as students or teacher, and painted the vibrancy of the crowded urban environment in the years between the World Wars.

<sup>320</sup> New York City's nickname, the "Big Apple," was introduced in the early twentieth century and by the late 1920s it had become popularized and in common usage.

<sup>321</sup> As quoted in the Kennedy Galleries Memorial Exhibition for Reginald Marsh in October, 1955, the artist once commented, "I like to paint burlesque because it puts together in one picture a nude or near nude woman, baroque architecture for a setting, and a crowd of many, very typical men, for an audience."

canvases of Henri and Shinn, and in more dire straits than Kuhn's Not-So-New Woman, the Blue Woman of Marsh's *Down at Jimmy Kelly's*, 1936 (fig. 20), had no time or energy to contemplate the plight of women in society and was willing to appear nearly nude because of financial difficulties resultant from the Great Depression.

Marsh, a prolific painter and illustrator, created many images of strippers in New York, which grant much information about the generation of female performers who succeeded Henri and Shinn's Newer Women and the Not-So-New Women of Kuhn's work. *Down at Jimmy Kelly's*, like some of Marsh's other images of strippers, illuminates the plight of the Blue Woman during the mid-1930s. Marsh's contemporary, Edward Hopper, a few years later in 1941, painted *The Girlie Show* (fig. 21) during the last year of the Depression and just prior to the United States' entry into World War II. The status of Hopper's burlesque performer is relatively unchanged from that of Marsh's stripper.

Throughout the 1930s, Marsh and Hopper recorded scenes of contemporary life, inside and outside of the theater. Their observations demonstrate that they were cognizant of social anxiety related to new developments in women's behavior and attitudes and they each captured images emblematic of these changes. They were perhaps not completely aware of how their paintings contributed to the dialogue about transfigured gender roles, but this was nonetheless an important aspect of their work and it remained relevant to succeeding generations.

Marsh and Hopper's brash burlesque dancers shared little in common with earlier female performers such as Shinn's sweet vaudeville coquettes, Henri's empowered performers, Eakins' awkward singers, or Kuhn's iconic chorus girls in elaborate headdresses.

Kuhn's *Trude* (fig. 18), for instance, listlessly assumes the role of a sexual provocateuse, but she is warm and inviting in comparison to the cold, nearly grotesque blonde stripper in Marsh's *Down at Jimmy Kelly's*, or the frozen statuesque figure in Hoppers' *Girlie Show*.

Marsh moved to New York in 1920, after studying art at Yale, where he worked as cartoonist and art editor for the *Yale Record*. Like many artists in New York, Marsh produced drawings for myriad publications, including *Vanity Fair*, *The New Yorker*, and *Esquire*. He illustrated scenes of vaudeville for the *New York Daily News*, and as Kuhn and Shinn had done, Marsh designed stage sets and costumes.

Marsh made the requisite trip to Europe in 1925-1926, and like Kuhn, Shinn, Henri, and Eakins before him, found inspiration in art of the European masters. However, unlike the others, he had little interest in nineteenth-century painters whom he felt were not willing or able to draw well.<sup>322</sup> Additionally, Marsh was clearly intrigued by Michelangelo's massive, solid bodies and the hefty figures of Peter Paul Rubens.<sup>323</sup> All this comes across in the curvaceous and voluptuous figure of the stripper in *Down at Jimmy Kelly's* and in his many other images of strippers, shoppers on New York City sidewalks, and bathers on Coney Island beaches. His painting, according to mid-twentieth century scholar Lloyd Goodrich, "was never devoid of humor, but it was a mordant humor, a relish for the grotesque." Goodrich continued, "He had an inborn, natural gift for character; his crowds were not faceless robots but persons, keenly characterized. Ugly or good looking, his

---

<sup>322</sup> Memorial *Exhibition*, exh. cat., Kennedy Galleries, New York, 1955.

<sup>323</sup> See Marilyn Cohen in *Reginald Marsh's New York: Painting, Drawings, Prints, and Photographs*, Whitney Museum of American Art (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1983), 21, for discussion of Marsh's affinity for the work of the Old Masters, citing his frequent visits to the Metropolitan Museum with Kenneth Hayes Miller, his teacher at the Art Students League where Marsh was especially drawn to the work of Michelangelo and Rubens.

people were alive.”<sup>324</sup> Marsh captured bustling city street scenes with nervous energetic lines that seemed to vibrate off the page or canvas. As a city of immigrants, New Yorkers populated theaters with swirls of disparate people of varying ethnicities and appearance. Marsh possessed an almost obsessive fascination for New York and sought out public spaces like Luna Park in Coney Island, movie palaces, and burlesque houses, which admitted the conglomeration of characters inhabiting modern New York in the first part of the twentieth century.

Marsh invoked images of female performers as vaudeville faded and as the Ziegfeld Follies, featuring “Glorified American Girls,”<sup>325</sup> prevailed in sensational extravaganzas on Broadway. In contrast to the more gentlemanly Shinn, Marsh ignored legitimate Broadway shows which were the closest contemporary equivalent to the more decorous vaudeville acts he had sketched earlier in his career as an entertainment illustrator and that Shinn had also liked. But instead of proper entertainment suitable for middle and upper-class ladies, Marsh chose burlesque shows whose side-street venues catered primarily to male audiences. Here were men of all stations from the unemployed to the affluent. Marsh liked the tawdry sexuality of burlesque queens and the pleasure seekers who watched the striptease. He found these performers much more compelling than the ones Shinn had been attracted to when vaudeville deliberately tried to be more inclusive in order to attract female audiences.

---

<sup>324</sup> Lloyd Goodrich, “A Tribute to Reginald Marsh,” *Reginald Marsh, Selections from the Felicia Meyer Marsh Bequest* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1979).

<sup>325</sup> Linda Mizejewski, *Ziegfeld Girl: Image and Icon in Culture and Cinema* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1999), 88.

The striptease began with a fully-costumed woman, sometimes alone on the stage and at other times supported by a bevy of chorus girls; the stripper then slowly and purposefully undressed to songs such as 'Blues in the Night.'<sup>326</sup> Francine Gray of *The New Yorker* wrote of her eye-witness account that men yelled "Take it off! Take it off!" as the burlesque dancer teased them and "lingered for a good five minutes over the disposal of her gloves alone, strutting about the stage with an expression of smoldering aloofness."<sup>327</sup> Gray continues, "With the same excruciating languor...she proceeded to divest herself of her boa, her gown, her panties. And, finally, wearing no more than a sequined G-string and the spangled papier-mâché pasties,...she pranced about for a few more taunting pouts and winks, her plump breasts bouncing about her small, curvaceous waist, before leaving the stage amid appreciated catcalls and thunderous applause."<sup>328</sup>

The performers Marsh gravitated towards sometimes directly serviced the sexual demands of their patrons in "Box Theaters." Abe Laufe, in his book *The Wicked Stage*, explained that "these raffish entertainments featured dance hall girls who were notorious for their immorality. They not only enticed men to buy drinks but also accompanied men to the boxes that could be closed off by curtains to ensure privacy."<sup>329</sup> Marsh enjoyed the paradox between idealized beauty and the ugly realities of poverty and degradation. He played the grace and youth of the girls against the coarseness and vulgarity of some male audience members.

---

<sup>326</sup> Francine Gray, "Dirty Dancing: The Rise and Fall of American Striptease," *The New Yorker* (Feb. 28, 2005), 1.

<sup>327</sup> Ibid.

<sup>328</sup> Ibid.

<sup>329</sup> Abe Laufe, *The Wicked Stage: A History of Theater Censorship and Harassment in the United States* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1978), 21.

In his many burlesque scenes, Marsh captured the exuberant gestures of dancers as they paraded across stages and down runways as the mostly male patrons reacted with expressions of both pleasure and revulsion. “I like to paint burlesque,” Marsh said, “because it puts together in one picture a nude or near nude woman, baroque architecture for a setting, and a crowd of men, very typical men, for an audience.”<sup>330</sup> For Marsh, the figures, whether on stage or in the audience, were the central motif and he painted the uneasy tension between the charged sexuality of the dancers and the enthralled, sometimes disturbed faces of the audience. Gone was any pretext of class distinction: men from all walks of life sat side-by-side before the raucous displays of female flesh.

Although he often depicted stage shows such as his 1935 *Striptease at New Gotham* (fig. 85), (which features a stripper standing like a Greek goddess, in the classic *Venus Pudica* pose), the voluptuous, heavily-made-up performer in Marsh’s 1931 painting *Down at Jimmy Kelly’s* struts on the same level as her audience, in a strip-tease right between tables full of intoxicated, lecherous men, one of whom eyes the bottle of booze held aloft by a waiter. Marsh packed his paintings with such telling details and his many scenes of city life are peppered with information giving the viewer the complexity of the life and people in New York City during those times.

Jimmy Kelly’s in New York’s Greenwich Village was a speakeasy offering illegal liquor and “shady” entertainment during Prohibition which began with the ratification of the Eighteenth Amendment in 1919. When Prohibition ended in 1933 with the passage of the Twenty-first Amendment, Jimmy Kelly’s morphed into a restaurant and nightclub. The

---

<sup>330</sup> Ibid.

quality of the entertainment remained constant and it attracted notable characters and celebrities, including John Barrymore, William Randolph Hearst, and even the Duke of Windsor, who characterized the atmosphere of the place as “refined, but rough.”<sup>331</sup>

In *Down at Jimmy Kelly's*, a clutch of male figures, crowded cheek-to-jowl, glom onto a buxom, brassy entertainer performing a “fan dance” as she raises two enormous ostrich-feather fans over her head, leaving her naked body fully exposed.<sup>332</sup> Everything about the stripper is extreme, from her garish makeup and bottle-blonde hair to her overripe curves. Unlike Kuhn who favored lean, athletic models such as Trude, Marsh painted soft, feminine bodies. They are abundant and flamboyant rather than thin and restrained. His dancers are not elevated to icon status like Kuhn’s. However, Marsh does often present his strippers with the command and pose of an iconic Greek Aphrodite and emphasizes, as did the Baroque Master Peter Paul Rubens, their fleshy, feminine curves.

Marsh presented “dolled-up” nude strippers jiggling amid crowds of ardent admirers. The audience of debauched, lecherous men in *Down at Jimmy Kelly's* echoes the down-at-the-heels state of the country during the Depression. Even though she performs burlesque on the dance floor, she does not engage with her admirers.<sup>333</sup> Rather than looking at them, she looks blankly toward the viewer with a down-range stare. Although

---

<sup>331</sup> Martha N. Hagood and Jefferson C. Harrison, *American Art at the Chrysler Museum: Selected Paintings, Sculpture, and Drawings* (Norfolk, Va.: Chrysler Museum of Art, 2005), 190-191, no. 119 - catalogue entry for Reginald Marsh’s *Down at Jimmy Kelly's*, [http://collection.chrysler.org/emuseum/view/objects/asitem/search\\$0040/0/title-asc?t:state:flow=41dd6166-6d34-489c-9c12-4b112a74d127](http://collection.chrysler.org/emuseum/view/objects/asitem/search$0040/0/title-asc?t:state:flow=41dd6166-6d34-489c-9c12-4b112a74d127) (accessed May, 10, 2010).

<sup>332</sup> See *The Billboard* (Jan. 3, 1943), 20. Although the dancer is unidentified, she may have been Manya Del Rey who performed the ostrich feather dance or Kea Loke, who danced a “fantasy of the fans.” Both were featured acts at Jimmy Kelly’s.

<sup>333</sup> *Ibid.* Jimmy Kelly’s had a “small strip of dance floor (about four feet wide and 30 feet long).”

her nude body is within arms' reach, her empty eyes and vacant expression are miles away. Her inattentive gaze excludes the men from any possibility of intimacy.

The docile True Woman of the nineteenth century was subject to the male gaze while the turn-of-the-century Gibson Girl with her sultry, hypnotic gaze negated man's power over her. Henri and Shinn's Newer Woman engaged the male gaze with flirtation as an equal while the Not-So-New-Woman and the Blue Woman were indifferent and therefore unaffected by the male gaze. Kuhn, Marsh, and Hopper thus documented a shift in power between the sexes which deflated the impact of the gendered gaze. Yet, to be fair, the male customer, with his unwavering gaze and perverse delight in the striptease performance, prevents the burlesque queen from ever being in complete control of her own sexuality.

The stripper's confidence in *Down at Jimmy Kelly's* demonstrates that she is aware of the power she holds, but her attitude projects her detachment from it. This is reinforced by the fluffy pink boa that serves as a shield between the entertainer and the ogling crowd. Her nude body guarantees their rapt attention, but despite her facile seduction she remains unattainable to them. Her flirtatious striptease is divorced from her own sexual appetite. She has no wish to satiate the carnal desires she inspires. Her sole purpose is her own survival. This may be the only job she can find to sustain herself and her family.

The fan dance was a signature performance at Jimmy Kelly's.<sup>334</sup> Vaudeville performers used props such as hand-held fans, boas, and scarves for various effects; Marsh's dancer uses her over-sized fan to deflect her gawking admirers in much the same

---

<sup>334</sup> Rachel Steir, *Striptease: The Untold History of the Girlie Show* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 163.

way a matador uses a cape as a device to direct the bull. Though a regular patron of burlesque known to sketch continually throughout shows, Marsh, according to art historian Kathleen Spies, used his sketchbook as a device to distance himself from the crowd rather than he studied.

The platinum-blonde head of the dancer in *Down at Jimmy Kelly's* is unadorned. Broadway chorines in shows like the Ziegfeld Follies wore large headdresses, but fan dancers did not.<sup>335</sup> Flashy, snake-like feather boas, fans, and fancy scarves lent the burlesque dancers a sense of glamour and allure; they could also regulate glimpses of nude flesh to add tension to the routine.

Both Marsh, with his strippers, and Kuhn, with his chorus girls, sought to draw back the curtain of glamorous illusions about "showbiz" with tired performers for whom entertainment was merely a job. But, unlike Kuhn's offstage performers, Marsh's are engaged in their work as audiences of ruffled, dissipated men gaze up at females that they could neither possess nor even touch. And even though both artists show women depleted by the harsh realities of their chosen profession, there is a wide gulf between the deadpan vacancy Kuhn employed for his backstage chorus girls and Marsh's falsely exuberant strippers in girlie shows.

Leveled at the viewer, the frank stare and aloof expression on the mask-like face of the dancer featured in *Down at Jimmy Kelly's* suggests that she recognizes the increasing marginalization of showgirls. Her distant gaze makes the reality of her surroundings and her situation appear more desperate than the disinterest projected by Kuhn's *Trude*, and when

---

<sup>335</sup> *Ibid.*, 147.

compared to the confident attitude and élan of Henri's *Jessica Penn*, Marsh's stripper is quite crude and performs in an unrefined manner. She brashly epitomizes America's candor and blunt, in-your-face character. She may have descended from the New Woman, but her inheritance is small. She has been silenced and stripped of her optimism and her fine clothing. Little is left save the determination to struggle onward. She is a beaten-down version of the New Woman phenomenon; she is a Blue Woman.

During Marsh's time, Burlesque had developed into a distinct form of American entertainment, essentially about nudity, and was at a zenith of wildness and lasciviousness. Burlesque had undergone considerable change since its inception, fifty years earlier in the 1870s, when shows featured comic skits with irreverent humor and chorus lines of amply endowed girls in costumes exposing ruffled undergarments and flesh colored tights. Burlesque began as a combination of Western saloon shows from the Gold Rush era and imported British acts of scantily clad women, such as The Black Crook and Lydia Thompson's *Blondes*, singing songs filled with sexual innuendo and other forms of "verbal unruliness."<sup>336</sup> These were generally considered too risqué and shocking for the time, but perhaps the controversy was exaggerated. The pious might have been scandalized but "saloon" shows were not designed to appeal to the sorts of people who went to church. These shows were deemed by some an affront to Christian society.

According to Irving Zeidman, once an inspector for the Department of Labor and a zealous researcher of Burlesque history, who published one of the first studies of the genre in 1967, burlesque in the 1890s expanded to feature "elephantine girls, racial comedy,

---

<sup>336</sup> Susan A. Glenn, "Taking Burlesque Seriously," *Reviews in American History*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (March, 1993), 97.

motley musical specialties, cooch dancers and blunt, often smutty afterpieces of ensemble finales.”<sup>337</sup> A *New York Times* critic in 1877 reported the utter lack of offense in these shows. He wrote, “There are half a score of pretty girls exhibited in an unending walk around, but they really have nothing to offer but their persons. As soon as you get tired of their bodies you yawn and want to get out....It is simply nonsensical to object to the troupe or its performances on the score of morality.”<sup>338</sup> American showmen soon added new elements to spice up the productions.

The “kootch,” shortened from “hootchy-kootchy,” was a type of “Oriental” belly dance that first appeared in 1876, at the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia, and then gained new attention at the Columbian Exposition in 1893, also known as Chicago’s World’s Fair.<sup>339</sup> The sexual threat of the kootch dancer, in her diaphanous costume conjuring images of harem odalisques, was minimized by her representation as an exotic “Other.” The comforting distance afforded by perception of the belly-dancer as a part of a foreign culture reduced her perceived threat to the American status quo.

After Philadelphia and Chicago, so-called “hootchy-kootchy” belly dancers invaded New York at the Grand Central Palace and quickly thereafter became requisite attractions throughout the country at carnival sideshows, traveling circuses, and even vaudeville stages before becoming common features of burlesque shows.<sup>340</sup> According to Robert Allen, a scholar of burlesque and American culture, “The cooch dance linked the sexual display of the female performer and the scopis desire of the male patron in a more direct and

---

<sup>337</sup> Irving Zeidman, *The American Burlesque Show* (New York: Hawthorn Books, Inc., 1967), 33.

<sup>338</sup> Quoted in Zeidman, *The American Burlesque Show*, 27.

<sup>339</sup> Shteir, *Striptease*, 41-42.

<sup>340</sup> Robert C. Allen, *Horrible Prettiness: Burlesque and American Culture* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 228-229.

intimate fashion than any previous feature of burlesque.”<sup>341</sup> The performer, as Allen notes, “wriggled and twisted, turned, cavorted, and kicked through an exhibition in which there was not the slightest sign of graceful movement.”<sup>342</sup> The cooch, performed with sexual abandon for the purpose of pure arousal, would eventually digress into the crass, vulgar bump-and-grind routines of burlesque striptease.

Irving Zeidman called burlesque an “expanded hootchie-kootchie attraction” which pandered to the “taste of giggling men in the orchestral stalls.”<sup>343</sup> The genre traditionally included a variety of acts such as chorus girls, singers, saucy comedians, and beautiful striptease artists. Marsh, a leading chronicler of burlesque, opined that it was an important part of contemporary American theater, albeit one with a narrow demographic.<sup>344</sup>

By the 1910s, burlesque infiltrated mainstream entertainment and was, for a short time, treated as a legitimate entertainment venue. For instance in 1908, the entertainment magazine *The Billboard* included a list of upcoming attractions for the new season announcing the opening of “a new drama, a new burlesque, and a new musical comedy.”<sup>345</sup> However, this cleaned-up version of burlesque was not successful. In truth, the male public wanted hootchy-kootchy dancers and girls in skimpy costumes. In 1916, *Variety*, in response to one particular burlesque show, called it “dirty, plainly and intentionally dirty.”<sup>346</sup> Zeidman noted that “The trouble with the American burlesque show, from

---

<sup>341</sup> *Ibid.*, 231.

<sup>342</sup> *Ibid.*, 230.

<sup>343</sup> Zeidman, *The American Burlesque Show*, 20.

<sup>344</sup> *Ibid.*, 222.

<sup>345</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>346</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

beginning to end, is either that it has been too dirty – or else that it hasn't been dirty enough."<sup>347</sup>

Burlesque, for the working-class male, offered a cheap way to escape the stresses of daily life and also was a chance to ogle pretty girls in a way that was not permitted in other arenas. As one burlesque performer, Louise Dacre, put it in verse:

Give me burlesque with its perhaps dubious frame  
Where a man's called a 'guy' and a woman's a 'dame'  
Where 'props' is a 'stool pigeon' and the girls are in debt  
Where, maybe, the soubret [sic] is the manager's pet  
Though the straight is a souse and the leader's a crank  
At the end of the season I have coin in the bank.<sup>348</sup>

Producers of burlesque shows began eliminating male entertainers and any pretense of staging a variety show while they added more "shimmy shakers" and "tassel dancers." Several burlesque queens such as Eva Tanguay, Sophie Tucker, and Fannie Brice became celebrities. However, male straight-men, known as "stooges" still occasionally appeared on stage. For instance, in a 2006 nostalgia story on the burlesque queen Sherry Britton, *The New York Times* reported that another performer, Rosita Royce "appeared onstage clad in a flock of white doves until a stooge came staggering down the aisle, sat in the front row and unwrapped his lunch – which happened to be birdseed."<sup>349</sup> The birds, of course, deserted Royce, leaving her naked. Marsh, however, had no interest in painting male performers. As Avis Berman points out, "In Marsh's world, only women work."<sup>350</sup>

---

<sup>347</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>348</sup> Quoted in Zeidman, *The American Burlesque Show*, 67.

<sup>349</sup> James Stevenson, "Lost and Found New York," *The New York Times*, Op-Ed, (Saturday, November 25, 2006), A27.

<sup>350</sup> Avis Berman and William Benton, *Reginald Marsh's New York*, exh. cat., DC Moor Gallery (New York, 1996), 7.

During the economic boom of the 1920s, while America basked in the Jazz Age, burlesque experienced a lull. Moral Reformers objected to it and, with unemployment in decline, few pretty girls were willing to strut, wink, and wiggle for the relatively low wages offered. According to Kathleen Spies, “Burlesque was considered the lowest rung on the ladder of live entertainment, thought to house showgirls and entertainers too old or untalented for the more esteemed realms of vaudeville, film, and serious theater.”<sup>351</sup> As had long been the case for all manner of female performers, most of the proper theater-going public looked down on burlesque and associated strippers with prostitutes.<sup>352</sup>

Burlesque experienced something of a renaissance in the time just before the stock market crash of 1929 and then, during the Great Depression, actually flourished, thanks to the ministrations of producers and showmen such as Billy Minsky and his brothers. However, it was their competitor Ben Kahn, at the Irving Place Theatre<sup>353</sup> in Union Square, who presented the first full-blown striptease, where girls slowly and seductively undressed down to pasties or bare breasts and G-strings.<sup>354</sup> It was at the Irving Place Theatre, according to burlesque historian Jane Briggeman, where chorus girls first walked the runway “holding only transparent chiffon over their breasts” before soon abandoning the sheer material altogether.<sup>355</sup>

---

<sup>351</sup> Kathleen Spies, “Girls and Gags’: Sexual Display and Humor in Reginald Marsh’s Burlesque Images,” *American Art*, 18 (2004), 44.

<sup>352</sup> Shteir, *Striptease*, 234.

<sup>353</sup> Jane Briggeman, *Burlesque, Legendary Stars of the Stage* (Portland, OR: Collectors Press, Inc., 2004), 18, notes that in the late 1920s “the shake,” an energetic version of the cooch was shifting to “the strip” which was the specialty at the Irving Place Theatre.

<sup>354</sup> See Shteir, *Striptease*, 201-202, burlesque did not commonly feature full nudity until the 1950s.

<sup>355</sup> Briggeman, *Burlesque*, 19.

The Minsky brothers produced hits with up to thirty showgirls supporting a featured act. They presented their girls in glittery costumes that exposed a lot of flesh, added colored lights and a runway, extending the stage into the audience. This innovation, which would become *de rigueur* for beauty pageants and fashion shows, can be seen in Marsh's 1930 *Gaiety Burlesque* (fig. 86). This extended stage allowed some of the kootch dancers to get close enough to the patrons that, as Mort Minsky described, "they could smell their perfume and hear their heavy breathing, [and] it was sensational."<sup>356</sup> Various groups sought to reform burlesque during the 1930s, and police raids were common. A well-publicized 1934 raid on the Irving Place Theatre resulted in elimination of all runways for burlesque shows in the city. The ironic result was that some clubs then adopted Jimmy Kelly's tactic of allowing the strippers to display their wares right on the main floor between the tables.<sup>357</sup>

In his art, Marsh idealized buxom strippers towering over audiences. This is true of *Minsky's Chorus* of 1935 (fig. 87) where, unlike the polished routines of a Ziegfeld Follies chorus line, Minsky's burlesque showgirls clumsily stomp out a routine as they appear as Amazons before their worshipers represented by a couple of gentlemen in a box near the stage and a smattering of musicians in the orchestra pit. They are similar in size to the lofty Gibson Girl, whose cruel countenance could crush a male admirer. "Part of her [Marsh's chorus girl] allure" according to Allen, "is her power to turn the tables on those men who would attempt to possess her, to dominate them and reduce them to midgets, comatose

---

<sup>356</sup> Shteir, *Striptease*, 79.

<sup>357</sup> The New York Society for the Suppression of Vice, under the guidance of Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia, held hearings in the late 1930s on the morality of burlesque. In 1942, the anti-vice campaign succeeded in making burlesque illegal in Manhattan. Burlesque simply moved across the Hudson River and became a thriving business in New Jersey.

old men, ducks, lobsters.”<sup>358</sup> Marsh’s hyperbolic presentation of the Blue Woman seems to be a comment on the New Woman and the Newer Woman’s sexual liberation and may uncover Marsh’s own anxieties with her unfettered sexuality. Art scholar Ellen Wiley Todd believes that Marsh tried to reassert masculine dominance by “reducing working-class women to sexual commodities [which] reassured some middle-class men whose manhood had been compromised by the loss of productive work.”<sup>359</sup> With Marsh’s burlesque queens, the Newer Woman, if present at all, is only “egregiously present.”<sup>360</sup>

In time of economic hardship, pretty girls were willing to bump-and-grind and shed their clothes in order to pay bills and survive. Legitimate jobs such as clerical work and sales assistants were highly sought but scarce. However, almost any presentable young woman could find work in burlesque. While a top performer at the prime New York venues such as the Irving Place Theatre and Minsky’s National Winter Garden could earn as much as \$250 per week, most “bottom-billing girls” earned far less, at around \$70 to \$125 a week.<sup>361</sup> Still, this was much more than a shop girl could earn and during the height of the Depression, the most revered burlesque stars such as Ann Corio earned as much as \$375 a week, plus a portion of the ticket sales, which often came to an additional \$1,500.<sup>362</sup> The United States Census for 1940, for instance, lists ninety-seven New York City female

---

<sup>358</sup> Allen, *Horrible Prettiness*, 219.

<sup>359</sup> Ellen Wiley Todd, *The “New Woman” Revised: Painting and Gender Politics on Fourteenth Street*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 313.

<sup>360</sup> Richard Martin, review of *The “New Woman” Revised: Painting and Gender Politics on Fourteenth Street*, by Ellen Wiley Todd, *Woman’s Art Journal*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (Spring-Summer, 1995), 63.

<sup>361</sup> Karen Abbott, *American Rose: A Nation Laid Bare: The Life and Times of Gypsy Rose Lee* (New York: Random House, Inc., 2010), 195.

<sup>362</sup> Zeidman, *The American Burlesque Show*, 148.

performers (from all types of entertainment) earning between \$2,000 and \$4,999, while an additional one hundred ten women earned more than \$5000.<sup>363</sup>

Burlesque historian Rachel Shteir suggests that the twentieth-century woman's recently won freedom to express herself sexually at least partially explains the rise in burlesque's popularity in the late 1920s and early 1930s. The striptease artist, like the New Woman, controlled her own sexual power. Shteir notes that "In the 1930s, on the burlesque stage, striptease gave women more agency than other forms of popular entertainment acknowledging their sexuality and allowing them to connect directly with the audience....Striptease stepped away from the Victorian conventions that told women how to behave in public."<sup>364</sup> In brief, there were few jobs in legitimate theater but numerous opportunities for a girl willing to strip.

Marsh frequently included portraits of himself and his friends in scenes of burlesque audiences, e.g. his mentor and fellow painter Kenneth Hayes Miller, the publicist Henry Luce, William Randolph Hearst, and Lloyd Goodrich, a childhood friend, ardent supporter, and historian of American Art.<sup>365</sup> It is believed that the standing red-headed man with a mustache in *Down at Jimmy Kelly's* is Goodrich.<sup>366</sup> Attending such performances together was a type of bonding for these men. Coming together to view women's nudity as a commodity, they in effect formed teams in the battle between the sexes, with the female

---

<sup>363</sup> U.S. Department of the Interior, Census Office, *Sixteenth Census of the United States, Population, The Labor Force*, Vol. 3, Part 4, Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1940, 436.

<sup>364</sup> Shteir, *Striptease*, 141.

<sup>365</sup> Hagood and Harrison, *American Art at the Chrysler Museum*, catalogue entry for Reginald Marsh's *Down at Jimmy Kelly's*.

<sup>366</sup> Lloyd Goodrich later became Director of the Whitney Museum and published books on Marsh as well as on Thomas Eakins, John Sloan, and Edward Hopper.

strippers perhaps victorious because they were the ones earning money from the enterprise.

Marsh's correspondence with William Benton, a college and lifelong friend (later a U.S. Senator) who shared his interest in this type of entertainment, has elements in common with letters exchanged between Everett Shinn and his wealthy benefactor, Poultney Bigelow. As Spies notes, "Benton's letters show that the 'college humor' he shared with Marsh aided their bonding and communication as two heterosexual men. In burlesque shows, men collectively ogled their mutual objects of desire and then shared the experience of joking about it, Benton's comments and Marsh's images served to fortify a masculine identity and a separate male culture. The men's club camaraderie between burlesque patrons and comedians, and between Benton and Marsh, featured in contemporary girlie magazines as well."<sup>367</sup>

Despite major gains made by women in the preceding fifty years - including the right to own property, earn an independent income, and vote - female stage performers were increasingly marginalized, had fewer speaking roles, and were considered even less respectable. Most actresses, singers, and dancers were perceived as sexually promiscuous; burlesque dancers, perhaps with cause, were assumed to have a price attached to their virtue. Their predominantly male audience held ambiguous feelings concerning their attraction to such women. Spies expressed it well when she said, "Marsh's visual enactment of sexual temptations in a humorous context may have helped male viewers

---

<sup>367</sup> Spies, "Girls and Gags," 50.

reconsider feelings of guilt stemming from their upbringing in the light of more modern thinking that marked such urges as an essential part of manhood.”<sup>368</sup>

The typical burlesque house certainly did not discriminate when admitting clientele from lower social strata and, as a result, men of means and men who were down-and-out shared space and perhaps feelings of shame attendant with the spectacle they mutually enjoyed.

Marsh, like the other artists in this study, enjoyed the entire spectacle of the theater, including the audience. He explored the dynamic possibilities inherent in the inclusion of the male audience because they reacted to the entertainers and interacted with each other. These responses naturally included applause, laughter, shock, and indulgence of the opportunity to scan women’s bodies.

A generation before Marsh, during the height of vaudeville, when Shinn chronicled the world of New York City theaters, the audiences in nearly equal numbers included faces of both men and women appearing delighted, enthralled, and full of wonder both at the performance and the greater spectacle of the evening: the beautifully decorated theaters, the lights, vivid colors, and rambunctious crowd. In burlesque shows, however, the male-only audience did not display that sense of awe. While Shinn depicted spectators of both genders behaving with decorum and manners, Marsh exposed the leering, sinister side of a primarily male audience; apparently proper manners were not a crucial part of the burlesque scene. This crass decorum shares some of the crude, unrefined nature of Walter

---

<sup>368</sup> Ibid.

Sickert's "gallery gods" who filled the balconies of London's music halls such as *The Old Bedford: Cupid in the Gallery*, c. 1890 (fig. 46).

Marsh took special care to portray these men as distinct, with very specific and unique features. Indeed, in many of his works it is possible to identify contemporary personalities who were part of the reigning social scene. He employed skills he developed as a cartoonist early in his career to create caricatures, while at the same time acknowledging that they were all, high or low, there to gratify the same urge to voyeuristically enjoy the sight and movement of female flesh. A prime example of this is the etching *Audience Burlesk* of 1929 (fig. 88), which is a close-up devoid of performers, focusing exclusively on nine men in the audience.

*Audience Burlesk* could serve as an illustration for Ann Corio's 1968 memoir of her years as a burlesque queen. She recalled the men who came to see her perform "with their rows of bald heads, palsied jaws, pendulous cheeks and bleared eyes, display[ing] differing yet distinct reactions, but their social status [was] unremarkable."<sup>369</sup> Despite their differing levels of success in the outside world and Marsh's predilection to emphasize their individuality, it is clear that from the point of view of the female performers that the men in the audience were all the same – unattractive, leering, eager, possessive, and invasive.

In addition to the extended runway, Marsh's 1930 etching *Gaiety Burlesque* (fig. 86) also contains a crowded audience of men who, similarly to Shinn's spectators in the loge and Sickert's gallery gods, squeeze together and hang over the balcony edge apparently attempting to get closer to the stripper on stage. Marsh's men, however, appear identical

---

<sup>369</sup> Ann Corio and Joseph DiMona, *This was Burlesque* (New York, 1968), 28.

to the spectators seated on the floor, in the pit, and next to the runway. If there is any distinction of class, it is not evident.

On the infrequent occasion when Marsh included a woman in his scenes of the audience, such as in *Gaiety Burlesque* from 1932 (fig. 89), he deliberately placed her to highlight her shocked reaction to the spectacle she witnesses. More often, as Marsh's *Irving Place Burlesk* of 1929 (fig. 90) illustrates, the woman spectator is getting up and leaving. Her exit takes place on the shadowed far right margin of the canvas and is easy for the viewer to overlook.

Men in Marsh's images, on the other hand, display a wide gamut of reactions ranging from excitement and rapt attention to boredom or even slumber. Other male faces variously register horror, fright, and revulsion. However, the vast majority of them exhibit the male gaze. This active intense looking denotes the inception of the predatory process of sexual conquest.

Males have gazed upon females since before the human species descended from the trees. It is often an unmentioned element of social interaction between the sexes. However, within the confines of the theater there is ritualized protocol applying to these exchanges of looks between women in fancy gowns (or stage costumes) and men in formal wear. These translate to a code of etiquette. Marsh followed earlier American artists as he captured the nuances of these institutionalized deliberations.

Shinn in particular gravitated toward these sorts of interactions between males engaged in surveillance and females performing in form-fitting costumes. In Shinn's time, well-mannered gentlemen were not permitted to blatantly stare at women in polite society

without incurring social stigma. American vaudeville relied on direct interplay between those on stage and those in the audience, and several of Shinn's paintings involve this manner of direct eye contact. Shinn highlighted these interrelations between the entertainers, musicians, spectators, and viewer. Contrastingly, Marsh and other burlesque patrons discarded social norms and full-out leering ensued. Displays of audience behavior in Ashcan School painting ranged from Shinn's women in fashionable hats staring out at the viewer to the penetrating inspection of nearly naked female performers by Marsh's grotesquely featured dirty-old-men.

Certainly, depressed economic times and uncertain conditions may have made men feel impotent when women were increasingly visible in public places and their participation in the workforce became more of a rule than an exception. Looking at nude burlesque performers may have helped men regain a sense of power. According to Marilyn Cohen, who curated a 1983 exhibition on Marsh for the Whitney Museum of American Art, "Marsh's notion of sexuality...centers on exhibitionism, and its corollary, voyeurism."<sup>370</sup> But in Marsh's oeuvre, many of the female performers appear either coldly indifferent or somewhat frightening and threatening. Marsh may have harbored his own fear of newly empowered females. His *Blue Women* do not seem as sweet or approachable as Shinn's *Newer Women*. Shinn could look back fondly upon the Victorian era when his attitudes were formed and women posed no strong threat to men. Marsh, as a man of the twentieth century, had no similar mental refuge to rely on. "Tempted by the joys of the flesh," Cohen explains, "the men in Marsh's world, and possibly Marsh too, found themselves led astray,

---

<sup>370</sup> Marilyn Cohen, *Reginald Marsh's New York: Painting, Drawings, Prints, and Photographs*, Whitney Museum of American Art (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1983), 27.

lost, or powerless.”<sup>371</sup> Female performers could allow access to sex or deny it and men could only watch. In all of Marsh’s work, men, despite their wide range of expressions, remain seated and passive while the female performers are free to move about.

In these settings, sex is always on display but there exists no intimacy, and no one embraces or connects in any meaningful way. Marsh’s burlesque scenes are straightforward -- men watch and women perform. Marsh was drawn to the studies of physically active women promenading with cool detachment, while the men in his compositions are often, as Thomas Bruhn, Director of The William Benton Museum of Art notes, “lethargic and respond toward women either voyeuristically from a distance or with complete indifference in their presence.”<sup>372</sup> In Marsh’s 1930 *Gaiety Burlesque*, the stripper actively works to entertain the male audience, while the men, although attentive, sit passively. Marsh illustrated a further level of passivity in his 1942 engraving of the *Eltinge Follies* (fig. 91) on West Forty-Second Street, where a gentleman sleeps in the balcony while his seat-mate reaches out to fondle the feather plumes on the stripper’s headdress. Marsh’s balcony dwellers are a mass of mouth-breathing old men with hungry faces who stare agape and are mesmerized by the tantalizing scene below.

Henri and The Eight, taking cues from European masters Velázquez and Hals and the American Eakins, sought to realistically chronicle their times. They did so by attempting to encapsulate the harsh realities of urban existence with street scenes including rubbish bins and drunken derelicts, but their work seems somewhat tepid in light of Marsh’s scenes of

---

<sup>371</sup> Cohen, *Reginald Marsh’s New York*, 34.

<sup>372</sup> Thomas P. Bruhn, *Scenes from Contemporary New York Life, The 1920s and 30s of Reginald Marsh*, exh. cat., The William Benton Museum of Art (Mansfield, CT: University of Connecticut, 1998), n.p.

seething crowds jostling on city streets and filling theater seats. In Marsh's work, life often seems to be a struggle, with large raucous personalities conflicting with one another. In this regard, despite his obvious enthusiasm for the subject, Marsh sometimes resembles a Northern Renaissance painter detailing scenes of Hell. His Depression era view of American society did not always flatter. Marsh's contemporary, the painter Edward Laning, once exclaimed, "I believe Marsh's work tells us more about the Decline and Fall of the American Empire than that of any other artist in any medium."<sup>373</sup>

Edward Hopper, also an Ashcan painter and contemporary of Marsh, was not drawn to the enticing power of the female performer over her audience, but rather focused on themes of isolation, alienation, and the feeling of being alone in crowd. Far from the frenzied excitement of burlesque, several of Hopper's theater paintings, such as *Two on the Aisle*, 1927 (fig. 92) depict dejected patrons sitting quietly in near empty auditoriums with the stage vacant and the curtain down in an atmosphere of haunting loneliness.

In Hopper's only painting of burlesque, *Girlie Show* (fig. 21), the scene is very different from any of Marsh's work. The only visible male face is that of a drummer in the orchestra pit with his back to a middle-aged stripper as she strides across the stage twirling a cape behind her and fully exposing her muscular body which is naked except for high heels and a G-string. Her face and possibly her nipples are garishly painted. Her raised chin hardens her appearance with her hooded eyes looking toward the heavens. She makes no attempt to connect with her audience, which is represented only by several heads in the foreground at the bottom of the canvas. The spotlight is harsh and unflattering. The

---

<sup>373</sup> Edward Laning, "Reginald Marsh," *American Heritage*, Volume XXIII, No. 6 (Oct., 1972), 35.

painting is not so much about female power as about the alienation of the individual. Despite being the focus of attention and the center of this scene, Hopper's stripper is utterly alone.

Marsh's burlesque dancer is lushly curvaceous but untouchable while Hopper's more fierce creature casts cold eyes and expresses an attitude of self-preservation. Both Marsh and Hopper's Blue Women are simultaneously attractive and repellent; both are ostensibly erotic yet grotesque and fend off their feckless admirers. However, Hopper's stripper, with her monstrous, heavily made-up face, actually seems fearsome.<sup>374</sup>

An important clue about the intent of *Girlie Show* can be gleaned by the date of its execution, 1941. At that time, the Depression had ravished the American psyche for nearly a dozen years. In Europe, World War II had started two years earlier and the Japanese were then already plotting to attack Pearl Harbor. Most Americans by this time felt that U.S. involvement in the war was inevitable. The harsh, unromantic nakedness of the stripper in Hopper's *Girlie Show* forebodes a sense of isolation and alienation elemental to the American zeitgeist during the period just prior to the Second World War. As she marches across the empty, brightly lit stage from the wings, her head is held high, her face is blank, and her movements seem stiff and mechanical; she resembles an automaton. Few images of the female nude project so little warmth and are so unappealing to the viewer. In that regard, this Blue Woman might as well be wearing armor, for she certainly is metaphorically.

---

<sup>374</sup> Hopper's relations with his wife, Josephine Nivison (Jo) is discussed by several scholars, notably in Vivien Green Fryd, "Edward Hopper's *Girlie Show*: Who is the Silent Partner," *American Art*, Vol. 14, No. 2 (Summer 2000), 53. Fryd references the Hoppers' difficult marriage and suggests the unabashedly harsh portrayal of his stripper presents not only the artist's response to the changes in the sexual culture but also to the tension in his marriage.

For Hopper's stripper, the black-curtained stage is as bare as her body. This presentation of a female performer has several elements reminiscent of Henri's *Salome*. Both artists eliminate extraneous details; furthermore, Hopper's stripper assumes a pose comparable to that of *Salome*. Both women have exposed bare bellies which curve at similar angles and each performer extends one leg forward. But while *Salome* projects an aura of self-confident and empowered sexuality as she stares down at her viewer, the mascara-laden eyes of Hopper's stripper seem, as historian Walter Wells notes, "lost in the shabby grandeur of her moment."<sup>375</sup>

Marsh and Hopper's images of forlorn Blue Women reflect the bleak state of the nation in the Depression years. As the Ziegfeld Follies represented an artificial ideal of the "Glorified American Girl" and movie starlets on the big screen projected risqué intrigue, these paintings of burlesque strippers detailed the wearying realities of show business. Meanwhile, the image of the independent, confident, optimistic New Woman in fine art had been gradually subsumed by the drudgery seen in the faces of chorus girls, burlesque dancers, and strippers.

Neither Marsh nor Hopper aimed to create images that championed women's equality. But as artists delineating their own version of modern American society, they gravitated towards the often unrecognized natural strength inherent in the female nude. Unlike Eakins and Shinn, their image making was not spliced to any internal drive to gratify their own psychic impulses to dominate the opposite sex. Without any particular agenda, Marsh and Hopper managed to acknowledge women's still nascent power in society and

---

<sup>375</sup> Walter Wells, *Silent Theater: The Art of Edward Hopper* (London: Phaidon Press Limited, 2007), 233.

granted them more sentience as naked females than many other artists. The strippers in the work of Marsh and Hopper might be considered placeholders for growing female empowerment.

The nature of sexual relations between men and women progressed a long way during the careers of Marsh and Hopper. They were both born near the end of the nineteenth century, when male and female sexual attraction was actively denied and strictly governed. Men and women in those years naturally experienced a great deal of confusion as the rules of society changed. Men at burlesque shows still felt that age-old titillation, but it was now perhaps tinged with guilt. Marsh expressed the changes afoot by filling the faces of his crowds with all kinds of different emotions. Hopper, on the other hand, remained consistent by continuing to express only one emotional state: alienation.

Although the widespread belief persisted that low female performers engaged in questionable activities offstage, in truth many were simply too hard-working and too exhausted to spend their time in nightclubs. As one performer explained, 'I'm just a wholesome, clean American girl, trying to get along.'<sup>376</sup> During this time of restlessness in politics and the economy, women's rights advanced little.

The Great Depression of the 1930s was of course a tough time for all Americans, with unemployment figures that sometimes reached twenty-five percent. Henry Luce was quoted as remarking that "We Americans are unhappy....We are not happy about America.

---

<sup>376</sup> Ted Shane, "Poor Man's Garbo: Interview with Margie Hart," *Collier's* (July 26, 1941), 48.

We are not happy about ourselves in relation to America. We are nervous – or gloomy – or apathetic.”<sup>377</sup>

Through their images of the burlesque strippers, Marsh and Hopper perhaps transmitted more about the cultural climate of the time than they might have realized. American society had changed in numerous ways since the late nineteenth century, when women first began entering the workforce in significant numbers. Americans were still adapting to the idea of “working women” and many men were unemployed. Burlesque shows were one of the few places where attractive young women were nearly sure to find jobs. The Depression only ended because production increased during World War II and demanded so many more workers than were available that women needed to take many jobs hitherto exclusively male such as machinists, pilots, and even movie ushers. The war would churn all aspects of society and it would have significant impact on the lives of female performers and how they were perceived.

---

<sup>377</sup> John Davis, “The End of the American Century: Current Scholarship of the Art of the United States,” *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 85, No. 3 (Sept., 2003), 544.

## CHAPTER NINE

### The Cinema and the Unsettled Usherette

Edward Hopper, *New York Movie*, 1939

Reginald Marsh, *Usherette*, 1939

The theater usherettes featured in Edward Hopper's *New York Movie* (fig. 22) and Reginald Marsh's *Usherette* (fig. 23), both painted in 1939, wear costumes and work in theaters, but of course, are not performers. They are of interest to this study not just for their place of employment but because the job of usher had long been, until just before these paintings were completed, exclusively a male occupation. Women taking jobs previously held by men were considered interlopers and were not always readily accepted by male coworkers and patrons. Hopper and Marsh may have been attracted to these usherettes by the novelty of finding lovely young women in a theater setting wearing uniforms that approximate costumes. They wield a modicum of authority, but they are still subject to the scrutiny of the male gaze. Only one of them is aware of this. The other is so lost in her own thoughts as to be oblivious of her surroundings and any attention she may garner. Neither woman expresses any sense of job satisfaction or fulfillment. It is in effect a dead-end job with the only hint of glamour being the opulent surroundings. However, the Depression was now ten years old and working-class women were still grateful to find any kind of employment. These factors combine to make these usherettes resemble Kuhn's Not-So-New Women who emit a negligible amount of enthusiasm for life.

Hopper's Not-So-New Usherette leans pensively against a side wall. With her arms folded and a hand to her chin, she seems burdened by her thoughts. Her closed posture

suggests that she would like to disappear and, for a moment, she has succeeded. Her job within the theater requires no creativity or self-expression and that makes her unique as the subject of a painting in this dissertation. Although the “star” of this painting, she is just another working woman.

Marsh’s usherette, in contrast, pays little heed to her duties as she rather self-consciously adopts a pose that displays her shapely body. It is as if one of the singers, dancers, or chorines from an earlier painting has come down off the stage. She stands in contrapposto with her hand on the curve of her hip, knowingly presenting herself, making it difficult to ignore her hourglass figure. The look of her bottle-blond hair and her lipstick and mascara is not too far removed from the stage makeup Kuhn applied to his chorines. Her mask-like expression conceals any personality or distinction she may possess. These two usherettes affect contrasting strategies to succeed in a man’s world; one exploits her sexuality while the other negates it.

The Not-So-New Woman had achieved some parity with men but her victory seems somewhat hollow. Social historian William H. Chafe describes her situation by explaining that “Women workers sought jobs, not careers – an extra paycheck for the family rather than a reputation as a success in business of the professions. Indeed, every aspect of women’s employment – including their sex-segregated jobs and low pay – seemed designed to mute the suggestion that traditional modes of female behavior were under attack.”<sup>378</sup> After some sixty years of struggle, instead of solidarity and celebration, the successor to the New Woman found herself with little gained except a working wage.

---

<sup>378</sup> William H. Chafe, *The Paradox of Change: American Women in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 170.

The vacant, detached expressions of Hopper and Marsh's burlesque queens discussed in the previous chapter are representative of the hard times and harsh economic conditions Americans dealt with during the Great Depression when the nation's spirits flagged. Despite the tremendous gains made by American women between 1880 and 1940, the numbers of working women in the 1930s were still a minor fraction of the overall population so most consideration of unemployment, like many historical inquiries, by default, addressed the male perspective.<sup>379</sup> Women looking for work had to overcome cultural resistance as well as "bad times" in order to find a job. The usherettes painted by these two artists explicate the hardships of women during that era. As had occurred in the case of their two depictions of burlesque strippers, Hopper and Marsh, with their usherettes, approached their subjects from different angles and with different sociological perspectives.

Fifteen years older than Marsh, Hopper was actually close in age to most members of The Eight and, like them, his style and realistic urban scenes had direct antecedents in the work of Eakins. However, Hopper's art career came to fruition later in his life well after The Eight had enjoyed their greatest success and notoriety. Therefore, Hopper considered with Marsh and Kuhn, belongs to a succeeding generation of Ashcan artists. This new generation of artists featured the diminished expectations of the Not-So-New Woman with mute and disengaged models. The New Woman as a prominent icon of female's advancement in society dwindled after the high times of the Flapper era and, by the end of

---

<sup>379</sup> According to the United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, in 1940 US unemployment was still at 14.6%, down from its height in 1932 of 23.6%, <http://www.stats.bls.gov> (accessed December 2011).

the 1930s, the New Woman lost her confident, statuesque posture and, in American art, became an average, every day, working woman.

Like *Girlie Show* (fig. 21) and *Down at Jimmy Kelly's* (fig. 20), Hopper's *New York Movie* and Marsh's *Usherette* offer some indications of how these two male American artists saw the social position of women during America's Depression years. These two paintings indicate the fresh option New Yorkers had to spend their leisure time as vaudeville houses were converted to movie theaters and became the primary form of popular entertainment. Hopper and Marsh's female "performers" are no longer onstage wearing glamorous costumes, but instead stand on the periphery of movie auditoriums wearing their uniforms.

With their usherettes, Hopper and Marsh present women working in positions once held exclusively by men. Although, one could argue that most jobs were once only for men, some occupations such as sales and office clerks, telephone operators, and teachers were most commonly taken by females when women first entered the modern workforce in substantial numbers. Theater ushers were exclusively male until World War I made young men scarce on this side of the Atlantic. Although tailored differently, their jackets with epaulettes paired with long pants closely resemble military uniforms. Her clothing is masculine, but Marsh's shapely usherette faces the viewer with a provocative expression and strikes a pose that accentuates her figure. Her attitude suggests inattention to her duties as a moviegoer heads down the darkened aisle to find his own seat. Marsh hints at her possible promiscuity. Her open sexuality clashes with the somber twilight of the movie theater.

Hopper's slim usherette, leaning quietly against the wall, lacks flamboyance. Her placement within the composition of the painting and within the space of the theater isolates her. With a distant expression, she is reflective and withdrawn, miles away from the onscreen action which grants the audience an escape from outside problems. She is alone with her concerns. Likely, she has already seen the film many times. She is attractive with shining blonde hair, but in this instance, her sexuality is neither emphasized nor even noticed. The tone of alienation and loneliness in *New York Movie* is characteristic of Hopper's oeuvre. Although Hopper and Marsh's usherettes are working in positions formerly occupied by males, they are not interacting with other people in any way and they seem to possess little power.

As a child in Nyack, New York, Hopper put on plays and puppet shows with his sister. He was in his teens when, in 1896, the first projected motion images were shown in America at Koster and Bial's Music Hall, and he was in his forties when talking movies were introduced. Unlike Marsh, who was younger, Hopper witnessed the growth of cinema firsthand. Both he and Marsh frequently patronized live theater and attended throughout their lives.

Hopper began his painting career around 1900 in New York City, but for many years after that he supported himself with work as an illustrator for *Scribner's Magazine*, *Everybody's*, and *Adventure* and many other publications.<sup>380</sup> He also made posters for the film industry. He studied under Henri at the New York School of Art and, although he never identified himself as an Ashcan artist, he was influenced by Henri and was therefore

---

<sup>380</sup> Gail Levin, *Edward Hopper as Illustrator* (New York and London: W.W. Norton and Co. in association with the Whitney Museum of American Art, 1979), 2.

indirectly influenced by Eakins. Like them, he too sought to record his reactions to the modern world with an unrelenting realistic eye. As a student, Hopper made three trips to Europe between 1906 and 1910. Although, unlike other most American artists, he never formally studied in France, but still created numerous sketches in museums and paintings *en plein air*.

Pamela N. Koob, current curator of the Art Students League, notes that Hopper incorporated elements of Symbolism in his art but largely ignored other European avant-garde movements.<sup>381</sup> He also circumvented influence from his contemporary American modernists such as Charles Demuth and Charles Sheeler with their stylized scenes of empty industrial-age factories and skyscrapers. Hopper painted locations where people gathered, e.g. restaurants and diners, offices, hotel rooms, and the gamut of theater from “proper” venues, to burlesque, and the movies, but he preferred them when they were sparsely populated.<sup>382</sup> He conveyed none of Shinn’s and Marsh’s sense of exuberance but rather concentrated on the idea that everyone is essentially alone to some degree no matter how big the crowd where they are stranded.

Movie theaters and dimly-lit burlesque houses provided diversion. The public, drawn to brightly lit exteriors with flashing marquees and colorful movie posters, entered darkened environs decorated with brass railings, gilt molding, and heavy velvet drapes and filled with silent audiences.<sup>383</sup> Here, in the light of the silver screen, one could be alone in a

---

<sup>381</sup> Pamela N. Koob, “States of Being: Edward Hopper and Symbolist Aesthetics,” *American Art*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (Fall 2004), 57.

<sup>382</sup> In 1908, New York City police temporarily closed Manhattan’s theaters and they did not reopen until a National Board of Review was established in 1909 which enforced certain codes of proper behavior.

<sup>383</sup> See Neal Gabler, *Life: The Movie, How Entertainment Conquered Reality* (New York: Knopf, 1998), many of the vaudeville theaters were converted into movie theaters. In 1913, the first grand movie palace, the *Regent*

crowd. Tickets were cheap but movies were shown in opulent, plush surroundings. They granted working-class audiences living in tenements and walkup, cold water flats access to the luxurious interiors of what were then called movie palaces.

Movies theaters were some of the first air-conditioned places in America and they may have been so popular during the Depression because they offered plush sanctuary for the body and respite for the mind with their tales of romance and adventure. The cinema was a perfect place for the middle-class shopper, office clerk, shop girl, factory worker, or the unemployed to indulge in escapism. Hopper also found solace at the movie theater, admitting in a letter to his mother that “When I don’t feel like painting I go to the movies for a week or more. I go on a regular movie binge.”<sup>384</sup>

Other Ashcan-era artists adopted movie theaters as subject matter. For instance, Mabel Dwight’s 1928 lithograph, *The Clinch* (fig. 93), presents a well-dressed crowd reacting to the passionate onscreen embrace. Moving pictures, under the same elaborate proscenium arches in converted vaudeville houses, replaced live performers and stole their audience. Dwight’s theater patrons crane their necks and look irritated with late-comers blocking the screen. Also in 1928, Dwight created *Stick ‘Em Up* (fig. 94), which mimics the final scene of one of the first narrative movies ever, 1903’s *The Great Train Robbery*, as an outlaw points his pistol at the clearly startled theater audience.<sup>385</sup> Dwight divided her

---

Theater, opened in New York City at 116<sup>th</sup> Street and Seventh Avenue. The next year, the *Strand* opened with seating for 4,000, making it the largest movie house in the country at the time.

<sup>384</sup> Unpublished letter to Hopper’s mother, Dec. 8, 1906, quoted in Gail Levin, *Edward Hopper: The Art and the Artist* (New York and London: W.W. Norton and Co. in association with the Whitney Museum of American Art, 1980), 58.

<sup>385</sup> *The Great Train Robbery* was the first movie with a narrative, made in 1903, and directed by Edwin Porter.

picture plane equally between the action on the screen and the response of the capacity audience.

John Sloan, one of the Eight, painted a movie scene as early as 1907. *Movies, Five Cents*, (fig. 95) is of a nickelodeon, a low-brow theater with less opulent furnishings than the movie palaces that would appear in New York some five years later. Although cinema was then a novelty, Sloan naturally devoted more of his canvas to the audience than to the movie screen. Most of these moviegoers are raptly attentive, with one clutching her chest. Another removes her gaze from the screen and with her eyes brings the viewer into the scene. Art historian Patricia McDonnell notes that this illusion of eye contact with the viewer echoes the sense of immediacy early moviegoers felt for the actors on the screen as people adjusted to the novelty of moving pictures.<sup>386</sup>

Like Dwight and Sloan, Hopper featured the audience in several of his theater paintings. One of his student paintings from about 1902, *Solitary Figure in a Theatre* (fig. 96), is of a woman wearing a hat and seated up front near the closed curtain while absorbed in her reading.<sup>387</sup> This strange, somewhat odd view of this lone woman might leave the viewer wondering just what is taking place. She seems to take for granted her independence as a New Woman unlike figures in earlier Ashcan paintings who seemed to celebrate it.

In 1927, Hopper painted another relatively empty auditorium with *Two on the Aisle* (fig. 92). None of the three elegantly-dressed patrons engage in the performance or with

---

<sup>386</sup> For more on the “actor-to-viewer” engagement of early films see Patricia McDonnell, *On the Edge of Your Seat: Popular Theater and Film in Early Twentieth-Century American Art* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002), 24.

<sup>387</sup> The figure is probably a woman, but to some scholars the gender is unclear.

each other. A woman sits alone in a box reading as a couple removes their coats and prepares to sit. Perhaps they have arrived early and are waiting for the performance to begin. As with *Solitary Figure in a Theatre* and much of Hopper's other work, the situation is ambiguous.

Many of Hopper's figures are solitary and in *New York Movie*, the focus is not on the movie or on any of the individuals in the audience but rather on the blonde woman who stands on the edges of both the theater and the canvas. In the theater she is invisible to everyone except the viewer of the painting in which she is the star. Two moviegoers, a man and a woman seated on separate rows, are only extras here. The bright screen to the left side of the canvas is partially blocked by three elaborate light fixtures. The image on the screen is obscured, but is identified as "snowy mountain tops" in notes made by the artist's wife.<sup>388</sup>

Hopper's pensive, usherette is the true focus of *New York Movie* and she is certainly a product of her time. The fact of her employment directly resulted from the women's movement and the women who had demanded empowerment and entry into the male domain. However, her deflated deportment might signal the fact that support for feminism waned after women gained the vote in 1920, and it virtually disappeared during the Prohibition era of the Roaring Twenties. At the beginning of the Depression, the country reverted to the more conservative belief that women belonged back in the home and not in the workplace. The social critic Albert Jay Nock reinforced this notion in 1931, when he wrote an article for *The Atlantic Monthly* stating that "Women can civilize a society and men

---

<sup>388</sup> Deborah Lyons, *Edward Hopper: A Journal of His Work* (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company in Association with the Whitney Museum of American Art, 1997), 50.

cannot.”<sup>389</sup> “Our society” Nock continued, “cannot be civilized through women’s attainment of the ends that feminism has hitherto set before them, laudable and excellent as those are.”<sup>390</sup> His flattery and his pandering did not quite disguise his stated opinion that “women have been over-preoccupied with the idea of doing what men can do.”<sup>391</sup>

The dream of full equality for American women went unrealized in the 1930s, as it would for decades to come, and Hopper’s usherette in *New York Movie* is certainly not triumphant. Far removed from both the outside world and the fantasy of the movie, Hopper’s attractive, stationary usherette seems to bear the weight of her alienation as she leans against the wall of the theater, bathed in the soft pink light of the wall sconce. As a Not-So-New Woman she has broken the barrier of exclusion from a man’s world and wears the uniform that confirms it, but she has lost the energetic confidence of the New Woman and is now stripped of her voice and her strength. She seems unhappy and unfulfilled. But at least she is, unlike the Blue Woman, still fully clothed.

Painted early in 1939, just a few months before World War II erupted in Europe, and two years before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, *New York Movie* may portend prewar anxiety, but it also transmits a working woman’s dissatisfaction with her lot in life. She would have spent long hours on her feet in the high heels which were a part of her uniform meant to lend her an air of sophistication she probably did not feel. However, even

---

<sup>389</sup> Albert Jay Nock, “A Word to Women,” *The Atlantic Monthly* (Nov., 1931), 551.

<sup>390</sup> *Ibid.*, 554.

<sup>391</sup> *Ibid.*

her low-wage job was coveted and not easy to secure. Among her few other options was the more lucrative but even less respectable option of performing burlesque.<sup>392</sup>

Hopper's drained, sexless usherette is a woman with little indication of self esteem or self identity. Unlike Marsh's usherette who ignores her duties and allows a patron to locate his seat unassisted, Hopper's competent usherette is in her proper position by the exit.<sup>393</sup> Different from Henri's Jesseca Penn, an industrious, satisfied, hard-working Newer Woman, Hopper's usherette, a Not-So-New Woman is not eager to meet new challenges because, for her, the horizon is vacant.

At least one scholar, Avis Berman, sees Hopper's usherette as only bored with this particular oft-seen movie. Berman says, "Freed from showing customers to their seats and waiting for the movie to be over, the inattentive young woman has the luxury of surrendering to her own thoughts, just as the viewers have escaped into the spectacle on the shimmering screen."<sup>394</sup> However, Hopper does not seem to have abandoned his most recurring themes and many viewers of this painting see her obvious boredom combined with shades of disenfranchisement and detachment.

Hopper crafted a theater scene so intimate that the viewer may have a disquieting sense of voyeurism concerning the usherette. Voyeurism is an illicit gaze upon an unaware other. This oblivious usherette provokes no unwarranted attention. But Hopper chose to zoom in on her anyway. Her androgynous ("transgender" in modern terms) outfit, unlike

---

<sup>392</sup> See Irving Zeidman, *The American Burlesque Show* (New York: Hawthorn Books, Inc., 1967), 148, when the burlesque star, Ann Corio, became a feature act and runway leader in 1930, at the Columbia Theatre, her earnings rose from \$150 to \$200 per week. She was paid \$350 weekly for her performances at the Irving Place Theatre.

<sup>393</sup> It is possible that the gentleman rebuffed her assistance because she did not want the assistance. After all, she is a woman working in a role traditionally held by men.

<sup>394</sup> Avis Berman, *Edward Hopper's New York* (San Francisco: Pomegranate, 2005), 89.

Marsh's usherette, conceals her figure. Part of the disquiet Hopper provokes here relates to a sense of invasion regarding her private reverie.

The vulnerable solitude of Hopper's usherette transpires within a very public place. Curator Pamela Koob notes that Hopper's sense of inside-out privacy blends "the inner realm with the exterior fact."<sup>395</sup> Hopper has taken the emphasis from the theater scene away from the performance and the audience and instead investigates the margins. Art historian Linda Nochlin commented on this characteristic stating, "The spaces of urban recreation are equally, for Hopper, the loci of alienation."<sup>396</sup> His "performer" is a cousin to Auguste Rodin's 1902 male nude *The Thinker* (fig. 97) which shares the same theme: rumination.

Hopper's usherette has retreated to a well-lit alcove separated by a massive, ornate column from the shadowy area containing the seats. The contrasts between the personal and the external world in *New York Movie* appear in many of the artist's works and as McDonnell notes, this painting "is at once a window and a mirror, opening up a view of the world and reflecting back the viewer's own position as observer."<sup>397</sup>

Theater usherettes helped late-arriving patrons locate seats in darkened theaters. Whereas Hopper's usherette is withdrawn and introspective, Marsh's female usher flaunts her sexuality with a deadpan expression. The slim body of Hopper's young woman is obscured by her outfit while the ample curves of Marsh's full-figured woman are clearly delineated. The voluptuous usherette is a much more simple creature than Hopper's as she

---

<sup>395</sup> Koob, "States of Begin: Edward Hopper and Symbolist Aesthetics," 72.

<sup>396</sup> Linda Nochlin, "Edward Hopper and the Imagery of Alienation," *Art Journal*, Vol. 41, No. 2 (Summer, 1981), 137.

<sup>397</sup> McDonnell, *On the Edge of Your Seat*, 152.

coquettishly attempts to entice the presumably male viewer with one hand on her hip while the other grips a possibly phallic flashlight. The open cape draped over her shoulders emphasizes her bulbous, hour-glass figure and subtly mimics the curtained entrance to the theater. She possesses an alluring power. Meanwhile, the young woman on the movie screen seems to rebuff the advances of her suitor.

A sense of estrangement pervades both Hopper's *New York Movie* and Marsh's *Usherette*. Hopper and Marsh's usherettes are disconnected from the movie audiences and their surroundings. Their expressions project an anxiety emblematic of the mood of the country at large as America dealt with the threat of war. Their evident lack of enthusiasm for their jobs might mesh with their awareness of how far short these Not-So-New Women were of the dream the New Woman held for the future. The plight of working women during the Depression is aptly described by Chafe, "In the idealistic years before World War I, it had seemed possible that women might substantially enlarge their economic sphere and achieve a new level of equality with men in the labor force. A decade later, such hope had become illusory."<sup>398</sup> The gains for women's rights that helped grant them entry into previously male realms of employment did not guarantee fulfillment or income security. These listless Not-So-New Women weathered the Depression employed in dead-end jobs and they were as becalmed as the women's movement itself in those years.

---

<sup>398</sup> William H. Chafe, *The American Woman: Her Changing Social, Economic, and Political Roles, 1920-1970* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), 65.

## CONCLUSION

The images in this study, created by male artists between 1880 and 1940, are glimpses of female performers at various stages of progress during a crucial era in the struggle for American women to gain more equal status with men in public life. At first blush, these paintings by Thomas Eakins, Robert Henri, Everett Shinn, Walt Kuhn, Reginald Marsh, and Edward Hopper might be considered as mere views of attractive women in colorful costumes before audiences. However, on closer inspection, certain details such as the venue, the type of performance, the clothing, props, postures, gestures, and facial expressions can provide information about the women onstage, the men and women spectators, and the times in which they lived. In their scenes of theatrical environs, these painters, intentionally or not, telegraphed their attitudes towards women as potential equals while recording degrees of ongoing societal change caused by the progress of the women's movement.<sup>399</sup> What had been traditional etiquette in relation to gender distinctions evolved as an unprecedented number of single women entered the workforce and began to experience new levels of independence and new opportunities for sociability. Both the male artists and the female performers they were drawn to were affected by and reacted to many developments between the time of the Gilded Age and the onset of World War II.

---

<sup>399</sup> After careful consideration and thorough research, I determined that few women artists painted in the style of urban realism, and fewer still dealt with entertainment and performers. One who did was printmaker Mabel Dwight. However, her amusing and insightful views of the city populace do not seem to focus on the changing role of the female in modern society, nor does she, as a working woman artist, seem to take the opportunity to make any personal commentary of the status of the independent woman at that time.

Chapter One of this dissertation discusses attributes of the docile, obedient woman embodied by the sobriquet the “True Woman” as the model of feminine deportment during the post-Civil War era when Eakins began his art career in Philadelphia. While men freely inhabited various roles in public life, the True Woman was relegated to the domestic sphere. Like many men of his time, Eakins regarded the opposite sex as being frail and sickly. This is clear in the portraits of women he painted, such as *The Concert Singer*, 1890-92 (fig. 8). The suffrage movement began early in his lifetime, causing women’s place in society to continually change throughout his career, but Eakins never acknowledged it in his paintings. He did paint two women singing in front of audiences, but in no way are they are empowered by their performances. Eakins’ female performers seem cognizant of their subjugation within the scope of the male gaze. They appear uncomfortable in the limelight, as if they are unusual specimens under scrutiny, which they are, given their temerity in standing up and drawing attention to themselves. His portraits of women markedly contrast with those he created of male athletes, surgeons, and civic leaders, who mostly appear vital and commanding. Eakins’ paintings of women demonstrate his adherence to the ideal of the True Woman; he seems only interested in their decorous appearance and makes no effort to delve into their personalities or achievements.

Henri, the subject of Chapter Two, literally and figuratively belonged to the same school as Eakins, as they were both associated with the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts and both believed that artists should realistically record scenes of their own milieu. Henri, unlike Eakins, demonstrated an enlightened willingness to celebrate women’s growing self-assurance and assumption of more equal status. His feelings along these lines are

exemplified in *Jessica Penn in Black with White Plumes*, 1908 (fig. 9) and his other studies of female performers. Much of Henri's career coincided with the era following that of the True Woman, the time of the "New Woman." This new creature breached the societal boundaries which had kept women from publicly participating in politics and business. As exemplified by the Gibson Girl, an icon of advertisements and cartoons named after her creator, the New Woman haughtily returned the male gaze and therefore, in some measure, negated its power.

The always finely-dressed New Woman hailed from the upper class and therefore would not likely have appeared onstage because it was not considered respectable. Henri's type of female performer was decidedly working class. Because the newly independent woman of the early twentieth century experienced a different economic and cultural reality than the New Woman, I decided to expand the nomenclature with the term the "Newer Woman." Successive incarnations of her spirit I dubbed the "Not-So-New Woman," and the "Blue Woman." Blue, as in erotic or taboo.

The Newer Woman in the paintings of Henri and Shinn took a cue from the antecedent of the New Woman and paraded independently across the stage on her own without a male partner. In Henri's oeuvre, the Newer Woman, like the Gibson Girl, counters the male gaze with a commanding, sultry expression containing a hint of flirtation which declares her assumption of equal status.

Most single, lower-class young women who entered the job market did so as factory workers, telephone operators, shop girls, or office clerks. The select few with talent could also choose the option of a show business career. The stage offered the attraction of a less

regimented life, and the possibility, however slim, of entrée into a higher social class. These advantages were not found in most other forms of employment.

The entertainment industry, although still tainted by an assumed connection between show business and prostitution, provided a better livelihood for talented young women of the working class. The chance to become an actress or a dancer granted the opportunity to enjoy even more self-sufficiency and independence than women in other, more respectable professions, but it came with accompanying societal disdain and the assumption of immorality.

Henri's friend and protégé, Shinn, also painted performers with many of the attributes of the Newer Woman but Shinn's epic vision of them, detailed in Chapters Four, Five, and Six, was nonetheless distinctly retrograde. Especially regarding women, he strongly identified with the code of propriety inherited from Victorian chauvinism. Shinn delighted in vaudeville girls with their displays of stockings and self-determination, yet he seemed uncomfortable with too much change. Although his female entertainers delight in their sexuality and are enticing, as in Shinn's *Revue*, 1908 (fig. 14), his performers maintain their coyness mixed with an air of propriety. They are not fettered by the male gaze but neither do they seek to challenge its authority. Instead they deliberately titillate and bask in the ensuing spotlight of attention without being too naughty or assertive. Shinn's lovely costumed figures are less bold than those of Henri, but they are certainly more vibrant and healthy than Eakins' diffident, enervated singers.

Like Shinn, Kuhn was enamored of the theater and devoted much of his energy and talent to show business. However, Shinn placed his ingénues within the artifice and

spectacle of live performance, while Kuhn's showgirls appear in studio portraits wearing costumes sewn by his wife. As discussed in Chapter Seven, he was intent on capturing a different aspect of the theater. One example, Kuhn's *Plumes*, 1931 (fig. 18) has a tone of resignation far removed from Shinn's almost festive *Revue*. Kuhn placed his models against neutral backgrounds in ambiguous spaces suggestive of gritty backstage reality. The curtain had come down, the show was over, and these women were tired. Kuhn's weary, matter-of-fact portraits of female performers are not nearly as unflattering as those of Eakins, but they are definitely realistic in their exposure of the harsh demands of show business. Because Kuhn evoked a sense of sheer exhaustion as a component attendant to the lives of working-class women, I refer to his chorus girls as Not-So-New Women.

In common with most artists in this study, Marsh began his prolific career as an illustrator. He completed many bustling urban and beach scenes and vignettes of theater, particularly raucous and rowdy burlesque shows in which nudity was prevalent. Marsh's burlesque scenes show much more of the female form than Shinn's relatively tame glimpses of stocking-clad ankles and calves. In Marsh's paintings, including *Down at Jimmy Kelly's*, 1936 (fig. 19), his stripper appears wearing nothing but shoes, a feathered boa, and a G-string, and she does not deign to acknowledge the male gaze. As detailed in Chapter Eight, Marsh's strippers maintain neutral expressions and seldom make eye contact with the men who gaze at them. Marsh's burlesque performer is thus more blue or forbidden than new: hence the term "Blue Woman."

Also in Chapter Eight is the contrast between Marsh's densely crowded canvases and Hopper's theater scenes, which are nearly all views of sparse audiences with individual

patrons finding their seats or waiting for the show to begin before closed curtains.

Although, like Marsh, Hopper also worked during the heyday of burlesque, he completed only one painting of a stripper, *Girlie Show*, 1941, (fig. 20). Hopper's burlesque queen reigns at an even more distant remove from her audience than the strippers in Marsh's burlesque paintings. Hopper does not seem interested in the contest for power and status between men and women - he seems only interested in the alienation of urban life which affected men and women equally. The faces of both Marsh and Hopper's strippers are expressionless and resemble masks, and the male gaze features nowhere in their thoughts.

Marsh and Hopper painted two other canvases with female figures in theatrical settings that invite comparison and are analyzed in Chapter Nine. They are of movie usherettes engaged in jobs that had been traditionally male occupations. In fact, their work attire is modeled on military uniforms. Because their work is more respectable than the burlesque star, they are not representative of Blue Women. They are merely "working stiffs" with no possibility of advancement and burdened by hard economic times. Thus, like Kuhn's showgirls, they belong in the category of the Not-So-New Woman.

One of these Not-So-New usherettes reacts to the male gaze while the other is oblivious to it. Marsh's full-figured usherette not only acknowledges the attention, but vamps with her hand on her hip. On the other hand, Hopper's androgynous usherette leans against a wall lost in thought as the movie plays. One flirts while the other is miles away, disconnected from her own sexuality and its potential effect on men. These usherettes may tell something of the feelings these two artists had in reaction to women in the workplace. Marsh projected the stereotypical male view of women as sex objects, while

Hopper may be the only artist in this dissertation to portray a woman completely disassociated from the male gaze as it targets her within its scrutinizing scope.

All of these artists demonstrated their determination to bring realism to scenes of modern life. However, their realism was not and could not be completely objective. Even if they had wished to, they could not help but imbue their work with the prejudices and attitudes coloring their regard for the opposite sex. Eakins saw the female as a lesser, inferior being to the male. Henri delighted in more self-assured and powerful women, yet he also idealized them. Shinn enjoyed vaudeville's risqué hint of female sexual appetites but was careful to maintain a chaste illusion of allure coupled with submissiveness. Kuhn chose to expose the hardships confronting America with his battered but capable entertainers. Marsh and Hopper painted hard-edged strippers who, although they appear nude, were very distant from any possibility of reciprocating male sexual desire. Finally, Marsh and Hopper, some sixty years after Eakins' time, delivered contrasting interpretations of women working in theaters who are clad in costumes and roles that had previously been the exclusive purview of men. Each artist, in his own light, presented the female performer as a microcosm of America's changing culture, and in doing so, defined not only his own perceptions, but also those of society.

## FIGURES



Fig. 1. "A 'New Woman,'" September 8, 1894, *Punch*



Fig. 2. "What It will Soon Come To," February 24, 1894, *Punch*



Fig. 3. "The New Woman and Her Bicycle – There Will Be Several Varieties of Her," *Puck*, June 19, 1895, Library of Congress



Fig. 4. "She was Certainly a Study, this Girl in Bloomers," from George F. Hall, *A Study in Bloomers; or, The Model New Woman*, 1895



Fig. 5. "The New Woman in Hunting Costume" from George F. Hall, *A Study in Bloomers; or, The Model New Woman*, 1895



Fig. 6. Charles Dana Gibson, *Gibson's Typical American Girl*, 1901, Life Publishing Company, Detroit Publishing Co. (Postcard Series, 1905), New York Public Library



Fig. 7. "Modern. Mrs. Newgurl (to daughter) - "Goodness me, Kitty! Don't stand there with your hands in your pockets, that way; - you don't know how ungentlemanly it looks!," *Puck*, April 17, 1895, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.



Fig. 8. Thomas Eakins, *Singing a Pathetic Song*, 1881, Oil on canvas, 45 x 32 3/16 in., Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.



Fig. 9. Thomas Eakins, *The Concert Singer*, 1890-92, Oil on canvas, 75 1/8 x 54 1/4 in., Philadelphia Museum of Art



Fig. 10. Robert Henri, *Jessica Penn in Black with White Plumes*, 1908, Oil on canvas, 77 x 38 in., Crystal Bridges Museum, Arkansas



Fig. 11. Robert Henri, *Salome*, 1909, Oil on canvas, 77 1/4 x 36 15/16 in., Mead Art Museum at Amherst College

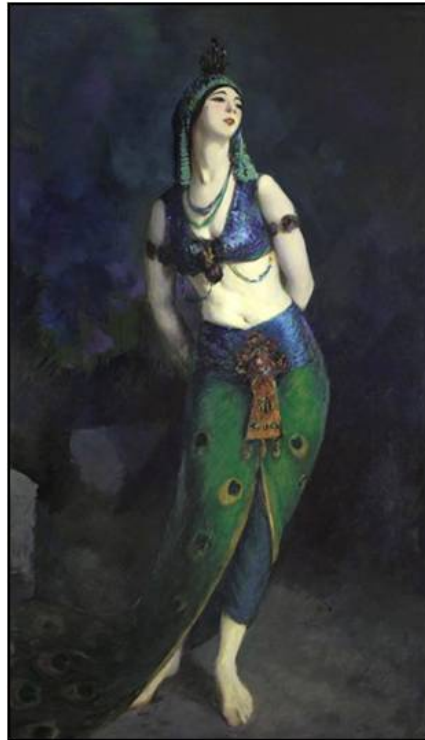


Fig. 12. Robert Henri, *Ruth St. Denis in the Peacock Dance*, 1919, Oil on canvas, 85 x 49 in., Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts

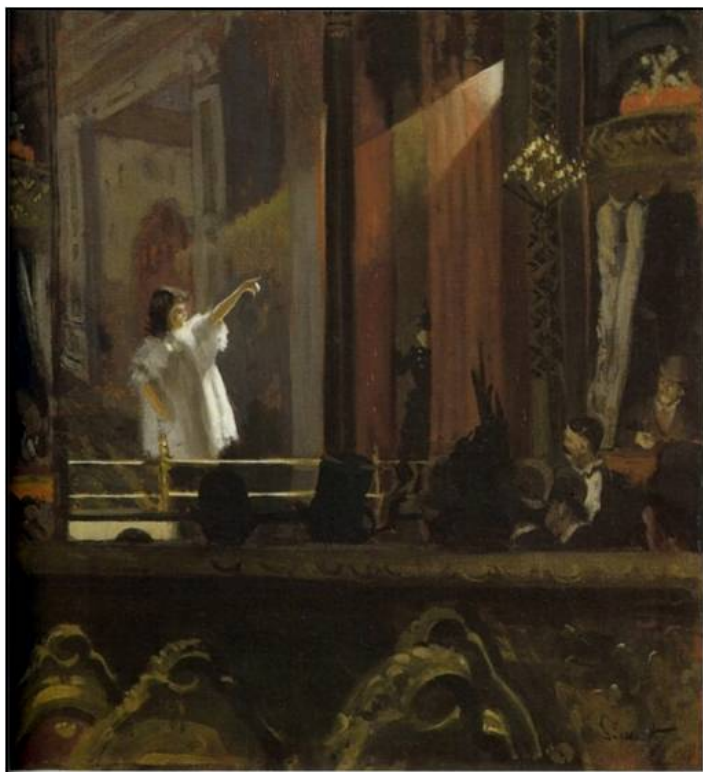


Fig. 13. Walter Sickert, *Little Dot Hetherington at the Bedford Music Hall*, 1888-89, Oil on canvas, 24 x 24 in., Private Collection



Fig. 14. Walter Sickert, *Minnie Cunningham at the Old Bedford*, 1892, Oil on canvas, 30 x 25 in., Tate Britain, London



Fig. 15. Everett Shinn, *Revue*, 1908, Oil on canvas, 18 x 24 in., Whitney Museum of American Art, New York



Fig. 16. Everett Shinn, *In the Loge*, 1903, Oil and pastel on canvas laid down on board, 25 1/2 x 17 1/8 in., Private Collection



Fig. 17. Everett Shinn, *The Rehearsal*, ca. 1915, Pastel on paper, 19 x 37 in., Frye Art Museum, Seattle, WA

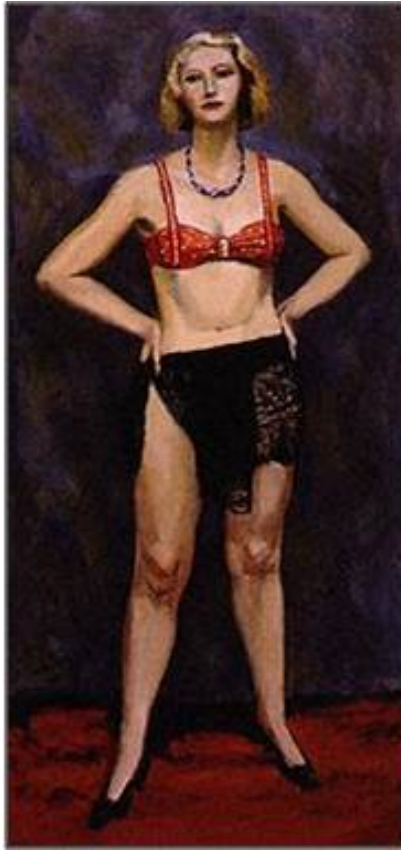


Fig. 18. Walt Kuhn, *Trude*, 1931, Oil on canvas, 68 x 33 1/4 in., Santa Barbara Museum of Art

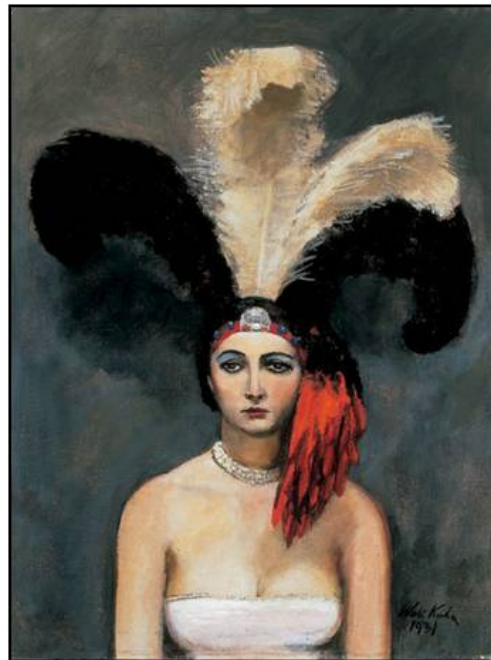


Fig. 19. Walt Kuhn, *Plumes*, 1931, Oil on canvas, 40 x 30 in., The Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C.



Fig. 20. Reginald Marsh, *Down at Jimmy Kelly's*, 1936, Tempera on masonite, 36 x 30 1/2 in., The Chrysler Museum, Norfolk, VA



Fig. 21. Edward Hopper, *Girlie Show*, 1941, Oil on canvas, 32 x 38 in., Private Collection



Fig. 22. Edward Hopper, *New York Movie*, 1939, Oil on canvas, 32 1/4 x 40 in., Museum of Modern Art, New York



Fig. 23. Reginald Marsh, *Usherette*, 1939, Watercolor on paper, 22 x 30 in., Rockford Art Museum, Rockford, IL



Fig. 24. John Singer Sargent, *Lady Agnew of Lochnaw*, 1892, Oil on canvas, 50 x 40 in., National Gallery of Art, Scotland



Fig. 25. Thomas Eakins, *Frances Eakins*, ca. 1870, Oil on canvas, 24 1/16 x 19 15/16 in., The Nelson-Atkins Museum



Fig. 26. Thomas Eakins, *Elizabeth at the Piano*, 1875, Oil on canvas, 72 1/8 x 48 3/16 in., Addison Gallery of American Art



Fig. 27. John Singer Sargent, *La Carmencita*, 1890, Oil on canvas, 90 x 55 in., Musee d'Orsay



Fig. 28. William Merritt Chase, *Carmencita*, 1890, Oil on canvas, 69 7/8 x 40 7/8 in., Metropolitan Museum of Art



Fig. 29. Thomas Eakins, *Swimming*, 1885, Oil on canvas, 27 3/8 x 36 3/8 in., Amon Carter Museum, Ft. Worth, TX



Fig. 30. Edgar Degas, *Singer with Glove (Chanteuse de Café)*, ca. 1878, Pastel on canvas, 20 13/16 x 16 3/16 in., Fogg Art Museum, Harvard



Fig. 31. Thomas Wilmer Dewing, *The Piano*, 1891, Oil on wood panel, 20 x 26 1/2 in., Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian

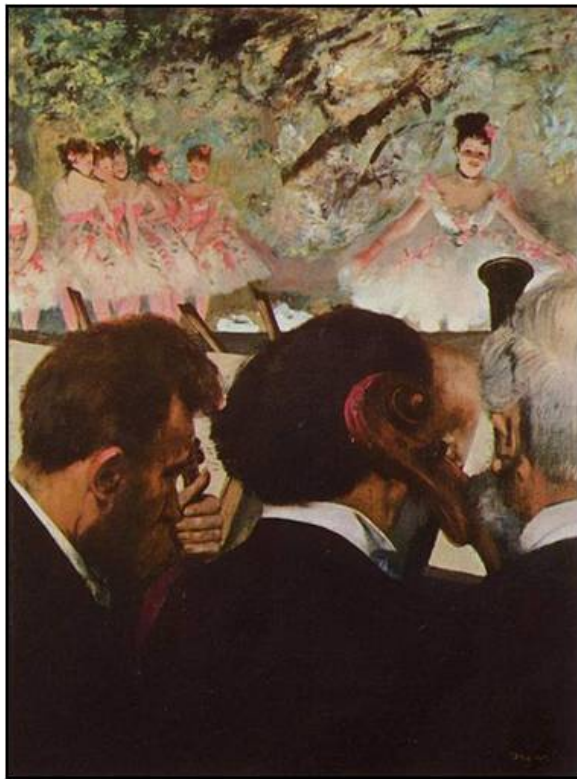


Fig. 32. Edgar Degas, *Orchestra Musicians*. 1870-71, Oil on canvas, 27 x 19 in., Städtisches Kunstinstitut und Städtische Galerie



Fig. 33. Edgar Degas, *The Rehearsal of the Ballet Onstage*, ca. 1874, Pastel over brush and ink drawing on paper on bristol board and mounted on canvas, 21 3/8 x 28 3/4 in., Metropolitan Museum of Art



Fig. 34. Robert Henri, *Young Woman in Yellow Satin*, 1907, Oil on canvas, 77 x 37 in., Mississippi Museum of Art



Fig. 35. Robert Henri, *Young Woman in Black* (Jesseca Penn), 1902, Oil on canvas, 77 x 38 in., Art Institute of Chicago



Fig. 36. John Singer Sargent, *Mr. and Mrs. Isaac Newton Phelps*, Oil on canvas, 84 1/4 x 39 3/4 in., Metropolitan Museum of Art



Fig. 37. Edwin Howland Blasfield, *The Evolution of Civilization*, 1896-1900, Dome of Rotunda, Thomas Jefferson Building, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.



Fig. 37. Edwin Howland Blasfield, *The Evolution of Civilization*, 1896-1900, (detail)



Fig. 38. Charles Dana Gibson, *Scribner's for June*, 1895, New York Public Library



Fig. 39. Charles Dana Gibson, *Stepped On*, 1905, Detroit Publishing Company Collection, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.



Fig. 40. Charles Dana Gibson, *The Gibson Girl*, ca. 1900



Fig. 41. Charles Dana Gibson, *Head of Girl*, ca. 1900, issued on United States 32¢, first-class Postage Stamp, February 3, 1998



Fig. 42. Henri Regnault, *Salomé*, 1870, Oil on canvas, 63 x 40 1/2 in., Metropolitan Museum of Art



Fig. 43. Aubrey Beardsley, *Salomé*, 1907, Pen and ink illustration for Oscar Wilde's *Salomé*



Fig. 44. Aubrey Beardsley, *Peacock Dance*, 1907, Pen and ink illustration for Oscar Wilde's *Salomé*



Fig. 45. William Hogarth, *A Scene from The Beggar's Opera*, 1728-29, Oil on canvas, 20 1/8 x 24 1/8 in., National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.



Fig. 46. Walter Sickert, *The Old Bedford: Cupid in the Gallery*, ca. 1890, Oil on canvas, 50 x 30 1/2 in., National Gallery of Canada



Fig. 47. William Glackens, *I'm So Glad You Found Me. Oh, Take Me Away!*, ca. 1901, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.



Fig. 48. Édouard Manet, *Bar at the Folies-Bergères*, 1882, Oil on canvas, 33 x 51 in., Courtauld Institute of Art, London



Fig. 49. Edgar Degas, *Cabaret Scene*, 1876-77, Pastel over monotype on paper, 9 1/2 x 17 1/2 in., Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.



Fig. 50. Everett Shinn, *Footlight Flirtation*, 1912, Oil on canvas, 29 x 36 1/4 in., Private Collection



Fig. 51. Everett Shinn, *The Singer*, 1902, Oil on canvas, 26 1/4 x 17 1/2 in., Private Collection



Fig. 52. Everett Shinn, *The Monologist*, 1910, Pastel and gouache on paper attached to cardboard, 8 1/4 x 11 3/4 in., Wichita Art Museum, Kansas



Fig. 53. John Sloan, *Sunday Afternoon in Union Square*, 1912, Oil on canvas, 26 1/8 x 32 1/8 in., Bowdoin College Museum of Art, Brunswick, Maine



Fig. 54. John Sloan, *Hell Hole*, 1917, Etching and aquatint on paper, 7 3/8 x 9 3/8 in., Phillips Collection of Art, Washington, D.C.



Fig. 55. George Luks, *Café Francis*, 1906, Oil on canvas, 36 x 42 in., Butler Institute of American Art, Youngstown, OH

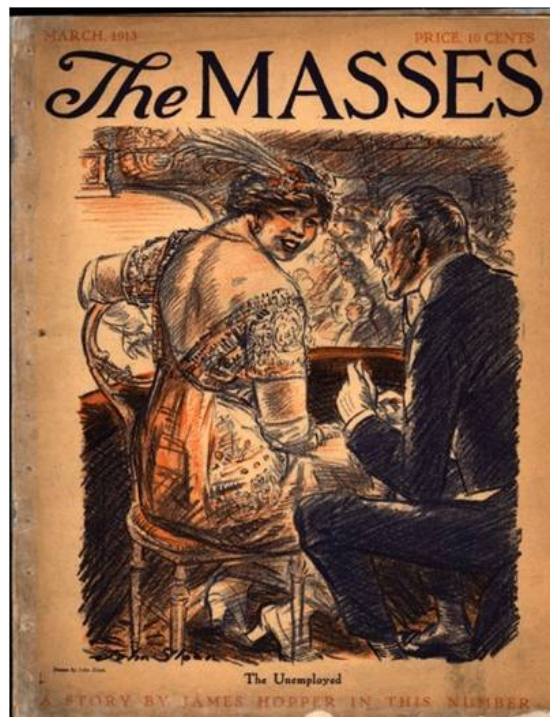


Fig. 56. John Sloan, "The Unemployed" cover for *The Masses*, March 1913, 13  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 10 in., Delaware Art Museum



Fig. 57. Pierre Auguste Renoir, *At the Theater, The First Outing*, 1876-77, Oil on canvas, 25 1/2 x 19 1/2 in., National Gallery of Art, London



Fig. 58. Mary Cassatt, *The Loge*, 1882, Oil on canvas, 31 7/16 x 25 1/8 in., National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.



Fig. 59. Mary Cassatt, *Woman with a Pearl Necklace in a Loge*, 1879, Oil on canvas, 32 x 23 1/2 in., Philadelphia Museum of Art



Fig. 60. Mary Cassatt, *In the Loge*, 1878, Oil on canvas, 32 x 26 in., Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

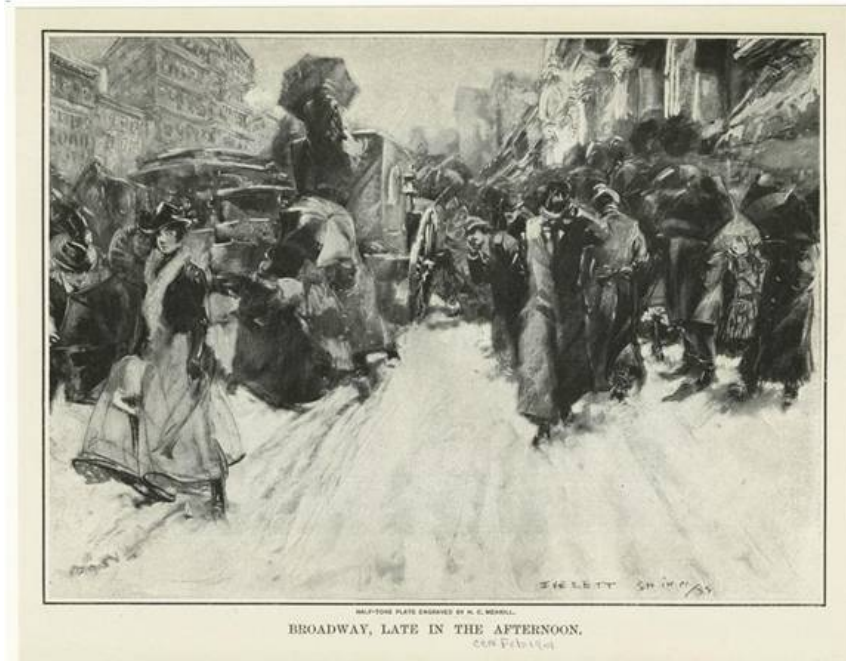


Fig. 61. Everett Shinn, *Broadway: Late in the Afternoon*, 1899, Pastel, charcoal, gouache, and watercolor on board, 21 3/4 x 29 1/2 in., Private Collection, published as one of "Four Midwinter Scenes in New York, *The Century Magazine*, 61, no. 4 (Feb. 1901): 521-25, New York Public Library



Fig. 62. Harrison Fisher, "The Spring Fashion Number," *The Ladies' Home Journal*, March, 1907

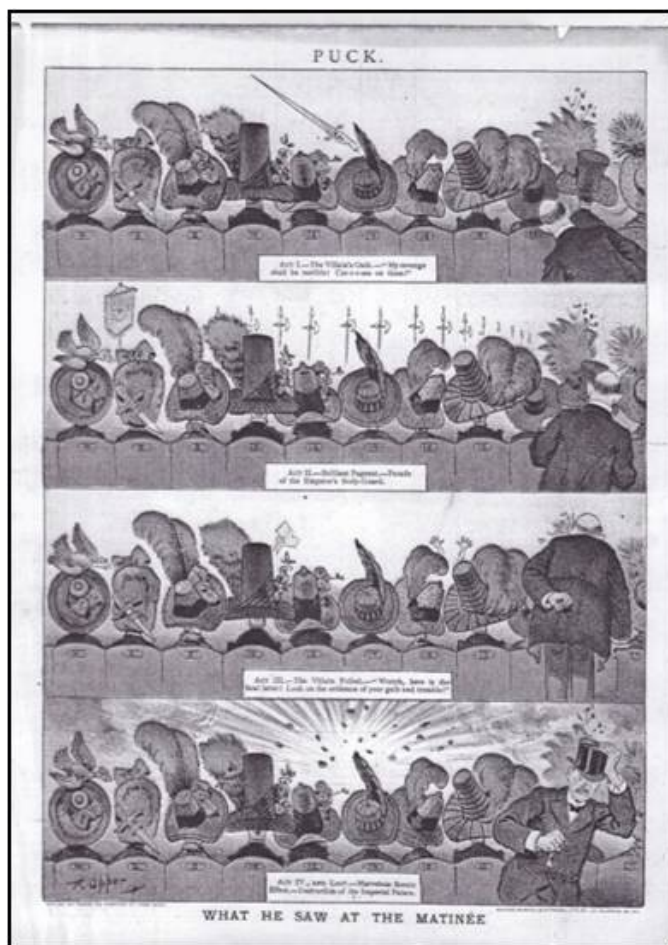


Fig. 63. “What he saw at the Matinee,” *Puck*, 1880, Delaware Art Museum



Fig. 64. Everett Shinn, *Girl in Red on Stage*, ca. 1905, Oil on canvas, 17 1/2 x 20 in., Private Collection



Fig. 65. Édouard Manet, *The Masked Ball at the Opera*, 1873, Oil on canvas, 23 1/4 x 28 9/16 in., National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.

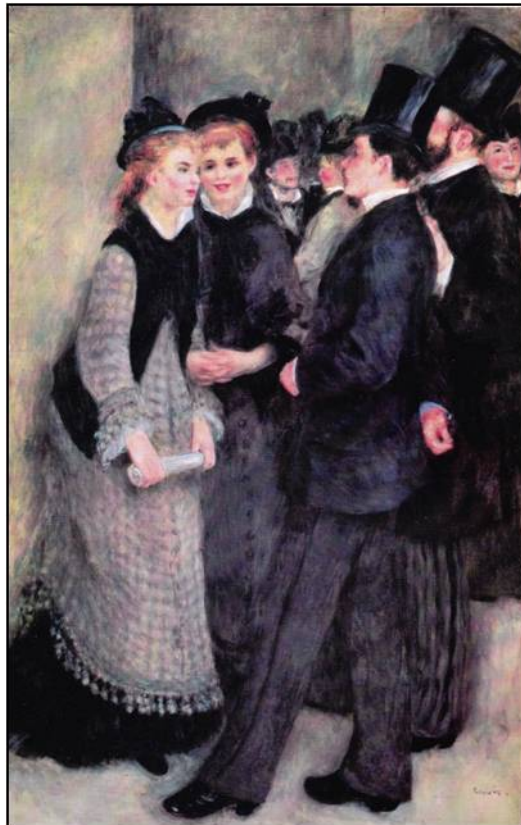


Fig. 66. Pierre Auguste Renoir, *Leaving the Conservatoire*, 1877, Oil on canvas, 73 3/4 x 46 1/4 in., The Barnes Foundation, Philadelphia, PA



Fig. 67. Edgar Degas, *Dancers*, 1879, Gouache, oil pastel, and oil paint on silk (fan), 12 1/16 x 23 15/16 in., Tacoma Art Museum



Fig. 68. Edgar Degas, *The Curtain*, 1881, Pastel over charcoal and monotype, 11 7/16 x 13 1/8 in., National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.



Fig. 69. Edgar Degas, *Dancers, Pink and Green*, 1890, Oil on canvas, 32 3/8 x 24 3/4 in., Metropolitan Museum of Art

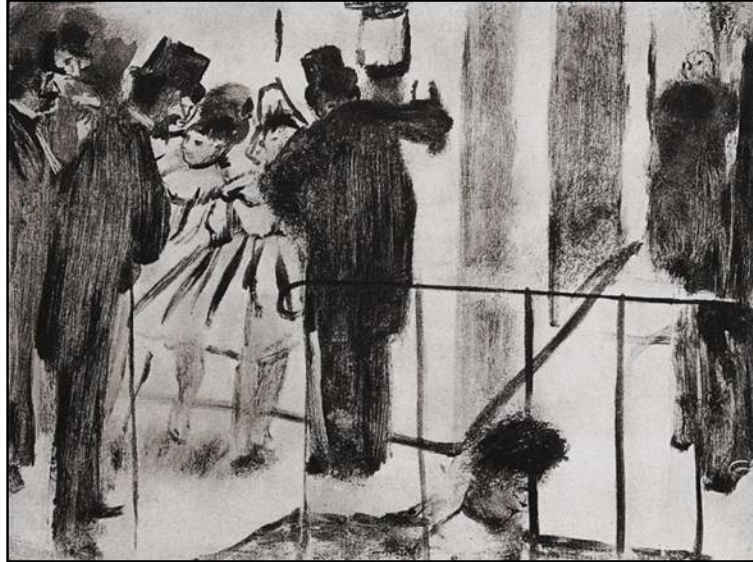


Fig. 70. Edgar Degas, *Pauline and Virginia Conversing with Admirers*, 1878, Monotype



Fig. 71. Edgar Degas, *Conversation: Ludovic Halévy Speaking with Madame Cardinal*, 1876-77, Monotype and pastel on paper, 8 1/2 x 6 1/4 in., Private Collection



Fig. 72. Jean-Louis Forain, *On the Stage*, 1912, Oil on canvas, 24 x 19 1/4 in., Private Collection



Fig. 73. Jean-Louis Forain, *In the Wings*, 1899, Oil on canvas, 23 3/16 x 29 in., Art Institute of Chicago



Fig. 74. Jean-Louis Forain, *Evening at the Opera*, 1879, Gouache, graphite and chalk on parchment, 6 5/8 x 23 1/4 in., Dixon Gallery and Gardens, Memphis, TN



Fig.75. Jean-Louis Forain, *Negotiations in the Wings*, ca. 1898, Watercolor and India ink on paper, 12 3/8 x 11 3/4 in., Galerie Schmit, Paris



Fig. 76. John Singer Sargent, *Portrait of Lord Ribblesdale*, 1904, Oil on canvas, 101 1/2 x 56 1/2 in., National Gallery of Art, London



Fig. 77. Everett Shinn, *Matinee, Outdoor Stage, Paris*, 1902, Private Collection



Fig. 78. Everett Shinn, *At the Stage Door*, 1915, Charcoal and gouache on paper, 13 3/4 x 18 3/4 in., Private Collection



Fig.79. Everett Shinn, *The Magician*, 1907, Private Collection



Fig. 80. Everett Shinn, *London Music Hall* 1918, Oil on canvas, 10 x 12 in., Metropolitan Museum of Art



Fig. 81. William Glackens, *Chez Mouquin*, 1905, Oil on canvas, 48 1/8 x 36 1/4 in., Art Institute of Chicago

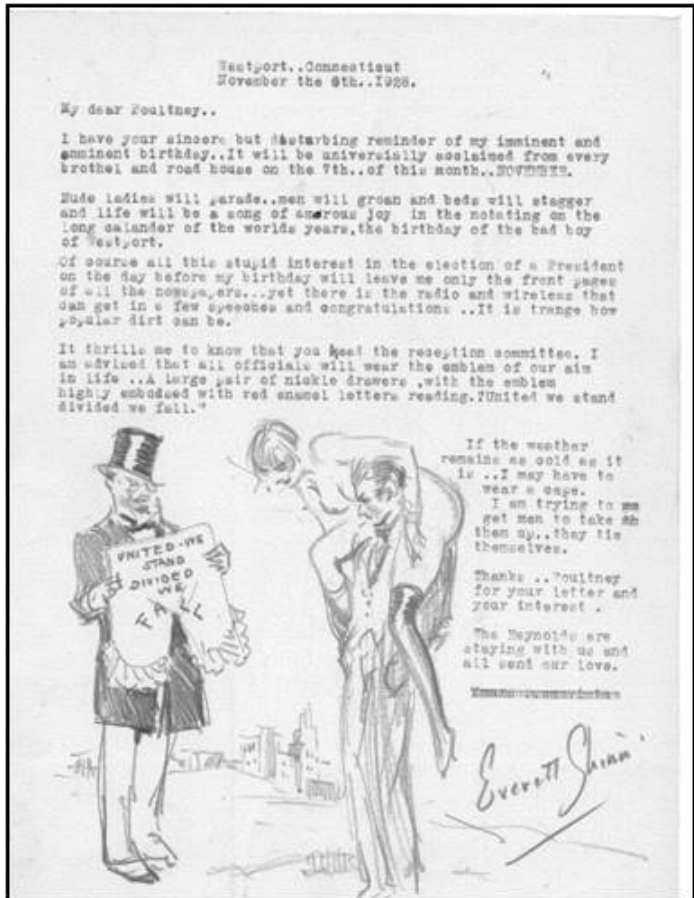


Fig. 82. Everett Shinn, letter to Poultney Bigelow, November 8, 1928, Poultney Bigelow papers, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library. Astor. Lenox. and Tilden Foundations

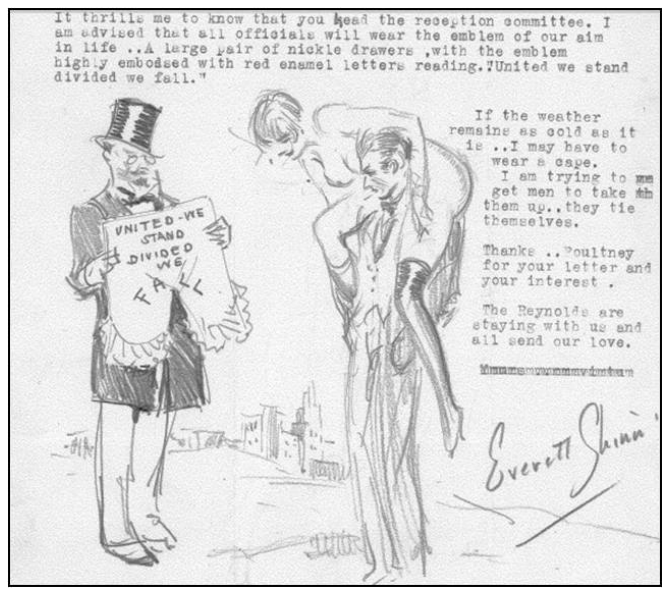


Fig. 82. Everett Shinn, letter to Poultney Bigelow, November 8, 1928, (detail)



Fig. 83. "Unpleasant Assurance," *Puck*, Vol. XLI, No. 1050 (April 28, 1897), back side of cover, Delaware Art Museum



Fig. 84. Jean-Antoine Watteau, *Pierrot* (formerly known as Gilles), ca. 1718-19, Oil on canvas, 72 1/2 x 58 3/4 in., Musée du Louvre

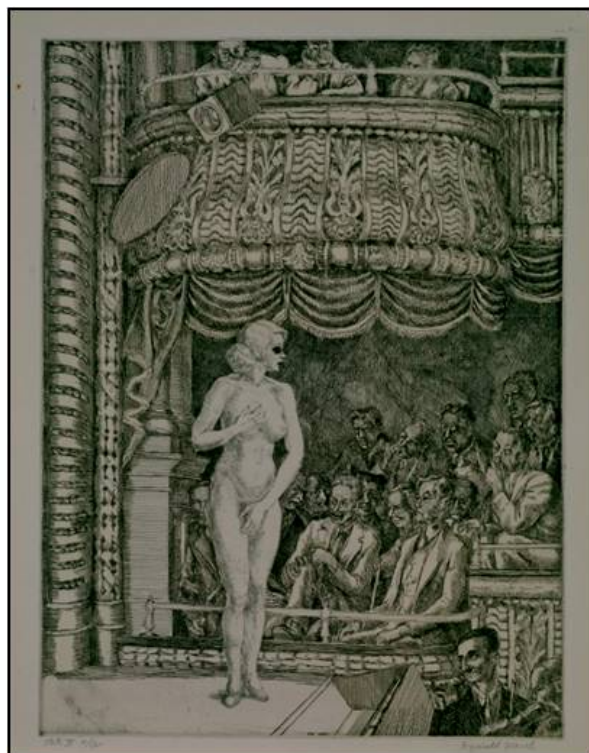


Fig. 85. Reginald Marsh, *Striptease at New Gotham*, 1935, Etching, 12 x 9 in., The William Benton Museum of Art, University of CT



Fig. 86. Reginald Marsh, *Gaiety Burlesque*, 1930, Etching with hand-coloring, 15 5/8 x 13 1/4 in., Whitney Museum of American Art



Fig. 87. Reginald Marsh, *Minsky's Chorus*, 1935, Tempera on composition board, 38 x 44 in., Whitney Museum of American Art



Fig. 88. Reginald Marsh, *Audience Burlusk*, of 1929, Etching, 6 x 8 in., The William Benton Museum of Art, University of Connecticut

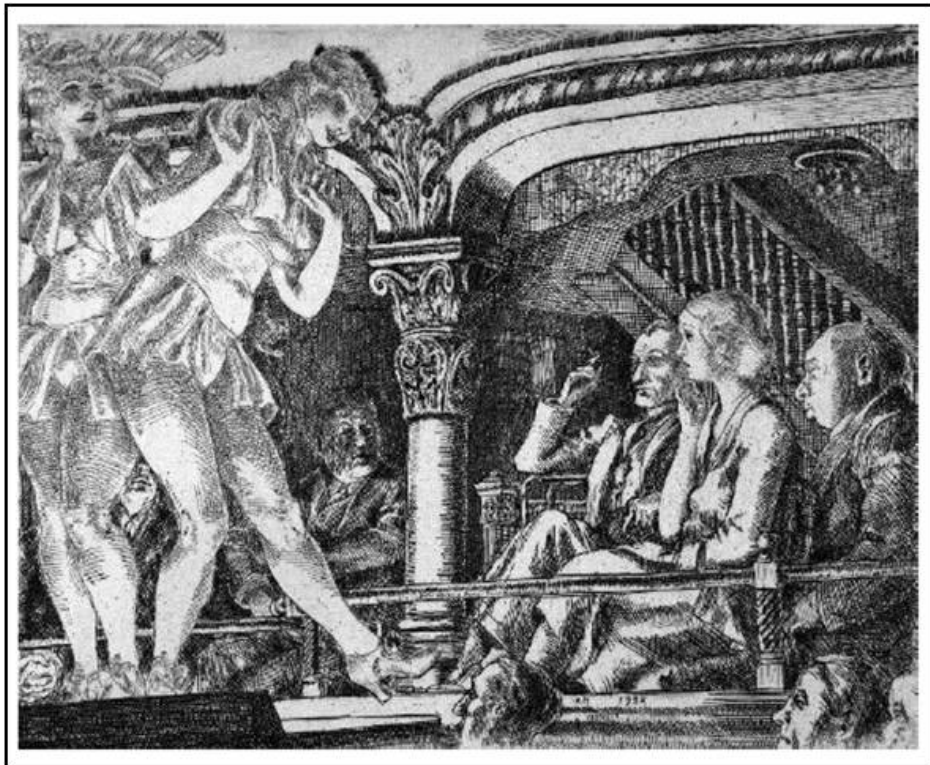


Fig. 89. Reginald Marsh, *Gaiety Burlesque*, 1932, Etching, 7 7/8 x 9 7/8 in., William Benton Museum of Art, University of Connecticut



Fig. 90. Reginald Marsh, *Irving Place Burlesk*, 1929, Etching, William Benton Museum of Art, Storrs, CT

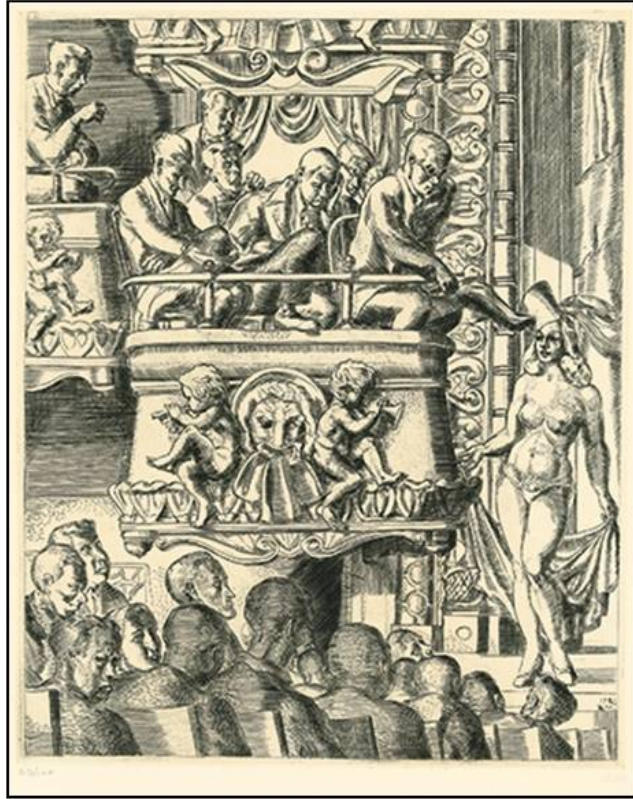


Fig. 91. Reginald Marsh, *Eltinge Follies*, Engraving, n.d., 13 x 11 in., Metropolitan Museum of Art



Fig. 92. Edward Hopper, *Two on the Aisle*, 1927, Oil on canvas, 40 1/8 x 48 1/4 in., Toledo Museum of Art



Fig. 93. Mabel Dwight, *The Clinch*, 1928, 9 x 11 11/16 in., Fogg Art Museum, Harvard

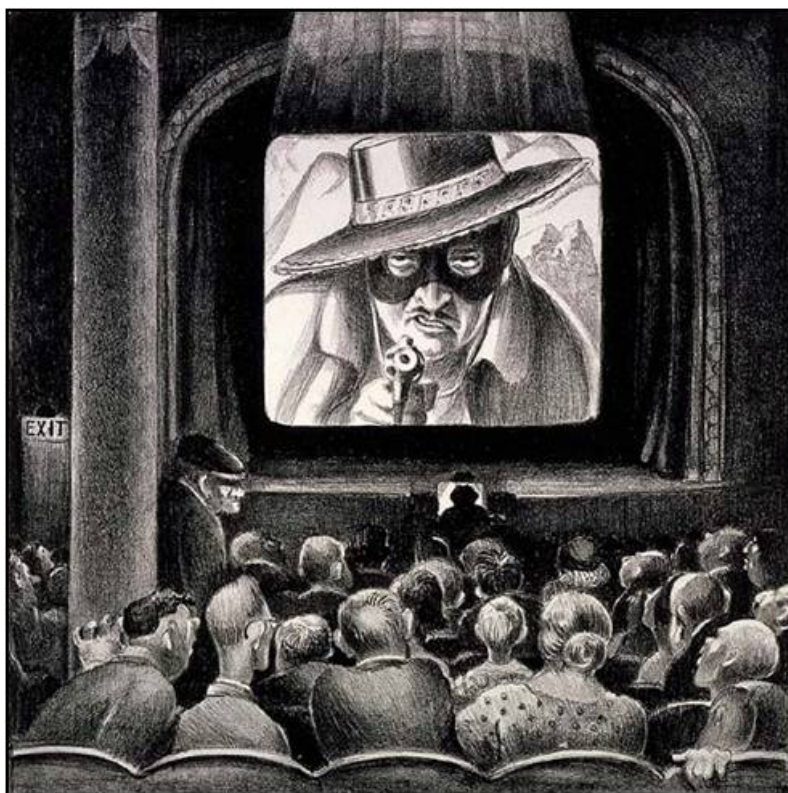


Fig. 94. Mabel Dwight, *Stick 'Em Up*, 1928, Lithograph on paper, 10 3/8 x 10 3/8 in., Smithsonian American Art Museum



Fig. 95. John Sloan, *Movies, Five Cents*, 1907, Oil on canvas, 23 1/2 x 31 1/2 in., Private Collection



Fig. 96. Edward Hopper, *Solitary Figure in a Theatre*, ca. 1902, Oil on board, 12 1/2 x 9 3/16 in., Whitney Museum of American Art

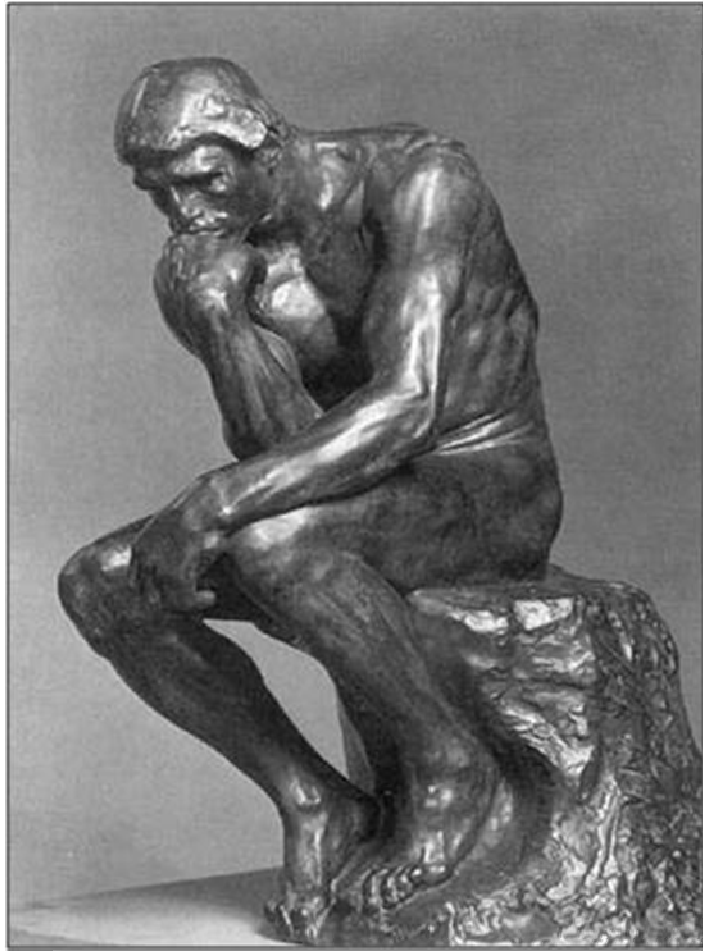


Fig. 97. Auguste Rodin, *The Thinker*, 1902, Cast bronze, 79 x 51 1/4 x 55 1/4 in., Musée Rodin, Paris

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abbott, Karen. *American Rose: A Nation Laid Bare: The Life and Times of Gypsy Rose Lee*, New York: Random House, Inc., 2010.
- Adams, Henry. *Eakins Revealed: The Secret Life of an American Artist*, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Adams, Philip Rhys. *Walt Kuhn, A Classical Revival*, exh. cat., Amon Carter Museum of Western Art, Fort Worth, 1978.
- Adams, Philip Rhys. *Walt Kuhn, Painter: His Life and Work*, Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1978.
- Allen, Robert C. *Horrible Prettiness: Burlesque and American Culture*, Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1991.
- "American Art Showing Strength, Walt Kuhn, Here to Teach, Says," *Columbus Dispatch* (Apr. 10, 1942): 16A. *Walt Kuhn Papers*, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., no reel.
- Ardis, Ann L. *New Women, New Novels: Feminism and Early Modernism*, New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press, 1990.
- Austen, Jane. *Mansfield Park*, New York: Barnes and Nobel Books, 1999. First published, 1814.
- Bailey, Peter. *Popular Culture and Performance in the Victorian City*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Banner, Lois. *American Beauty*, New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1983.
- Baron, Wendy. *Perfect Moderns, History of the Camden Town Group*, Aldershot, UK: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2000.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Sickert*, London: Phaidon Press, Ltd., 1973.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Camden Town Group*, London: Scolar Press, 1979.
- Baron, Wendy and Richard Shone. *Sickert Paintings*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press for the Royal Academy of Arts, London, 1992.

- Batterberry, Ariane Ruskin and Michael Batterberry. *The Pantheon Story of American Art for Young People*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1976.
- Beach, Cecilia. *Staging Politics and Gender*, New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005.
- Beardsley, Aubrey and Oscar Wilde. *Salome*, New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1967.
- Beerbohm, Max. *More*, New York and London: John Lane Company, 1899.
- Bell, Laurence. "Strip-Tease as a National Art," *American Mercury*, Vol. 42 (Sep., 1937): 56-64.
- Berendt, John. "The Top Hat," *Esquire*, Vol. 109, no. 2 (Feb., 1988): 26-27.
- Berger, Martin A. *Man Made: Thomas Eakins and the Construction of Gilded Age Manhood*, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2000.
- Berman, Avis. *Edward Hopper's New York*, San Francisco: Pomegranate, 2005.
- Berman, Avis and William Benton. *Reginald Marsh's New York*, exh. cat., Moore Gallery, New York, 1996.
- Bird, Paul. *Fifty Paintings by Walt Kuhn*, New York and London, Studio Publications, Inc., 1940.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Letter to the Editor, *Art News*, 29 (Nov., 1944), *Walt Kuhn Papers*, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., reel D349, frame 476.
- Blau, Herbert. *The Audience*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990.
- Booth, Michael. *Theatre in the Victorian Age*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.
- Boyer, Patricia Eckert. *Artists and the Avant-garde Theater in Paris, 1887-1900*, Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 1998.
- Braddock, Alan C. *Thomas Eakins and the Cultures of Modernity*, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2009.
- Brady, Cyrus Townsend. "A Vaudeville Turn," *Scribner's Magazine* (Sep., 1901): 351-55.
- Brake, Laurel and Julie F. Codell. *Encounters in the Victorian Press: Editors, Authors, Readers*, New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005.

Briggeman, Jane. *Burlesque: Legendary Stars of the Stage*, Portland, OR: Collectors Press, Inc., 2004.

Brown, Milton. "Walt Kuhn's Armory Show," *Archives of American Art Journal*, Vol. 27, No. 2, The Seventy-Fifth Anniversary of the Armory Show (1987): 3-11.

Bruhn, Thomas P. *Scenes from Contemporary New York Life, The 1920s and 30s of Reginald Marsh*, Exhibition Catalogue, Mansfield, CT: University of Connecticut, The William Benton Museum of Art, 1998.

Burns, Sarah. *Inventing the Modern Artist: Art and Culture in Gilded Age America*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996.

Burroughs, Bryson. "Regnault's Salome," *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, Vol. 11, No. 8 (Aug., 1916): 163-166.

Butsch, Richard. *The Making of American Audiences from Stage to Television*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Calloway, Stephen. *Aubrey Beardsley*, New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1998.

\_\_\_\_\_. "A Fresh Look at Hogarth's 'Beggar's Opera,'" *Educational Theatre Journal*, Vol. 27, No. 1 (Mar., 1975): 30-39.

Cary, Elisabeth Luther. "Dance in Art at Brooklyn Museum," *New York Times* (Feb., 2, 1936): X9.

Case, Sue-Ellen. *Feminism and Theatre*, New York: Methuen, Inc., 1988.

Cassuto, Leonard and Clare Virginia Eby, *The Cambridge Companion to Theodore Dreiser*, New York and Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

Casteras, Susan. *Images of Victorian Womanhood in English Art*, Cranbury, NJ and London: Associated University Presses, 1987.

Chafe, William H. *The American Woman: Her Changing Social, Economic, and Political Roles, 1920-1970*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Paradox of Change: American Women in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Women and Equality: Changing Patterns in American Culture*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977.

Chandler, Tertius. *Four Thousand Years of Urban Growth: An Historical Census*, Lewiston, NY: St. David's University Press, 1987.

Charteris, Evan. *John Singer Sargent*, New York: C. Scribner's and Sons, 1927.

Cherry, Deborah. *Beyond the Frame: Feminism and Visual Culture, Britain, 1850-1900*, London: Routledge, 2000.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Painting Women: Victorian Women Artists*, London and New York: Routledge Inc., 1993.

Clark, Sue Ainslie and Edith Wyatt. *Making Both Ends Meet*, New York: MacMillan Company, 1911.

Claridge, Laura. *Emily Post: Daughter of the Gilded Age, Mistress of American Manners*, New York: Random House, 2008.

Cohen, Marilyn. *Reginald Marsh's New York: Painting, Drawings, Prints, and Photographs*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1983.

Colburn, David R. and George E. Pozzetta, eds. *Reform and Reformers in the Progressive Era*, Westport, CT and London: Greenwood Press, 1983.

Collins, Gail. *American's Women*, New York: HarperCollins Publishers Inc., 2003.

Connor, Holly Pyne. *Off the Pedestal: New Women in the Art of Homer, Chase, and Sargent*, The Newark Museum, Newark, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2006.

Cooke, Maud C. *Social Life or The Manners and Customs of Polite Society*, Buffalo, NY: The Matthews-Northrup Company, 1896.

Corbett, David Peters. *Walter Sickert*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The World in Paint: Modern Art and Visuality in England, 1848-1914*, Manchester and NY: Manchester University Press, 2004.

Corbett, David Peters and Lara Perry, eds. *English art 1860-1914: Modern artists and identity*, New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2001.

Corio, Ann and Joseph DiMona. *This was Burlesque*, New York: Madison Square Press, 1968.

Cott, Nancy F. *No Small Courage: A History of Women in the United States*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Bonds of Womanhood: Woman's Sphere in New England, 1780-1835*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977.

Cox, Kenyon. "Art, the Carnegie Institute Exhibition," *Nation* 84 (Apr. 18, 1907): 369.

Coyle, Heather and Joyce K. Schiller. *John Sloan's New York*, for Delaware Art Museum, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007.

Crary, Jonathan. *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture*, Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 1999.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century*, Cambridge, MA and London: MIT, 1990.

Cullen, Jim. *The Art of Democracy: A Concise History of Popular Culture in the United States*, New York: Monthly Review Press, 2002.

Davis, Tracy C. *Actresses as Working Women: Their Social Identity in Victorian Culture*, New York and London: Routledge, 1991.

Davis, Jim and Victor Emeljanow. *Reflecting the Audience: London Theatregoing, 1840-1880*, Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2001.

Davis, John. "The End of the American Century: Current Scholarship of the Art of the United States," *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 85, No. 3 (Sep., 2003): 544-580.

DeShazo, Edith. *Everett Shinn, 1876-1953: A Figure in His Time*, New York: Clarkson N. Potter, Inc., Publisher, 1974.

DeVonyar, Jill and Richard Kendall. *Degas and the Dance*, New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, 2002.

Dillion, Naylor. *American Theaters: Performance Halls of the Nineteenth Century*, New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1997.

Dils, Ann and Ann Cooper Albright, eds. *Moving History / Dancing Cultures: a Dance History Reader*, Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2001.

Dimeglio, John E. *Vaudeville U.S.A.*, Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1973.

Dixon, Annette. *The Dancer: Degas, Forain, Toulouse-Lautrec*, exhibition catalogue, Portland, OR: Portland Art Museum, 2008.

- Dreiser, Theodore. *Sister Carrie*, Cleveland, OH: The World Publishing Company, 1946.
- Dreishpoon, Douglass. *Reginald Marsh: Paintings and Works on Paper*, New York: Hirschl & Adler Galleries, Inc., 1985.
- D'Souza, Aruna and Tom McDonough. *The Invisible Flâneuse?: Gender, Public Space, and Visual Culture in Nineteenth-Century Paris*, Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2006.
- Dumas, Ann and John Collins. *Renoir's Women*, exhibition catalogue for Columbus Museum of Art, London and New York: Merrell Publishers, Ltd., 2005.
- Emmons, Robert. *The Life and Opinions of Walter Richard Sickert*, London: Faber and Faber, Ltd., 1941.
- Erenberg, Lewis A. *Steppin' Out: New York Nightlife and the Transformation of American Culture, 1890-1930*, Westport, CT and London: Greenwood Press, 1981.
- Everett Shinn, Important Paintings and Pastels*, exh. cat., New York: Owen Gallery, 1996.
- Exhibition of Paintings by Walt Kuhn*, exh. cat., New York: Marie Harriman Gallery, 1930.
- Failing, Patricia. *Best-Loved Art from American Museums*, New York: Clarkson N. Potter, Inc., 1983.
- Farnsworth, Marjorie. *The Ziegfeld Follies*, New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1956.
- Faulk, Barry J. *Music Hall and Modernity: The Late-Victorian Discovery of Popular Culture*, Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2004.
- Ferber, Linda S., "The Theater Subjects of Everett Shinn," *Studies in the History of Art*, 37, by Doreen Bolger and Nicolai Cikovsky, Jr., eds., (1990): 50-67.
- Finney, Gail. *Women in Modern Drama: Freud, Feminism, and European Theater at the Turn of the Century*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989.
- Fletcher, Pamela M. *Narrating Modernity: The British Problem Picture, 1895-1914*, Aldershot, Hants, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2003.
- Flory, M.A. *A Book about Fans: The History of Fans*, New York and London: Macmillan and Co., 1895.
- Fort, Bernadette and Angela Rosenthal. *The Other Hogarth: Aesthetics of Difference*, Princeton, NJ and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001.

Foster, Kathleen. *Thomas Eakins Rediscovered: Charles Bregler's Thomas Eakins Collection at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997.

Foulkes, Richard. *British Theatre in the 1890s: Essays on Drama and the Stage*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

Frascina, Francis, Nigel Blake, Briony Fer, Tamar Garb, and Charles Harrison. *Modernity and Modernism: French Painting in the Nineteenth Century*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993.

Freedman, Estelle B. "The New Woman: Changing Views of Women in the 1920s," *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 61, No. 2 (Sep., 1974): 372-393.

French, Philip. "From Nighthawks to the shadows of film noir," *The Observer*, London (Sun., Apr. 25, 2004).

Fried, Michael. "Realism, Writing, and Disfiguration in Thomas Eakins' *Gross Clinic*," *Representations*, Vol. Winter 1985, No. 9 (Winter, 1985): 79.

Fryd, Vivien Green. "Edward Hopper's "Girlie Show": Who is the Silent Partner?," *American Art*, Vol. 14, No. 2 (Summer, 2000): 52-75.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Art and the Crisis of Marriage: Edward Hopper and Georgia O'Keeffe*, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2003.

Gale, Maggie B. *West End Women: Women and the London Stage, 1918-1962*, London: Routledge, 1996.

Garb, Tamar. *Bodies of Modernity: Figure and Flesh in Fin-de Siècle France*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1998.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Body in Time: Figures of Femininity in Late Nineteenth-Century France*, exh. cat., Spencer Museum of Art, University of Kansas, Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2008.

Gardner, Viv and Susan Rutherford, eds. *The New Woman and Her Sisters: Feminism and Theatre, 1850-1914*, New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992.

Gallatin, A.E. *Whistler's Pastels and Other Modern Profiles*, New York and London: John Lane Company, 1911.

Getlein, Frank. *Walt Kuhn*, New York: Kennedy Galleries Inc., 1967.

Gillett, Paula. *Worlds of Art: Painters in Victorian Society*, New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990.

Gissing, George. *The Odd Women*, London: Lawrence and Bullen, 1893.

Glenn, Susan A. *Female Spectacle: The Theatrical Roots of Modern Feminism*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Taking Burlesque Seriously," *Reviews in American History*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (Mar., 1993): 93-100.

Goodman, Lizbeth and Jane de Gay, eds. *The Routledge Reader in Gender and Performance*, London and New York: Routledge, 1998.

Goodrich, Lloyd. "A Tribute to Reginald Marsh," *Reginald Marsh, Selections from the Felicia Meyer Marsh Bequest*, New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1979.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Edward Hopper*, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, UK: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1949.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Edward Hopper*, New York: Abradale Press, Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1983.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Reginald Marsh*, New York: H.N. Abrams, 1972.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Thomas Eakins, Vol. I & II*, Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press for the National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C., 1982.

Gourley, Catherine. *Gibson Girls and Suffragists: Perceptions of Women from 1900 to 1918*, Minneapolis, MN: Twenty-First Century Books, 2008.

Grand, Sarah. "The Modern Girl," *The North American Review*, Vol. 158, No. 451 (Jun., 1894): 706-714.

\_\_\_\_\_. "The New Aspect of the Woman Question," *The North American Review*, Vol. 158, No. 448 (Mar., 1894): 270-276.

Gray, Francine, "Dirty Dancing: The Rise and Fall of American Striptease," *The New Yorker*, (Feb. 28, 2005).

Greben, Diedre Stein. "Everett Shinn", *Artnews* 6 (Apr., 1997): 133.

Greenwald, Maurine Weiner. *Women, War, and Work: The Impact of World War I on Women Workers in the United States*, Westport, CT and London: Greenwood Press, 1980.

Griffin, Randall C. *Homer, Eakins, & Anshutz: The Search for American Identity in the Gilded Age*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004.

Haddon, Archibald. *The Story of the Music Hall: From Cave of Harmony to Cabaret*, London: Fleetway Press, 1930.

Hagood Martha N. and Jefferson C. Harrison, **American Art at the Chrysler Museum: Selected Paintings, Sculpture, and Drawings**, Norfolk, VA: Chrysler Museum of Art, 2005, 190-191, no. 119.

Hakutani, Yoshinobu, ed. *Theodore Dreiser and American Culture: New Readings*, Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2000.

Hall, George F. *A Study in Bloomers, Or, The Model New Woman a Novel*, Chicago, Philadelphia, Stockton: American Bible House, 1895.

Halttunen, Karen. *Confidence Men and Painted Women: A Study of Middle-Class Culture in America, 1830-1870*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982.

Harrison, Charles and Paul Wood, eds. *Art in Theory 1900-1990: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1992.

Harwood, Ronald. *All the World's a Stage*, BBC Publications, London: Secker and Warburg, 1983.

Heller, Adele and Lois Rudnick, eds. *1915, The Cultural Moment: The New Politics, the New Woman, the New Psychology, the New Art & the New Theatre in America*, New Brunswick and New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1991.

Hendricks, Gordon. *The Life and Work of Thomas Eakins*, New York: Grossman Publishers, 1974.

Henri, Robert. "Progress in Our National Art Must Spring from the Development of Individuality of Ideas and Freedom of Expression: A Suggestion for a New School," *The Craftsman* 15 (Jan., 1909): 387-401.

Hewitt, Barnard. *History of the Theater*, New York: Random House, 1970.

Hills, Patricia. *Turn-of-the-Century America, Paintings, Graphics and Photographs, 1890-1910*, exh. cat., New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1977.

Hobbs, Susan. *The Art of Thomas Wilmer Dewing, Beauty Reconfigured*, Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press in association with The Brooklyn Museum, 1996.

Homer, William Innes. "The Exhibition of 'The Eight': Its History and Significance," *American Art Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Spring, 1969): 53-64.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Robert Henri and His Circle*, New York: Hacker Art Books, 1988.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Thomas Eakins: His Life and Art*, New York, London, and Paris: Abbeville Press Publishers, 1992.

Howard, Angela and Sasha Ranaé Adams Tarrant, eds. *Redefining the New Woman, 1920-1963*, New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1997.

"I Gotta Be a Showman," *Time*, 22 (Nov., 1948): 52. Walt Kuhn vertical file, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington D.C.

Irwin, Kenneth and Charles O. Lloyd, *Ruth Etting: America's Forgotten Sweetheart*, Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2010.

Iskin, Ruth E. *Modern Women and Parisian Consumer Culture in Impressionist Painting*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

James, Henry. *Daisy Miller*. London: Martin Secker, 1915, first published 1878.

James, Henry. *Portrait of a Lady*, London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1997, first published 1881.

Jay, Martin. *Downcast Eyes: the Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-century French Thought*, Berkeley: University of California Press, c1993.

Jewell, Edward Alden. "Show Surveys Art of Everett Shinn", *New York Times*, (Feb. 28, 1935): 15.

*Jimmy Kelly's: the Montmartre of New York*, self-published for the New York World's Fair, 1939.

"Jimmy Kelly's, New York," *The Billboard* (Jan. 3, 1943): 20.

*John Sloan / Robert Henri: The Philadelphia Years (1886-1904)*, exh. cat., Philadelphia: Moore College of Art Gallery, 1976.

Johns, Elizabeth. *Thomas Eakins: The Heroism of Modern Life*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983.

Johnson, E.D.H. *Paintings of the British Social Scene from Hogarth to Sickert*, New York: Rizzoli, 1986.

Johnston, Patricia, ed. *Seeing High and Low: Representing Social Conflict in American Visual Culture*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006.

Jones, Amelia. *The Feminism and Visual Culture Reader*, London: Routledge, 2003.

Jordan, Ellen. "The Christening of the New Woman: May 1894," *Victorian Newsletter* 48 (Spring, 1983): 19.

Kaplan, Joel H. and Sheila Stowell. *Theatre and Fashion: Oscar Wilde to the Suffragettes*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

Kendall, Richard. "Influence in Low Places: Degas and the Ashcan Generation," *Degas and America: The Early Collectors*, by Ann Dumas and David A. Brenneman, Atlanta: High Museum of Art, The Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Rizzoli International Publications, 2000.

Kennedy, Elizabeth, ed. *The Eight and American Modernisms*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009.

Kern, Stephen. *Eyes of Love: The Gaze in English and French Culture, 1840-1900*, New York: New York University Press, 1996.

Kerr, Walter. *The Theatre World of Reginald Marsh: Drawings*, exh. cat., City Center Gallery, New York, April 15-June 22, 1969.

Kibler, M. Alison. *Rank Ladies: Gender and Cultural Hierarchy in American Vaudeville*, Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999.

Kift, Dagmar. *The Victorian Music Hall: Culture, Class, and Conflict*, Cambridge: University of Cambridge, 1996.

Kirkpatrick, Sidney D. *The Revenge of Thomas Eakins*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006.

Kitch, Carolyn. *The Girl on the Magazine Cover: The Origins of Visual Stereotypes in American Mass Media*, Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001.

Klein, Philip Shreiver and Ari Hoogenboom. *A History of Philadelphia*, New York: MacGraw-Hill Book Publishing, 1973.

Kobler, John. *Damned In Paradise: The Life of John Barrymore*, New York: Atheneum, 1977.

Koob, Pamela N. "States of Being: Edward Hopper and Symbolist Aesthetics," *American Art*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (Fall, 2004): 52-77.

"Know Yankee Girls by Expressive Eyes," *The New York Times* (Nov. 28, 1913).

Kramer, Hilton. "Shinn, One of the Eight, Liked His Women Dressed", *The New York Observer*, (Dec. 25, 2000): Arts and Entertainment, 1.

Kranzfelder, Ivo. *Edward Hopper, 1882-1967: Vision of Reality*, London and New York: Taschen, 2001.

Kwiat, Joseph J. "Dreiser's *The 'Genius'* and Everett Shinn, the 'Ash-Can' Painter." *PMLA* 67 (Mar., 1952): 15-31.

Laning, Edward, "Reginald Marsh," in *American Heritage*, Volume XXIII, No. 6 (Oct., 1972) edited by Bruce Catton, New York: American Heritage Publishing Co., Inc., 14-35, 92.

Laufe, Abe. *The Wicked Stage: A History of Theater Censorship and Harassment in the United States*, New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1978.

Ledger, Sally. *The New Woman: Fiction and feminism and the fin de siècle*, Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1997.

Leeds, Valerie Ann. *My People: The Portraits of Robert Henri*, exh. cat., Orlando Museum of Art, Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1994.

\_\_\_\_\_. "The Portraits of Robert Henri: Context and Influences," *American Art Review*, Vol. VII, No. 2 (Apr.-May, 1995): 92-97, 157, 160.

Leja, Michael. "Eakins and Icons," *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 83, No. 3 (Sept., 2001): 479-497.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Looking Askance: Skepticism and American Art, from Eakins to Duchamp*, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2004.

Lester, Katherine Morris and Bess Viola Oerke. *Accessories of Dress: An Illustrated Encyclopedia*, Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2004.

Levin, Gail. *Edward Hopper as Illustrator*, New York and London: W.W. Norton and Co. in association with the Whitney Museum of American Art, 1979.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Edward Hopper: The Art and the Artist*, New York and London: W.W. Norton and Co. in association with the Whitney Museum of American Art, 1980.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Hopper's Places*, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1985.

Levine, Susan. "Labor's True Woman: Domesticity and Equal Rights in the Knights of Labor," *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 70, No. 2 (Sept., 1983): 323-339.

Levine, Lawrence W. *Highbrow / Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America*, Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1988.

Lipton, Eunice. *Looking into Degas, Uneasy Images of Women and Modern Life*, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986.

Louchheim, Aline B. "Last of 'The Eight' Looks Back", *New York Times* (Nov., 1952): X9.

Loughery, John. "Woman as Other," *The Hudson Review*, Vol. 49, No. 3 (Autumn, 1996): 449-455.

Lubin, David M. *Picturing a Nation: Art and Social Change in Nineteenth-century America*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994.

Lyons, Deborah. *Edward Hopper: A Journal of His Work*, New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company in Association with the Whitney Museum of American Art, 1997.

Mackintosh, Iain. *Architecture, Actor, and Audience*, New York and London: Routledge, 1993.

Macleod, Dianne Shachko. *Art and the Victorian Middle Class: Money and the making of Cultural Identity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Mancini, JoAnne Marie. *Pre-modernism: Art, World Change and American Culture from the Civil War to the Armory Show*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005.

Mangum, Teresa. *Married, Middlebrow, and Militant: Sarah Grand and the New Woman Novel*, Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1998.

Margetson, Stella. *Leisure and Pleasure in the Nineteenth Century.*, New York: Coward-McCann, Inc., 1969.

Margo, Robert A. "Employment and Unemployment in the 1930s," *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (Spring, 1993): 41-59.

Marks, Patricia. *Bicycles, Bangs, and Bloomers: The New Woman in Popular Press*, Lexington, KY: The University of Kentucky, 1990.

Marsh, Jan. Review of *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and Histories of Art*, by Griselda Pollock. *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 133, No. 1057 (Apr., 1991): 274.

Marsh, Reginald. *East Side West Side All Around the Town: a Retrospective Exhibition of Paintings, Watercolors, and Drawings by Reginald Marsh*, Tucson: The University of Arizona Museum of Art, 1969.

Martin, Richard. Review of *The "New Woman" Revised: Painting and Gender Politics on Fourteenth Street*, by Ellen Wiley Todd. *Woman's Art Journal*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (Spring-Summer, 1995): 63-64.

Matthews, Jean V. *The Rise of the New Woman: The Women's Movement in America, 1875-1930*, Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2003.

McAuley, Gay. *Space in Performance: Making Meaning in the Theatre*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Theatre, Film, Performance: the Role of the Spectator." Paper presented at Sydney Society of Literature and Aesthetics Conference, Sydney University, June 2000.

McCabe, Jr., James D. *Paris by Sunlight and Gaslight: A Work Descriptive of the Mysteries and Miseries, the Virtues, the Vices, the Splendors, and the Crimes of the City of Paris*, Philadelphia, Chicago and Boston: National Publishing Company, 1869.

McCabe, Lida Rose. "Carmencita and Her Painters," *The New York Times* (Jul. 8, 1923): Book Review and Magazine section, BR4.

McConkey, Kenneth. *Memory and Desire: Painting in Britain and Ireland at the Turn of the Twentieth Century*, Aldershot, Hants, England and Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2002.

McCoy, Garnett. "The Post Impressionist Bomb," *Archives of American Art Journal*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (1980): 13-17.

\_\_\_\_\_. "The Walt Kuhn Papers," *Archives of American Art Journal*, Vol. 5, No. 4 (Oct., 1965): 1-6.

McCullagh, Janice. "The Tightrope Walker: An Expressionist Image", *Art Bulletin* 66, no. 4 (Dec., 1984): 633-44.

McDonnell, Patricia. *On the Edge of Your Seat: Popular Theater and Film in Early Twentieth-Century American Art*, exh. cat., Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002.

McFarlane, James, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Ibsen*, Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

- McLean, Jr., Albert F. *American Vaudeville as Ritual*, Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1965.
- Mecklenburg, Virginia M. "New York City and the Ashcan School", *Magazine Antiques* 148, (Nov., 1995): 684-93.
- Memorial Exhibition, Reginald Marsh (1898-1954), Etchings...Engravings...Lithographs*, exh. cat., New York: Kennedy Galleries, Inc., 1955.
- Mesch, Rachel. "Housewife or Harlot? Sex and the Married Woman in Nineteenth-Century France," *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (Jan., 2009): 65-83.
- Milroy, Elizabeth. *Painters of a New Century: The Eight and American Art*, Milwaukee Art Museum, 1991.
- Minsky, Mort and Milt Machlin. *Minsky's Burlesque*, New York: Arbor House, 1986.
- Mizejewski, Linda. *Ziegfeld Girl: Image and Icon in Culture and Cinema*, Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1999.
- Morgan, Marjorie. *Manners, Morals, and Class in England, 1774-1858*, London: St. Martin's Press, 1994.
- Mulvey, Laura. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Screen*, Vol. 16, No. 3 (Autumn, 1975): 6-18.
- Murphy, Patricia. *Time is of the Essence: Temporality, Gender, and the New Woman*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001.
- Nead, Lynda. *Myths of Sexuality: Representations of Women in Victorian Britain*, Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell Inc., 1988.
- "New Ideals Shown by 'Girl of To-Day,'" *The New York Times* (Oct. 29, 1913).
- Newlin, Keith, ed. *A Theodore Dreiser Encyclopedia*, Westport, CT and London: Greenwood Press, 2003.
- Nochlin, Linda. "Edward Hopper and the Imagery of Alienation," *Art Journal*, Vol. 41, No. 2, (Summer, 1981): 136-141.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Representing Women*, New York: Thames and Hudson, Inc., 1999.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Politics of Vision: Essays on Nineteenth-Century Art and Society*, New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1989.

Nock, Albert Jay. "A Word to Women," *The Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. 148, (Nov., 1931): 545-554.

Norgaard, Erik. *When Ladies Acquired Legs*, London: Neville Spearman Ltd., 1967.

Nunn, Pamela Gerrish. *Problem Pictures: Women and Men in Victorian Painting*, Aldershot, Hants, UK: Scolar Press, 1995.

Olson, Stanley. *John Singer Sargent: His Portrait*, London and New York: Macmillan, 1986.

Patterson, Martha H. *Beyond the Gibson Girl: Reimagining the American New Woman, 1895-1915*, Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2005.

Peiss, Kathy. "Charity Girls and City Pleasures," *OAH Magazine of History*, Vol. 18, No. 4 Sex Courtship, and Dating (Jul., 2004): 14-16.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York*, Philadelphia: Temple Press, 1986.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Hope in a Jar: The making of America's Beauty Culture*, New York: Metropolitan Books Harry Holt and Company, 1998.

Pène du Bois, Guy. "Edward Hopper," *American Artists Series*, exh. cat., Whitney Museum of American Art, 1931.

Perlman, Bennard B. "Innocence in Greasepaint," *Art and Antiques* (Feb., 1990): 65-69, 102-103.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Meeting Shinn", *Art & Antiques* 15 (Feb., 1993): 78-81.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Painters of The Ashcan School, The Immortal Eight*, New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1979.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Robert Henri: His Life and Art*, New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1991.

Phillips, Lisa. "Walt Kuhn: The Entertainers," exh. cat., New York: Whitney Museum of Art, 1987.

Pizer, Donald. *The Novels of Theodore Dreiser: A Critical Study*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1976.

Pollock, Griselda. *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and Histories of Art*, London and New York: Routledge, 1988.

Powell, Kerry, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian and Edwardian Theatre*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Women and Victorian Theatre*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

Pullen, Kirsten. *Actresses and Whores: On Stage and in Society*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

Pyne, Kathleen. *Art and the Higher Life: Painting and Evolutionary Thought in Late Nineteenth-Century America*, Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1996.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Evolutionary Typology and the American Woman in the Work of Thomas Dewing," *American Art*, Vol. 7, No. 4 (Autumn, 1993): 12-29.

*Reginald Marsh, (1898-1954): Paintings and Works on Paper*, exh. cat., New York: Hirschl & Adler Galleries, Inc., 1986.

Renner, Rolf Günter. *Edward Hopper, 1882-1967: Transformation of the Real*, Germany: Benedikt Taschen, 1990.

Richardson, Angelique. *Love and Eugenics in the Late Nineteenth Century*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.

Richardson, Angelique and Chris Willis. *The New Woman in Fiction and in Fact: Fin-de-Siècle Feminisms*, Basingstoke, Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan Ltd., 2001.

*Robert Henri, American Icon*, exh. cat., New York: Owen Gallery, 1998.

*Robert Henri, 1865-1929, October 15-November 27, 1976*, exh. cat., New York: Chapellier Galleries, 1976.

Roberts, Mary Louise. *Disruptive Acts: The New Woman in Fin-de-Siècle France*, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2002.

Robins, Anna Gruetzner and Richard Thomson. *Degas, Sickert and Toulouse-Lautrec: London and Paris, 1870-1910*, exh. cat., London: Tate Gallery Publishing Ltd., 2005.

Robins, Anna Gruetzner. "Degas and Sickert: Notes on Their Friendship," *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 130, No. 1020 (Mar., 1988): 198, 210-21, 225-229.

Rowbotham, Sheila. *A Century of Women: The History of Women in Britain and the United States*, London: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1997.

Rowell, George. *The Victorian Theatre, 1792-1914*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978.

Rubin, Susan Goldman. *Degas and the Dance: the Painter and the Petits Rats, Perfecting Their Art*, New York: H.N. Abrams, 2002.

Sasowsky, Norman. *The Prints of Reginald Marsh, an Essay and Definitive Catalogue of his Linoleum cuts, Etchings, Engravings, and Lithographs*, New York: Potter, 1976.

Schneider, Dorothy and Carl J. Schneider, *American Women in the Progressive Era, 1900-1920*, New York: Facts on File, 1993.

Schwartz, Vanessa R. *Spectacular Realities: Early Mass Culture in Fin-de-Siècle Paris*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998.

Scott, David W. and E. John Bullard. *John Sloan, 1871-1951: His Life and Paintings, His Graphics*, exh. cat., National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., Boston: Boston Book and Art Publisher, 1971.

Scott, Harold. *The Early Doors: Origins of the Music Hall*, London: Nicholson and Watson, 1946.

*Seven Paintings by Walt Kuhn*, exh. cat., New York: Marie Harriman Gallery, 1932.

Sewell, Darrel. *Thomas Eakins: Artist of Philadelphia*, exh. cat., Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1982.

Shane, Ted. "Poor Man's Garbo: Interview with Margie Hart," *Collier's*, (Jul. 26, 1941): 18-19, 48.

Shi, David E. *Facing Facts: Realism in American Thought and Culture, 1850-1920*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Simple Life: Plain Living and High Thinking in American Culture*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985.

Shinn, Everett. "Recollection of The Eight," *The Eight*, exh. cat., The Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn Museum Press, New York, 1943.

Shteir, Rachel. *Striptease: The Untold History of the Girlie Show*, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Siegl, Theodor. *The Thomas Eakins Collection*, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia: The Falcon Press, 1978.

Southern, Richard. *The Victorian Theatre: A Pictorial Survey*, Newton Abbot, UK: David and Charles, Ltd., 1970.

Snyder, Robert W. *The Voice of the City: Vaudeville and Popular Culture in New York*, Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2000.

Søndergaard, Sidsel Maria. *Women in Impressionism: From Mythical Feminine to Modern Woman*, Milan, Italy: Skira Editore, 2006.

Spies, Kathleen. "Baseball, Apple Pie, and Burlesque Queens: Nationalism in Walt Kuhn's Portraits of Showgirls," *Journal of American Culture*, 31, No. 1 (2008): 34-48.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Burlesque Queens and Circus Divas: Images of the Female Grotesque in the Art of Reginald Marsh and Walt Kuhn, 1915-1945*, PhD diss., Indiana University, 1999.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Girls and Gags': Sexual Display and Humor in Reginald Marsh's Burlesque Images," *American Art*, 18 (2004): 32-57.

Steele, Valerie. *Paris Fashion: A Cultural History*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Fan: Fashion and Femininity Unfolded*, New York: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., 2002.

Stein, Charles W. *American Vaudeville as Seen by its Contemporaries*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984.

Stevenson, James. "Lost and Found New York," *The New York Times*, Op-Ed (Sat., Nov., 25, 2006): A27.

Stheir, Rachel. *Striptease: The Untold History of the Girlie Show*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Still, Geoffrey M. and Roberta K. Tarbell, eds. *Walt Whitman and the Visual Arts*, News Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1992.

Storey, John. *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture, An Introduction*, Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 2006.

Strahan, Edward. (pseudonym for Earl Shinn). "Exhibition of the Society of American Artists," *The Art Amateur*, vol. 4, no.6 (May, 1881).

Streissguth, Tom. *An Eyewitness History: The Roaring Twenties*, New York: Facts on File, Inc., 2001.

Sweeney, James Johnson. "Ashcans Instead of Powder Puffs", *New York Times*, (Feb., 20, 1955): BR1.

Taylor, George. *Players and Performers in the Victorian Theatre*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989.

Tickner, Lisa. *Modern Life & Modern Subjects: British Art in the Early Twentieth Century*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Spectacle of Women: Imagery of the Suffrage Campaign, 1907-14*, London: Chatto and Windus, Ltd., 1987.

Todd, Ellen Wiley. *The "New Woman" Revised: Painting and Gender Politics on Fourteenth Street*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.

Tottis, James W. *Life's Pleasures: The Ashcan Artists' Brush with Leisure, 1895-1925*, exh. cat., Detroit Institute of Arts, London and New York: Merrell Publishers Ltd., 2007.

Treuherz, Julian. *Hard Times: Social Realism in Victorian Art*, London: Lund Humphries Publishers Ltd., 1987.

Troyen, Aimee. *Walter Sickert as Printmaker*, New Haven: Yale Center for British Art, 1979.

Tusan, Michelle Elizabeth. "Inventing the New Woman: Print Culture and Identity Politics During the Fin-de- Siècle: 1997 VanArsdel Prize," *Victorian Periodicals Review*, Vol. 31, No. 2 (Summer, 1998): 169-182.

U.S. Department of the Interior, Census Office, *Sixteenth Census of the United States, Population, The Labor Force*, Vol. 3, Part 4, Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1940

van Claerbergen, Ernst Vegelin and Barnaby Wright, eds. *Renoir at the Theatre: Looking at La Loge*, exh. cat., Courtauld Gallery, London: Paul Holberton Publishing, 2008.

Voskuil, Lynn. *Acting Naturally: Victorian Theatricality and Authenticity*, Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2004, 81.

*Walt Kuhn, 1877-1949*, exh. cat., New York: Kennedy Galleries, April 13-May 7, 1977.

Ward, David and Olivier Zunz. *The Landscape of Modernity: Essays on New York City, 1900-1940*, New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1992.

Wardle, Marian, ed. *American Women Modernists: The Legacy of Robert Henri, 1910-1945*, New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005.

Warshaw, Steven, ed. *The Gibson Girl: Drawings of Charles Dana Gibson*, Berkeley, CA: Diablo Press, Inc., 1968.

Weiner, Lynn Y. *From Working Girl to Working Mother*. Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1985.

Weintraub, Laural. *Fine Art and Popular Entertainment: The Emerging Dialogue Between "High" and "Low" In American Art of the Early Twentieth Century*, PhD diss., The City University of New York, 1996.

Wells, Walter. *Silent Theater: The Art of Edward Hopper*, London: Phaidon Press Limited, 2007.

Welter, Barbara. "The Cult of True Womanhood, 1820-1860," *American Quarterly*, 18 (Summer, 1966): 151-74.

Werbel, Amy. *Thomas Eakins: Art, Medicine and Sexuality in Nineteenth-Century Philadelphia*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007.

West, Shearer. *Fin de Siècle: Art and Society in an Age of Uncertainty*. Woodstock, NY: The Overlook Press, 1994.

Wexler, Victor G. "Creating a Market in American Art: The Contribution of the Macbeth Gallery," *Journal of American Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (Aug., 1991): 245-255.

Wilmerding, John. *Thomas Eakins and the Heart of American Life*, exh. cat. London: National Portrait Gallery, 1993.

Wilton, Andrew. "Review: Thomas Eakins, London," *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 136, No. 1090 (Jan., 1994): 43-44.

Wong, Janay. *The Early Work of Everett Shinn (1897-1911): Art at the Crossroads of a New Century*, PhD diss., The City University of New York, 2002.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Everett Shinn: The Spectacle of Life*, New York: Berry-Hill Galleries, Inc., 2000.

Wood, Christopher. *Victorian Panorama, Paintings of Victorian Life*, London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1976.

Woods, Marianne Berger. *The New Woman in Print and Pictures: An Annotated Bibliography*, Jefferson, North Carolina and London: McFarland & Company, Inc. Publishers, 2009.

Woolf, Virginia and Leonard Woolf. *A Writer's Diary: Being Extracts from the Diary of Virginia Woolf*, London: Hogarth Press, 1953.

Yarrow, William and Louis Bouché, eds. *Robert Henri: His Life and Works with Forty Reproductions*, New York: Boni & Liveright, Inc. 1921.

Young, Mahonri Sharp. *The Eight: The Realist Revolt in American Painting*, New York: Watson-Guption Publications, 1973.

Yount, Sylvia L. "Consuming Drama: Everett Shinn and the Spectacular City," *American Art*, Vol. 6, No. 4 (Autumn, 1992): 86-109.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Shinn and the Intimate Spectacle of Vaudeville." In *On the Edge of Your Seat: Popular Theater and Film in Early Twentieth-Century American Art*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002.

Zeaman, John. "When Painters Found the Stage Door; Montclair Show Reflects an Era of Theatrical Work", *The Record*, Bergen County, New Jersey, (Oct., 4, 2002): Go!, 37.

Zeidman, Irving. *The American Burlesque Show*, New York: Hawthorn Books, Inc., 1967.

Zeitz, Joshua. *Flapper: A Madcap Story of Sex, Style, Celebrity, and the Women Who Made America Modern*, New York: Crown Publishers, 2006.

Zilczer, Judith. "The Eight on Tour, 1908-1909", *American Art Journal* 16, (Summer, 1984): 21-48.

Zurier, Rebecca, Robert W. Snyder, Virginia M. Mecklenburg. *Metropolitan Lives: The Ashcan Artists and Their New York*, exh. cat., National Museum of American Art, New York, London: W.W. Norton and Company, 1995.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Art for the Masses (1911-1917): A Radical Magazine and its Graphics*, New Haven, London: Yale University Art Gallery, 1985.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Picturing the City: Urban Vision and the Ashcan School*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006.

"29 Who Were Chosen as Girls of To-Day," *The New York Times* (Dec. 7, 1913).

**Archival Sources:**

*Everett Shinn Papers.* Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C.

Everett Shinn, vertical file. Delaware Art Museum, Wilmington, DE.

Everett Shinn, vertical file. Frye Art Museum, Seattle, WA.

*Macbeth Gallery Papers.* Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

*Poultney Bigelow Papers.* Manuscripts and Archives Division. The New York Public Library, New York. Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations.

*Reginald Marsh Papers.* Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

Reginald Marsh, vertical file. Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.

Robert Henri, vertical file. Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art, Philadelphia, PA.

*Robert Henri Papers, 1870-1954.* Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Thomas Eakins, vertical file. Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

Thomas Eakins, vertical file. Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art, Philadelphia, PA.

*Walt Kuhn Papers.* Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C.

Walt Kuhn, vertical file. The Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C.

## VITA

Melanie Enderle is an Art Historian who lives in Seattle, Washington. She was born and raised in Texas and graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Art History from Stephen F. Austin State University. She earned her Master of Arts degree in British Art and Literature at Reading University, England. Enderle has worked for the Philadelphia Museum of Art and Pacific Science Center. As an Art History Instructor, she has taught classes at the University of Washington, Seattle Central Community College, Western Washington University, and Pacific Lutheran University. Enderle earned a Doctorate of Philosophy in Art History from the University of Washington in 2012.