

DE GRUYTER

Annabel Friedrichs

SHAPING VISIONS IN U.S.-AMERICAN MAGAZINES

WOMEN ILLUSTRATORS AND THE VISUAL
CULTURE OF FEMININITY, 1890-1920

ANGLIA BOOK SERIES

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Annabel Friedrichs

Shaping Visions in U.S.-American Magazines

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Volume 84

Annabel Friedrichs

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Women Illustrators and the Visual Culture
of Femininity, 1890–1920

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To my family and Sourena

Acknowledgements

“But that is not what I came here to do,” this bit of a girl answered. “I expect not,” the man of men in the newspaper game replied in a fatherly way. “But that’s what we want you to do, little girl, and you must do what we want.” “But I won’t make comics,” she declared. “I’ve got a good daddy back in Denver and I’ll go back there to him.” For quite a little bit the big man looked at her almost reverently. “It took me twenty-five years to reach a point where I could say ‘I won’t,’” he mused aloud [. . .]. Then smiling quaintly, he said to her: “You needn’t go back to your daddy, little girl. You just stay here and draw any kind of pictures you want to make.”
(1908 article in the *Denver Post*, unknown issue, qtd. in Robbins 2001: 10–11)

When Nell Brinkley was first tasked by editor Arthur Brisbane with creating artwork for the *New York Evening Journal*, she objected: “But I won’t make comics.” Little did she know that she would, about a century later, be remembered for having shaped early comics and, what is more, for having profoundly influenced visualizations of femininity with her Brinkley Girls in the early decades of the twentieth century.

When I was first asked by Ruth Mayer, in 2017, if I wanted to write my doctoral dissertation on comics, I initially objected, as well, but magazine illustrations I could agree on.

I therefore want to begin my acknowledgements by thanking, first and foremost, my two advisors:

Ruth Mayer has accompanied me with advice, guidance, and a bright light whenever I could not see the path ever since 2015. When I came out of our meetings, which I spent sitting on her tiny-legged, mid-century plush sofa, which thankfully never broke, I always felt clearer about my project and the next steps and more motivated to tackle them.

Christina Meyer was not only my second advisor, but also my partner-in-panel, who wrote about the Brinkley Girls long before me and has been my go-to person for all questions periodicals and cartoons ever since. My admiration for her writing style hopefully shines through.

I also want to thank my colleagues in the American Studies Department at Leibniz University Hannover for many inspiring discussions during our monthly colloquia, in some of which I presented drafts of this text and received helpful feedback. Thank you also to Kathleen Loock who kindly chaired the Board of Examiners during my defense.

Shaping Visions is the revised version of my doctoral dissertation, which I defended at Leibniz University Hannover in May 2024. It was part of the research project “Contingency and Contraction: Modernity and Temporality in the United

States, 1880–1920,” led by Ruth Mayer. I am grateful for the German Research Foundation (DFG) for funding this research project.

I would also like to thank the Philosophical Faculty at Leibniz University Hannover for a generous travel grant that helped fund my research trip to the Dowd Illustration Research Archive, St. Louis, the Library of Congress, and the Archives of American Art (both Washington, D.C.) in Spring 2019.

During this research trip, I also had the chance to attend the conference *Illustration Across Media: Nineteenth Century to Now*, organized by the Dowd Illustration Research Archive and the Norman Rockwell Museum. This conference not only offered a unique focus on my research topic, but also turned out to be a conglomerate of the who’s-who of illustration studies. Imagine being invited to a party with all your favorite writers. This is what it felt like when I suddenly made the acquaintance of illustration scholars and living legends in illustration history like Roger Reed, Jaleen Grove, Michele Bogart, Patricia Scanlan, and many others. I would especially like to thank Jaleen Grove, who drew my attention to this conference in the first place and who was so generous as to read and provide feedback to drafts of the introduction to this text. I would also like to thank Roger Reed, who operates the Illustration House in New York City, and who told me numerous anecdotes about his childhood memories of Rose O’Neill’s former house and gave me many useful insights into the business and work processes of illustration. Many passages of this text benefited from his (anecdotal) information on the commissioning process and other intricacies.

Further helpful insights into the work process – of Rose O’Neill, in this case – was given by Susan K. Scott, President of the Bonniebrook Historical Society that houses the O’Neill Kewpie Museum, Fine Art Gallery, and Research Library. Although I did not have the chance to visit Bonniebrook, Susan’s numerous emails enlightened me about the lesser-known facets of the talented Rose O’Neill. This book also profited from her generous supply of scans of original artwork. I would therefore like to thank Susan, as well as David O’Neill, Rose O’Neill’s nephew, for their kind permission to reproduce O’Neill’s illustrations in this book.

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And, finally, I would like to thank Trina Robbins. Although we never met, she and her detailed books on the artist provided the foundation for my and other scholars’ investigations of Nell Brinkley’s artwork. The American comics community has lost one of its diamonds when she died earlier this year.

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This book would not be so richly illustrated if it wasn't for the kind support of a number of people who kindly gave me permission to use these illustrations in my work. Among these are Annabel Taylor and Pia Ingberg (of Tribune Content Agency), Emma Halm and Susan Liberator (of the Ohio State University, Billy Ireland Cartoon Library & Museum), Scott Olsen (of King Features/Hearst), Marisa Bourgoïn (Archives of American Art), Kay Peterson (of the National Museum of American History), Laura Weakly (Nebraska Digital Newspaper Project), as well as Susan K. Scott and David O'Neill (for Rose O'Neill's artwork).

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The text in this book benefited from the eyes and scrutiny of Claudia Hellmann, who proofread the manuscript. I could not have asked for a better proofreader, since she once wrote her doctoral dissertation on early magazine illustrations herself. Any typos or mistakes left in the text are my own.

Finally, I would never have managed to write this thesis over the last six years without the support of my friends, family, and partner.

I want to thank my friends for their patience throughout these years: Whether they listened to and helped me reflect my thoughts and ideas or were my 'sparring-partner' in one-on-one Skype sessions during solitary mid-pandemic writing: Sharing the ups and downs with friends made this journey a lot easier.

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Contents

Acknowledgements — VII

List of Illustrations — XV

List of Abbreviations — XIX

- 1 Drawing outside the Lines: Female Illustrators and the Visual Diversification of Femininity in U.S.-American Magazines, 1890–1920 — 1**
 - 1.1 Sketching the Beginnings: Female Illustrators in the Golden Age of American Illustration — **1**
 - 1.2 Tracing the Lines: Research in Historical Periodical Media — **9**
 - 1.3 Drawing Meaning: The Visual-Textual Aesthetics of Magazine Illustrations — **11**
 - 1.4 Expanding the Lines: Women Illustrators' Strategies of Professionalization — **18**
 - 1.4.1 Going to Art School: Women Illustrators' Education — **21**
 - 1.4.2 Shared Spaces: Clubs, Houses, and Studios — **27**
 - 1.5 Coloring it in: Five Illustrators and their Creative Visions of Femininity — **31**

- 2 “Flirting with Time,” Or: How Young Women in Rose O’Neill’s Illustrations for *Puck* (1896–1901) Have the Summer of their Lives — 40**
 - 2.1 Taking Her Time — **40**
 - 2.2 ‘Out of Time’: Woman’s Positioning within Modern Time — **44**
 - 2.3 ‘Lost in Nature?’ ‘Natural’ Negotiations of Time in Illustrations of Young Womanhood — **53**
 - 2.4 “Vain Roses” and “Fragrant Crowds”: Perceptions and Negotiations of Temporal and Spatial Limitation in Young Women’s Lives — **63**
 - 2.5 Time-Out: Young Women’s Negotiation of Time Through Education — **73**
 - 2.6 The Aesthetic Management of Young Women’s Temporalities in *Puck* — **79**
 - 2.7 The Serial Management of Young Women’s Temporalities in *Puck* — **86**
 - 2.8 It’s About Time: Conclusion — **93**

- 3 On “Well Built Girls” and “Modern Bacchantes”: The Self-Fashioning of Modern Womanhood in Nell Brinkley’s Illustrations for the mid-1910s *Harper’s Bazar* — 95**
 - 3.1 Do You Want to Join Me for A Glass? — 95
 - 3.2 Instructive Texts, Luring Images, and all that is Conveyed In-Between — 100
 - 3.3 Instructing the “Woman Who Knows”: ‘Smart’ Consumption in *Harper’s Bazar* — 103
 - 3.4 Making the Female Body Modern: Instructions for the ‘Well Built Girl’ — 106
 - 3.5 “Only More Conservative” and “Less Exaggerated”: Calls and Democratizations of Fashion — 110
 - 3.6 Let’s Chat Corsets and Débutante-Slouches: Discussions of Rigidity and Movement — 126
 - 3.7 Girl Business: The Syndication of Nell Brinkley’s Art, or: How the Omaha Girl Came to See the World — 135
 - 3.8 Conclusion: Looks, Types, and “Frightful Looking Things” — 148

- 4 Visualizing Political Womanhood: May Wilson Preston’s Drawings for “Portia Politics” in the *Woman Voter*, 1911–12 — 151**
 - 4.1 The ‘Girl of To-Day’ — 151
 - 4.2 Types and Tactics: Portia’s Composite-Type as Political Strategy — 156
 - 4.3 Portia’s ‘Politics,’ Or: The Looks of Emancipated Womanhood — 167
 - 4.4 “In order to be kind, no charity we shirk”: The Woman Suffrage Party’s (Pseudo-) Socialist Reasoning for Suffrage — 180
 - 4.5 “You, Together with a lot of other Yous?” Portia’s and the Woman Suffrage Party’s Activism between Personal Emancipation and Collective Action — 187
 - 4.6 Conclusion: Solidarity and Suffrage at Last? — 201

- 5 ‘It Floats’: Jessie Willcox Smith’s and Alice Beach Winter’s Visual Narratives of Childhood between Commerce and Sociopolitical Critique — 203**
 - 5.1 Confidence in Cleanliness: A New Series of Ivory Soap Advertisements — 203
 - 5.2 ‘Better Babies’ and ‘Educated Mothers’: Child-Rearing and Cleanliness in the Progressive Era — 209

- 5.3 Two Magazine Illustrators, Two Magazine Formats, and Two Approaches to Advertising — **214**
- 5.4 The System of Advertisement Illustration and Illustrators' Agency — **215**
- 5.5 The Bathroom Taskforce: Jessie Willcox Smith's Illustrations for Ivory Soap — **219**
- 5.6 "Saturday Night is 'Tub Night'": Caring for the Child in Alice Beach Winter's Illustrations — **232**
- 5.7 Washing it Off: Conclusion — **251**

- 6 Imagining the Next Generation — 252**
 - 6.1 Everlasting Lines: The Impact of Early Female Magazine Illustrators — **252**
 - 6.2 Flappers — **256**
 - 6.3 Heroines — **260**
 - 6.4 Star Reporters — **264**

Works Cited — 275

Index — 309

List of Illustrations

- Figure 1.1** “Turn Your Ideas Into Money.” 1918. Advertisements in women’s magazines encouraged female readers to enroll in art or cartooning schools. Courtesy of *Hathi Trust* via University of Michigan — **22**
- Figure 1.2** “Elizabeth Shippen Green, Violet Oakley, Jessie Willcox Smith and Henrietta Cozens in their Chestnut Street studio (c. 1901).” The so-called ‘Red Rose Girls’ (Elizabeth Shippen Green, Violet Oakley, Jessie Willcox Smith, and Henrietta Cozens) posing as roses. The handwritten identification on verso, possibly written by Violet Oakley, reveals that the photograph mimics the poster for an exhibition at the Plastic Club in the background. Courtesy of Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution — **29**
- Figure 2.1** O’Neill. 1897. “Flirting with Time.” At the dawn of the new century, young women were caught between a new and an old sense of time, depicted here as a whirling dance with Father Time. Courtesy of Bonniebrook Historical Society Museum — **40**
- Figure 2.2** O’Neill. 1901. “Woman’s Tact.” Living life in her own ‘woman’s tact,’ a young woman thinks that “life is too short” to listen to sermons. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division — **48**
- Figure 2.3** O’Neill. 1898d. “To Vain Roses and Ladies.” Rose O’Neill often used flower allegories to depict young women’s ephemeral youth and beauty. Courtesy of Bonniebrook Historical Society Museum — **64**
- Figure 2.4** O’Neill. 1905. “Juneflowers.” Like flowers in June, the beauty of these flower-shaped brides will wilt. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division — **68**
- Figure 2.5** O’Neill and Sabin. 1898. “She Graduates.” ‘Sweet Girl Graduates’ were a popular visual type used across turn-of-the-century postcards, cartoons, or magazine covers. Courtesy of Bonniebrook Historical Society Museum — **74**
- Figure 3.1** Warwick and Brinkley. 1915e. “The Problem of Diet.” Perhaps this “modern bacchante” is not the right person to promote moderation in alcohol intake. Courtesy of *HathiTrust* via University of Michigan — **96**
- Figure 3.2** Warwick and Brinkley. 1915c. “The Call of Fashion.” These young Brinkley Girls are heeding the “Call of Fashion.” Courtesy of *HathiTrust* via University of Michigan — **114**
- Figure 3.3** Purdy. 1908. “Notes from New York.” Capitalizing on the ‘Brinkley craze,’ in 1908, the department store Bloomingdale’s organized a “Nell Brinkley Day” with offerings from Nell Brinkley shoes to Nell Brinkley hair dressing. Courtesy of *HathiTrust* via University of Iowa — **121**
- Figure 3.4** Warwick and Brinkley. 1915d. “A Chat about Corsets.” The debate about the pros and cons of corset-wearing did not stop at the Brinkley Girls, much to the chagrin of Dan Cupid. Courtesy of *HathiTrust* via University of Michigan — **130**
- Figure 3.5** Warwick and Brinkley. 1915a. “The Art of Staying at Home.” Given the countless new possibilities for the “fashionable woman of to-day” to spend her time in the city, the Countess of Warwick celebrates the “art of staying at home.” Courtesy of *HathiTrust* via University of Michigan — **137**

- Figure 3.6** Brinkley. 1915. “A World Within a World.” The same illustration was reprinted on the “Home Magazine Page” of the *Omaha Bee*. Courtesy of the *Nebraska Digital Newspaper Project* — **139**
- Figure 3.7** Brinkley. 1913. “A Business Girl.” The early twentieth century created new job opportunities for young women. Nell Brinkley made it clear that ‘business girls’ can be found anywhere. Courtesy of the California Digital Newspaper Collection, Center for Bibliographic Studies and Research, University of California, Riverside — **142**
- Figure 4.1** Bailey and Preston. 1911. “Portia Politics [episode I].” Ten-year-old Portia is a suffragist in-the-making, much to her father’s dismay. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, General Collections. Photo by the author — **157**
- Figure 4.2** One [Arthur Raymond Brown] and Preston. 1914. “How it Feels to Be the Husband of a Suffragette.” May Wilson Preston illustrated the story “How it Feels to be the Husband of a Suffragette,” written under the pen name ‘Him’ (or ‘One’) by Arthur Raymond Brown, husband of Woman Suffrage Party member Gertrude Foster Brown. Courtesy of *HathiTrust* via University of Michigan — **165**
- Figure 4.3** Bailey and Preston. 1912a. “Portia Politics–II.” Embodying the ubiquitous type of the ‘sweet-girl graduate,’ Portia returns from college with an education and new assertiveness. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, General Collections. Photo by the author — **169**
- Figure 4.4** Preston. 1912. “No title (woman refusing money and crown).” Suffragists made it clear that neither they nor their cause could be bought with money. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, General Collections. Photo by the author — **171**
- Figure 4.5** Bailey and Preston. 1912e. “Portia Politics–VI: Portia at the Fair.” Standing on a soapbox labelled “Votes for Women,” Portia gives a speech at the state fair. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, General Collections. Photo by the author — **176**
- Figure 5.1** Winter. 1911b. “How One Woman Cleaned Her White Parasol.” A woman presents the soap manufacturer’s signature ivory-white cleanliness to the little girl and to the reader of the *Ladies’ Home Journal*. Courtesy of *HathiTrust* via University of Michigan — **204**
- Figure 5.2** Smith. 1901. “Care and Precision.” With a lot of “care and precision,” this mother wipes her girl’s face after washing it with Ivory Soap. Courtesy of *HathiTrust* via University of Michigan — **206**
- Figure 5.3** Smith. 1920. “Begin the Day Right.” Each equipped with soap, towel, and determination, these three kids know how to “begin the day right.” Courtesy of *Ivory Soap Advertising Collection, Archives Center*. National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution — **221**
- Figures 5.4a and 5.4b** Winter. 1915. “Grandma’s Morning Task.” Winter. 1910. “Children Frequently Suffer from Headaches.” In the above ads by Winter, plain white chemises, simple furniture on bare wooden planks, and the splitting of care work across generations indicate a lower-class background. Courtesy of *HathiTrust* via University of Michigan — **234**

- Figures 5.5a and 5.5b** Winter n.d. Sketch for “Saturday Night is ‘Tub Night.’” Winter. 1907. “Saturday Night is ‘Tub Night.’” The unpublished sketches for Winter’s Ivory Soap illustrations confirm that the artist consciously chose to depict darker-haired children within an otherwise glaringly white visual context. Photo of sketch courtesy of Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. Published advertisement illustration courtesy of *HathiTrust* via University of Michigan — **238**
- Figure 5.6** Winter. 1911c. “I was Explaining.” In a scene of ‘splash’ and ‘stripes,’ Winter depicts a woman and a boy whose skin and hair tone differ starkly from those of the persons presented in Smith’s Ivory Soap illustrations. Retrieved from the *Modernist Journals Project* — **240**
- Figure 5.7** Winter. 1912b. “Why Must I Work?” With her eyes open wide, this girl on the cover of the socialist little magazine *The Masses* wants to know: “Why must I work?” Retrieved from the *Modernist Journals Project* — **245**
- Figure 6.1** Brinkley and Wells. 1929. “‘Twas a High-Brow Battle, Won, as Usual, by Jim.” In a comic-like story, arranged on a full-color 22x16 inch newspaper page, Polly decides to engage in a “high-brow battle,” but eventually returns to her low-brow romance novels and her boyfriend Jim. Photo by the author — **257**
- Figure 6.2** Brinkley. 1937. “Quick-Trigger Woman.” For her episode “Quick-Trigger Woman,” part of her series *The Heroines of Today*, Brinkley adopts the style and storylines popular from the pulp comics of the 1930s. Nell Brinkley © 1937 King Features Syndicate, Inc — **261**
- Figure 6.3** Messick. 1940a. *Brenda Starr, Reporter* [first episode]. *Brenda Starr, Reporter* premiered in a self-contained comic book addendum of the *Sunday Chicago Tribune* that readers could cut out and fold into a comic book. © Tribune Content Agency, LLC. All rights reserved. Distributed by Tribune Content Agency. Retrieved from *Newspapers.com* — **266**
- Figure 6.4** Messick. 1953. *Brenda Starr, Reporter* [unnumbered episode with cut-out paper doll titled “Brenda Goes to Work”]. Cut-out dolls with matching outfit options invited fans to imagine and play through new storylines for Brenda beyond her action-packed reporter job. © Tribune Content Agency, LLC. All rights reserved. Distributed by Tribune Content Agency. Retrieved from *Newspapers.com* — **270**
- Figure 6.5** Messick. 1940b. *Brenda Starr, Reporter* [third episode]. Compared to earlier visualizations of women, Dale Messick does not shy away from depicting female rage in the face of women’s unfair treatment in the workplace. © Tribune Content Agency, LLC. All rights reserved. Distributed by Tribune Content Agency. San Francisco Academy of Comic Art Collection, Billy Ireland Cartoon Library & Museum, The Ohio State University — **271**

List of Abbreviations

<i>HB</i>	<i>Harper's Baza(a)r</i>
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
NAWSA	National American Woman Suffrage Association
NWP	National Woman's Party
PAFA	The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts
<i>TM</i>	<i>The Masses</i>
WSP	(New York City) Woman Suffrage Party/Woman Suffrage Party (of Greater New York)
<i>WV</i>	<i>The Woman Voter</i>

1 Drawing outside the Lines: Female Illustrators and the Visual Diversification of Femininity in U.S.-American Magazines, 1890–1920

1.1 Sketching the Beginnings: Female Illustrators in the Golden Age of American Illustration

[N]ow it is an acknowledged fact that any woman possessing the requisite talent, training, and practical experience in working for reproduction, is assured a profitable return for her labor.
(Morse 1893: 68)

When Alice Cordelia Morse – a well-known independent designer of book covers involved with the organization of the Woman’s Building¹ at the World’s Columbian Exposition of 1893 (Dubansky n.d.) – wrote her chapter on “Women Illustrators” for the handbook *Art and Handicraft in the Woman’s Building of the World’s Columbian Exposition*, she also pointed out emerging career opportunities for women in the field of illustration. Morse stresses the “acknowledged fact” that “any” talented woman willing enough to undergo hard “training” and “labor” will be rewarded with according financial “return” (see also Goodman 1987: 14). Emphasizing that “now it is an acknowledged fact” (my emphasis), Morse identifies women’s professionalization in illustration as a novel, late-nineteenth-century development in a male-dominated sphere. However, women in illustration were by no means as well-represented as she makes it seem. In the early 1890s, illustration (or ‘reproduction,’ in more general terms) constituted a field in which women had already worked since the middle of the nineteenth century (Masten 2008). However, women were only now starting to increasingly professionalize themselves and expand the female workforce in the field of illustration, given the increasing demand for illustrated editorial and advertising matter in the growing magazine and consumer market of late-nineteenth-century U.S.-American industrial modernity. Illus-

1 The Woman’s Building, “instigated by Susan B. Anthony” celebrated the accomplishments of the women’s movement since 1876 (Rubinstein 1982: 152). Designed by architect Sophia Hayden, it showcased murals (by Mary Cassatt, among others), paintings, sculptures, and other art created by women, hosted “meetings and conferences” on women’s rights, and even contained a day-care center for visitors’ children (154). Still, the Exposition’s segregated narrative of ‘women’s art’ in a building labeled ‘Woman’s Building’ caused objection among contemporary female artists (Cott 1981: 9).

tration² was so much in demand that illustrators were the “rock stars” of their day and age (Eisenstat 1984: 28) and the era was dubbed the ‘Golden Age of American Illustration’ (c. 1890–c. 1920).³ Two coinciding developments reinforced this phenomenon: On the one hand, magazines and newspapers were the predominant form of mass communication (before the advent of radio and television) and provided the number one source of information and entertainment for a growing literate and leisure-class readership (Kennedy 2013: 14–15). On the other hand, illustration was the chief means of *visual* communication (Grove 2013: 12), adorning all sorts of periodical media and other print formats, such as posters and books, yet particularly magazines. Female illustrators were eager to profit from both developments, and even though their situation was not quite as unproblematic as Morse makes it out, they did enter the periodical market and had a profound effect on it. My study aims to explore this process, focusing on exemplary artists and the visualization of femininity in magazines between 1890 and 1920.

It took a concatenation of several developments until women moved into an occupational field dominated by men. Illustrators profited from a fundamentally new visual understanding of periodical media in an already flourishing magazine market. A general movement of middle-class women into public-sphere occupations, together with stereotypical preconceptions about their aptitude to illustrate the new publications catering to women and children, further helped to bring about a fair number of female illustrators by the turn of the twentieth century.⁴

2 I understand illustration as the art of visual communication (as opposed to mere textual communication), that is, as any element that generates meaning, or narrates its ‘story’ on a visual level – be it through a particular visual vocabulary, symbolism, or a particular composition of illustrated elements. In a specific art-school focus, Grove et al. have defined illustration also as “the art of how to select and interpret passages from a text” (Grove et al. 2019: 296), although this definition is rather technical and only shows one possible direction of commercial illustration.

3 The period of the Golden Age of American Illustration differs by source, but in the context of this study I use it to refer to the timeframe from 1890 to about 1920: Helen Goodman dates it as 1880–1914, following Roland Elzea’s exhibition catalogue on the Golden Age (1972: 8–17, qtd. in Goodman 1987: 13), whereas Patricia Smith Scanlan (2015: 2) dates it as 1885–1925. Martha H. Kennedy demarcates the Golden Age as 1880–1930 (2018: 4). Benjamin Eisenstat, referring to the years between 1890 and 1900, defines the Golden Age of American Illustration as a “time of high regard for the illustration profession. One aspired to be an artist first. Publication was a by-product” (1984: 29). Jaleen Grove locates the Golden Age as “1890–1920(ish),” an era “when print was the primary medium of communication and illustration was used as much as or more than photography; illustrators were at their highest point of being in demand and were celebrated and paid as artists of high repute” (2013: 12). Overall, on the magazine page, “visuals [took] precedence over the written text” (Tucker 2010: 7).

4 The number of active women illustrators during the turn and the outset of the twentieth century ranges from “eighty” (Waldrep 2010: vi) to “literally hundreds” (Marshall 1912: 11) – the real

Whereas male illustrators had already been working publicly, women had been working mostly anonymously and unaccredited as lithographers and colorists ever since the middle of the nineteenth century (Kennedy 2018: 5). They were even trained for these purposes at the Philadelphia School of Design for Women or the Cooper Union Free Art School for women (Masten 2008; Goodman 1987: 14). They earned a small income working in the background in low-status illustration jobs or worked freelance on spot illustrations at home, since “prevailing social norms” (Kennedy 2018: 5) forbade middle-class women to take up employment in the public sphere (Reed 2019c: 324). And yet, despite these promising and successful beginnings, described by April F. Masten in her book on mid-nineteenth-century women artists (2008), “[i]llustration as a career for women rarely was mentioned in the literature until about 1890” (Goodman 1987: 14).

Female illustrators began to leave a mark, expanding their careers and increasingly professionalizing themselves, when magazine illustration underwent a “visual revolution” (Swinth 2001: 104) and, as I would add, a commercial one. Thanks to “technological advances” (Nudelman 1989: 11), that is, on the one hand, full-color printing and, on the other hand, the gradual transition from wood-engraving to cheaper and high-quality half-tone reproductions by 1900 (Adams, Keene, Koella 2012: 11), periodical media increasingly capitalized on illustration for visual attraction.⁵ This ongoing ‘visual revolution’ is reflected in David E. Sumner’s analogy: “In the early 1900s, magazines looked like small versions of books. At the end of the century, magazines looked like television screens” (2010: 11).

The new ubiquity of illustration in periodical media was closely linked to the growth of industrial production with a prospering consumer goods market and the evolvment of mass culture. Illustration turned into a “commodity form” because manufacturers of consumer goods relied on highly visual ads to promote their goods (Swinth 2001: 104). Many of them targeted female readers who were consid-

number probably lies somewhere in between. Lesser-known women illustrators are difficult to trace in the archives because often their names changed or their careers were interrupted or upended altogether by marriage (Waldrep 2010: viii), resulting in what Scholes and Wulfman call a “[h]ole in the [a]rchive” (2010: 196).

5 Only very few magazines, among them *Puck* and *Judge*, made use of both photo-based technologies (half-tone, linecuts) and full color printing, although both were used in the New York newspapers by the 1890s (Grove 2024). As illustration scholar Jaleen Grove (2024) explained to me in an email, “[c]hromolithograph illustrations had occasionally been put into high-end magazines as early as the 1870s, but it wasn’t common to see color illustrations in/on mass magazines until after 1895, and then it was usually just the cover and frontispiece and expensive ads, and most art was typically only black plus one color, until well after 1900 (exceptions were maybe made for Christmas issues – and *Puck* or *Judge*). Most full color printing comes after 1910. Half-tone, on the other hand, appeared c. 1880, printing just in black.”

ered the primary buyers of the household (104; see also Thacker 2012: 22; Zuckerman 1998: 67). Seeking to reduce the magazines' high price (on average 25–35 cent per issue), while increasing their readership, editors at the turn of the century introduced attractive subscription rates with the support of an ad-revenue oriented business model, where they would “sell magazines for less than the cost of publishing them, attract a huge circulation, and sell ads to manufacturers willing to pay most of the costs to reach those readers by advertising their products” (Sumner 2010: 16; see also Thacker 2012: 22).⁶

Ideas of commercial “cheap images” evoked links between mass culture and “voracious, but irrational, female consumerism” (Swinth 2001: 104). Illustration, perceived as a low-culture and “feminized realm” (105), “an inferior cousin of fine art” that “wasn't ‘real’ art” (Waldrep 2010: vii; see also Goodman 1987: 14; Huysen 1986), was deemed a profession that did not require “genius,” but “merely a serviceable talent, training, and on-the-job experience,” in short “seemed eminently suitable for and not beyond the reach of women” (Goodman 1987: 14). While this equation of women and consumption indubitably has misogynistic implications, it thus served to turn illustration into a female enterprise profession, where middle-class women could profit from freelancing (Grove 2024) and “were held in high esteem” (Holm 2019: 264), although they regularly earned less than male illustrators.⁷

⁶ On magazines' economic dependence on advertising revenues, see also Ohmann (1998).

⁷ Exact numbers on artist fees are hard to come by, and contemporary articles listing exorbitantly high numbers (or correspondence-course ads promising financial success) should be taken with a grain of salt, as they owe to the hype around illustration at the time as also illustration-expert Jaleen Grove wrote me in an email (2024). As such, the span of earnings from around \$4,000 to up to \$75,000 per year listed by Waldrep (2010: vii) is one example of the high volatility in the sources. Instead, Grove writes that “\$10 for a drawing was pretty normal ca 1905. If you did one per day every day, then you could not make more than \$3,650 annually.” This usually referred to low-paid spot illustration, which, next to likewise low-paid “decorative borders, children's features, and fashion,” was typically assigned to female illustrators (Grove 2024). An essay on “Pictorial Illustration” that writer and illustrator Izora C. Chandler contributed on a study on women's salaries in various occupations, lists similar figures: “[Y]ou will receive \$5 each for the figures in a single drawing, or you will be paid according to space. From \$15 to \$50 will be offered for a drawing of size and consequence. One hundred dollars a page is paid by a few magazines, and the double page in some of the weeklies brings from \$150 to \$200” (1889: 225). As Grove (2024) adds, “the high figures Jessie Willcox Smith supposedly made were very exceptional. Most illustrators, male or female, were paid basic amounts.” A more truthful account is provided by account books, such as the one of illustrator Arthur William Brown. For the first five years of his career, he lists earnings below \$4,000, and, only from the sixth year while working full time for clients like *Saturday Evening Post*, he starts to list numbers above \$5,000 (A. W. Brown 1900–1950; Grove 2024). I thank Jaleen Grove for these helpful remarks.

Contemporary articles, like one on the “[q]ualities that [m]ake for [s]uccess in [w]omen [i]llustrators” written by Frances W. Marshall, assistant editor of the children’s magazine *St. Nicholas*, further highlight women’s alleged “natural adaptability” and “subordinat[ion],” as well as their purported “power of impersonation” or “feminine graciousness and charm” (1912: 11, qtd. in Waldrep 2010: vii). Using a biologicistic reasoning, (predominantly) male editors and advertising agents “called on women artists to draw for women readers, assuming that the two would inherently share a particularly feminine point of view of the world” (Prieto 2001: 161). In a growing magazine market catering to middle-class women and children, female illustrators were deemed perfect fits to visually express feelings of maternal love on magazine covers or in ads for baby food – not least because they stayed in their ‘sphere’ and “did not threaten conventional gender norms” (Holm 2019: 264).

At first glance, it may look as though women illustrators’ professional understanding and assigned topics were caught up in narrow stereotypical ascriptions due to their gender – a perspective that is, of course, shortsighted, as I will show. Some women artists even skillfully used this stereotype to their benefit by metaphorically referring to their art as their children, into whom they have invested (motherly) care and labor (Prieto 2001: 52). Laura R. Prieto addresses the ambiguity in this approach: Female illustrators of the turn of the twentieth century had to navigate a complex conundrum, where “[t]he analogy between cultural and biological reproduction conferred value on women’s artwork at the same time that it folded them into the category of True Woman” (2001: 52), that is, where women’s “‘nature’ (biological sex, as opposed to gender)” (3) was deemed an indicator of women’s inability to produce professional art (‘culture’). Instead, women were deemed *re*-producers of culture, not its producers.

And yet, ‘reproduction’ carries several meanings in the context of illustration and femininity. On a meta-level, reproduction informed the era: As an umbrella term it referred to the technological process of mechanically replicating an original artwork – regardless of technology,⁸ but was also used synonymously with illustration in the nineteenth century as seen in Morse’s statement. Processes of mass (re-)production steered technological advancements, such as automatized printing presses and a vast train network that facilitated the speedy distribution of (reproduced) information (Holahan 2019: 306). At the same time, ‘reproduction’ can suggest a lack of originality, calling up notions of merely reproducing (instead of producing or also defying) certain ideas.

⁸ See also Walter Benjamin (2008).

Female illustrators at the turn of and during the early twentieth century deserve attention because they did important cultural work: The years between 1890 and 1920 marked an era of unprecedented sociopolitical change for white U.S.-American women – rapid changes that were articulated by illustrators in mass and little magazines alike. This way, they contributed to the Golden Age’s visual ubiquity and sheer endless reproduction of cover girls and the like. I argue that particularly female illustrators were in a unique position that enabled them to reproduce reality (with its assumptions and stereotypes about female gender roles), as much as they were able to reformulate and thereby *produce* this reality by creatively drawing their own imaginations, hopes, or sociopolitical messages into their periodical illustrations. That is, rather than merely representing the changing female gender roles of the time or passively ‘working in the reproduction’ of other illustrators’ stereotypical images of femininity, I argue that, as creative artists and self-emancipating professional pioneers themselves, female illustrators impacted on these changes with their creative visual imaginations of femininity and female life stages from girl- to woman- or motherhood. This is the focus of my study: how women illustrators actively participated in shaping and constructing or deconstructing female gender roles and ideas. This process was not without ambiguity: At times, I argue, it entailed even strategically reproducing stereotypical images in order to carve out possibilities for women’s visual representation.

The iconic visualizations of ‘new women’ at the turn of the century were often named after famous male illustrators (such as Charles Dana Gibson’s, Harrison Fisher’s, or Howard Chandler Christy’s creations of the Gibson, Fisher, or Christy Girl). In this book, I want to show that women were no less involved in the project of representation and that, during a time of women’s changing roles and place in society, it mattered that the illustrators of the present visualizations of femininity and female gender roles were women themselves. As women who often faced the same challenges, but also benefited from the same new opportunities as the female objects they visualized, illustrators Rose O’Neill (1874–1944), Nell Brinkley (1886–1944), May Wilson Preston (1873–1949), Jessie Willcox Smith (1863–1935), and Alice Beach Winter (1877–1968) were in a prime position to (re-)define, popularize, or also question images and imaginations of womanhood. Negotiating and extending the roles that society prescribed for women of their time, they claimed space and paved the way for future female illustrators in a largely male-dominated professional field⁹ by professionalizing themselves and making strategic use of educational possibilities, all-

9 The “historiography of illustration [which] framed our views [and canons] today” mostly comes down to pre-internet publications (Grove 2019b). Yet, although men dominated the illustration market (which was also reflected financially in their salaries) and women were underrepresented in certain illustration genres, scholars recently began to bring more balance into this

female art clubs, and practical living arrangements, some of which I delineate below. With their often-non-traditional life designs and familiarity with women's contemporary demands and challenges, women illustrators were agential creators and themselves representatives and mediators of the roles they portrayed for the magazines. As can be assumed, their lives and experiences influenced their imagination so that women artists "acted as flesh-and-blood models of the New Woman, who had already embraced education, wage-earning, urban living, and professionalism" (Prieto 2001: 146). While by far not all women presented in this study would have referred to themselves as 'new women,' I follow Prieto in arguing that already the sheer "persistence of female professionals' identities as women had its own culturally radical potential" (11). Although discussing the professionalism of women artists may seem redundant – after all, a study on male artists would not emphasize this point, I agree with Goodman that the point must be addressed "because professionalism is inconsistent with the then widely held view that lady artists were dabblers and dilettantes" (1987: 13).¹⁰

The illustrations under investigation here offer insight into stereotypes, but also express hopes about possibilities for women during an era of pivotal social and political change: This was the era of the college-educated 'new woman,' of young women negotiating or altogether abandoning traditional roles of wife and mother, of Margaret Sanger advocating birth control. Middle-class women entered the labor market and the urban public sphere, where they also participated in protests for better working conditions and suffrage, which culminated in reforms and the 19th Amendment in 1920.

narrative of male dominance and give more credit to a considerably growing female presence during the Golden Age. In her online I.D. Illustrator Database, Grove exposes the biases in the literature: Reference books continuously re-issued throughout the twentieth century were chiefly written by male historians of illustration, who often focused on women illustrators only with regard to childhood topics. U.S. and British female writers, on the other hand, presented a wider scope of women illustrators' topics. As Grove concludes, "women feature women more" (2019b). Only recently have female authors contributed larger reference books on the field of illustration (Kennedy 2018; Doyle, Grove, and Sherman 2019; Waldrep 2010). Rubinstein published an early compendium in 1982. For a contemporary book on U.S.-American and European women artists, see Waters, *Women in the Fine Arts: From the Seventh Century B.C. to the Twentieth Century A.D.*, which was published in 1904.

10 If already white female artists had to fight to have their professionalism and competence recognized, Black artists had to navigate even greater prejudices.

How women illustrators decided to visualize femininity also plays a role for the targeted, or actual female reader's negotiation of gender roles.¹¹ On a magazine market that thrived on women's objectification as cover girls or protagonists of love plots in serialized fiction, the female reader's potential reception of these images carries weight. As Susan J. Douglas writes, women's role and self-perception oscillates between "be[ing] active subjects in control of their own images" and being "passive objects judged by those images" (2000: 278). Set between these two poles, women illustrators sounded out spaces for (re-)negotiations of female gender roles in various life stages via all sorts of visual-textual narratives in periodical magazine media.

I view the visual imagination of turn-of-the-century femininity as a complex network, where the individual illustration, its creation process, and its meaning are impacted by several factors. The illustrators (as the creative authors of these visualizations), but also the accompanying textual narratives (often in tension or playful connection with the visual narratives of the illustration), form the main nodes within this network.

In this book I aim to take scope of the width of illustrative work at the turn of the century, taking into account publications from mass to little magazines and covering a broad range of interests – from commerce to entertainment and politics, and more. I will explore the (back-)cover girls of the satirical journal *Puck* as well as illustrated serialized fiction in the suffragist party journal *Woman Voter*. My study sheds light on imaginations of female roles in illustrated advice columns in the upper-class fashion and society magazine *Harper's Bazar*, and it peeks behind the shiny façade of soap advertisements found in women's household magazines, contrasting them with socialist illustrations for the radical, leftist little magazine *The Masses*.

The present study thereby delineates how the contracted mode of illustration in both mass and little magazines expressed, yet also contributed to shaping women's political demands, life experiences, and performances of identity within larger (potentially regulatory) contexts of social representation. In doing so, the project provides new insight in the overlapping and mutually inspiring cultural spheres of little and mass periodicals, and it explores the political possibilities of mass culture by reading mass-appealing, syndicated, serially, and commercially published magazine illustrations as a generative sphere where a female audience could question, reflect upon, or claim authority over its individual life designs and political demands. As Grove et al. remark, much more than by technical ex-

¹¹ Based on letters to the editor reprinted in women's and domestic magazines (though not only there), we can surmise that their readership was predominantly female.

pertise alone, illustrators measured their work's excellence by "picture ideas and problem solving," that is by their creative ability to visually interpret a given text (2019: 296). This study investigates the extent to which a commercial illustrator could 'expand' or even deviate from a given text and thereby sound out the scopes of how young women at the turn of the century could be portrayed or perceived.

Employing a complex methodological framework of close-reading visuals as if they were texts, this study traces the lines within which Rose O'Neill, Nell Brinkley, May Wilson Preston, Jessie Willcox Smith, and Alice Beach Winter pragmatically managed aspects of change and temporality in illustrations that were themselves subject to the strict time regimes and temporal affordances of the serial magazine format. I will show that these illustrators represented and enacted temporal transformation through techniques that emphasized adaptation and compliance rather than radical rupture.

1.2 Tracing the Lines: Research in Historical Periodical Media

As explicitly temporal media, simultaneously publishing on *time* and *on their* time, magazines lend themselves ideally for studying how (representations of) women claimed the limited space and reading time invested on the magazine page. I use a comparative approach to investigate how these visual-textual imaginations of modern femininity can possibly even be understood in terms of the same temporal affordances that characterize the turn-of-the-century magazines that circulate them. I argue that the distinctly time-imbued modern mass medium is fundamental for discussions of femininity and the centrality of time in women's experience of the turn of the century.

Both the periodical form and modern female life followed instincts for renewal. Economically driven to (re-)invent and (re-)produce its pages in the nick of time (that is, before the copy deadline), the early (women's) magazine was closely hinging on the same constant and time-imbued struggle to renegotiate and reinvent its identity as did young, single white women who sought to live out their opportunities within the social, temporal, and spatial limitations at the turn of the century (see also Beetham 1996: 12–13). Particularly women's magazines capitalized on this idea of continuous identity renewal – and they had to constantly offer new and interesting versions of womanhood with each week or month, before being replaced by an even newer issue. Quite like the women's magazine, modern female life was thereby discursively (re-)produced and (re-)negotiated in

the modern periodical press in a distinctly time-informed manner.¹² Relating the magazines' visual-textual narratives to the mechanisms of the modern magazine market, this study highlights how women increasingly claimed space, time, and attention in the urban and the periodical public sphere, and how the burgeoning print market increasingly tapped into this development.

This is where periodical research itself comes into play: A field as interdisciplinary as the medium itself (Monk, Patterson, and Roggenkamp 2015: 2–3), periodical studies “explor[es] the press as a key site for cultural production, public debate and the dissemination of knowledge” (Van Remoortel et al. 2016: 1). Like other periodical scholars, I make use of periodicals' function of “[m]aintaining a record of the day” to address questions such as “how they provide information or shape public opinion” (Marks 2015: 41). Not only did a very active, turn-of-the-century periodical market fan out into a variety of audiences and subject areas. The market was also embedded in a period of crucial socioeconomic change, when a multitude of unprecedented opportunities for space-taking and representation arose for all kinds of marginalized groups, including women and immigrants, which makes it an excellent source of knowledge for scholars of all disciplines. This vibrant research field is therefore decisively informed by a reckoning with the past and its medial (under-)representation of certain groups of people, as also the scholarship about Black or indigenous periodical media or the likewise vibrant research on avant-garde or transnational publications indicates.¹³

Successful research on periodicals relies heavily on the internet and the growing digitization of the archives. Yet, as I noticed during my study, while “[r]esearch has been made easier by electronic marvels,” as Patricia Marks writes, anyone browsing the digital archives also relies on “perseverance [. . .] to flip page after page (or screen after screen), tracing an elusive cultural thread” (2015: 42). Despite all digitization and online databases, periodical research still benefits from the analogue archive. This may be due to a lack of accessibility (not everything is scanned and digitized yet), budget constraints at local libraries that limit access to certain online databases or collections,¹⁴ or a researcher's simple curios-

12 Part of these ideas also appeared in Friedrichs 2019a.

13 See, for example, Rooks 2004, *Ladies' Pages: African American Women's Magazines and the Culture That Made Them*; the forthcoming anthology on *Indigenous Periodicals: American Indian Newspapers and Magazines, 1887–1934*, edited by Scheiding and Newton; or projects such as the *Modernist Journals Project*, to name but a few.

14 Knowing that research often “relies on institutional budgets and pricing,” researchers of American periodicals like Mark L. Kamrath hope that “multi-institutional partnering and ‘bundles’ go up,” whereas “the cost of storage goes down” to widen scholars' and students' “access to the digital archive” and databases like *ProQuest* (2015: 60, quotation marks in orig.).

ity about what a particular magazine looked like in real life. Only in the archives, will you be able to touch the actual paper (with gloves) and take in the real-life format of these magazines (until you have seen them for real, you have no idea how huge some magazines really were).

The archives, and which artists' work is represented there, should be regarded with caution. As Jaleen Grove writes, "archives shape knowledge" (2020: 27) – and, I would add, often unconsciously so for the users of the archives. In the end, the question of whose work gets archived and digitized (and whose work does not) is fraught with power imbalances: Just like the literary canon has long been predominantly male (since men's work was deemed more valuable, hence worthy of archiving and reproducing for anniversaries, for example), also the historiography of illustration, let alone the idea of an 'illustration canon,' has long been dominated by men like Maxfield Parrish, Charles Dana Gibson, or Norman Rockwell. A (female) artist's work that was not retained and archived in the first place, does not get digitized for databases, is not celebrated during anniversaries, is not a part of exhibitions, and thus eventually disappears from public memory (see also Seifert 2024: 293). With its sole focus on the work of female illustrators, some of which has been neglected by scholars so far, this book does its part to redress this imbalance.

In the remainder of the introduction, I outline my methodology and terminology for analyzing the relations between illustrators' visual and surrounding textual narratives of femininity. Following this, I outline female illustrators' strategies of professionalization during the Golden Age of American Illustration and conclude with an outline of the four case studies and the primary material in focus.

1.3 Drawing Meaning: The Visual-Textual Aesthetics of Magazine Illustrations

This book lends attention solely to female illustrators. It is thereby in the line of Mary Carolyn Waldrep's *Women Illustrators of the Golden Age* (2010), Charlotte Streifer Rubinstein's 1982 history of *American Women Artists*, or the more recent *Drawn to Purpose* by Martha H. Kennedy (2018). A sole focus on women illustrators can also be found in Helen Goodman's 1987 article "Women Illustrators of the Golden Age of American Illustration" or in Patricia Smith Scanlan's article "God-Gifted Girls" (2015). It is, of course, impossible to discuss these images without discussing the artists behind them. Yet, while there are already biographical

studies¹⁵ or short bios written on each of the illustrators presented here (see, for example, Nudelman 1989; A. Carter 2000; Robbins 2001; O'Neill 1997), there is a lack of studies on the visual material itself – particularly as viewed within its original publication context. To fill this scholarly gap, this study explicitly focuses on image-text *relations*, using a methodological approach of close-reading images and their textual surroundings in close relation.

My methodological framework relies on a multidisciplinary ‘toolbox approach.’¹⁶ The idea of taking whatever one needs from “the wealth of thematic and disciplinary approaches [. . .] from different academic fields” (2010: 239, qtd. in Stein, Meyer, and Edlich 2011: 517) proves fruitful in fields that lack consistent methodology, such as comics studies, but also visual-textual narratives more broadly. With a background in literary and cultural studies, I rely on narratological expertise (including close-reading), as well as visual theory and image analysis (inspired by methods of visual or art studies), approaching visual as well as textual components of illustrated magazine columns, advertisements, covers, or serialized fiction through close-reading and contextualization. My theoretical framework further draws from approaches found in periodical studies.

In what follows I will read and analyze illustrations in their immediate textual surroundings (such as captions or textual descriptions) to understand how they relate and to see how these contextual relations generate meaning. As multimodal media magazines lend themselves ideally for an interlinked image-text analysis given their particular text-image ratio.¹⁷ This correlation is worth paying attention to for its effect on processes of meaning-making. As Amy Tucker writes, “written and visual texts work in tandem to shape reader response” (2010: xviii; see also Karnatz 2015: 20).

For cultural studies, W. J. T. Mitchell has dominated the debate on text-image relations, not least with the coinage of the ‘pictorial turn,’ although various approaches based on different academic fields and perspectives abound.¹⁸ “The dia-

15 In scholarly research on women illustrators, biographical approaches abound. For examples using more contextualized approaches to women illustrators’ lives and works, see Kitch 2001; Garvey 1996; Prieto 2001.

16 This term was first coined by Karin Kukkonen and Gideon Haberkorn (2010), referring to their conscious combination of various tools and analytical techniques for comics analysis.

17 On intermodal processes of communication and reception in illustrated magazines, see Bucher (2016: 25).

18 In “Rhetoric of the Image,” Roland Barthes uses a linguistic perspective to distinguish two text-image relations: anchorage (a text directs or helps to interpret our understanding of an image, which is the opposite of illustration, where an image directs or adds to our understanding of a text) and relay (where both text and image create meaning together, as, for example, in cartoons or comic strips) (1999: 38). In their taxonomy of image-text relations that they sampled

lectic of word and image seems to be a constant in the fabric of signs that a culture weaves around itself,” Mitchell writes in *Iconology* (1986: 43). And yet, this dialectic is so complex, and image and text are often so interwoven, since “all media are mixed media” (1994: 5), that, in his follow-up book *Picture Theory*, Mitchell cautions against a simplistic comparative approach to text-image relations, but to rather focus on the “whole ensemble of *relations*” between them (1994: 89, italics in orig.; see also Schulz 2005: 76). Instead of asking “what is the difference (or similarity) between the words and the images,” he calls for taking this question to the next level by asking “what difference do the differences (and similarities) make?” (Mitchell 1994: 91).¹⁹ This question forms the backdrop for my analysis of processes of visual-textual meaning-making in turn-of-the-century illustrated magazines.

Mitchell argues that the existence of ‘pure’ non-textual images, or non-visual texts is “impossible and utopian” (1994: 96) and even replaces the binary theory of text and image by the figure of the ‘image/text’ that describes a “composite, synthetic form” or “a gap or fissure in representation” (1994: 9, 83). Given these fluid demarcations, I will resort to an occasional reversal of image-text relations, reading texts as visuals or visuals as text. Visuals can work as storytelling devices and thus merit narratological investigation (in order to analyze what I refer to as visual narratives),²⁰ while texts can be viewed and thereby close-read from a visual perspective. Whereas Mitchell argues that texts become visual “the moment they are written or printed in visible form” (1994: 95), I resort to a more practical approach: That is, next to the narratological existents of a textual narrative (such

from various media sources, Emily Marsh and Marilyn Domas White go even further by detecting up to 49 different conceptual functions in three different categories of image-text relations, from images’ “[f]unctions expressing little relation to the text” (such as images that “[d]ecorate” a text) to “[f]unctions expressing close relation to the text” (by “[r]eiterate[ing]” or “[e]xplain[ing]” the text) to “[f]unctions that go beyond the text” (where images “[i]nterpret” or “[t]ransform” a given text) (2003: 653). For an overview of how practitioners from other fields, such as Information Studies, have contributed to the debate, see Martinec and Salway (2005: 339).

19 Mitchell, for example, describes the role of image-text relations with regard to power and ideology. He outlines how critics of art and culture like Burke or Lessing view “the image as the site of a special power that must either be contained or exploited,” relying on texts (or “symbols”) to “keep images in their place” (1986: 151).

20 The idea that visual media can be ‘read’ as if they were text goes back to Roland Barthes’s “Rhetoric of the Image,” in which he extended the idea of the ‘text’ “to suggest that they [visual media, my addition] are constructed on the basis of codes in the same way that language forms a text” and can thus be decoded or read (Sturken and Cartwright 2001: 369). This idea of ‘reading’ images to understand them is also represented in the term ‘visual literacy’ and its methods of image analysis that are widely taught at schools. For an excellent use-case example for a textual analysis of family photographs, see Hirsch (2002).

as the plot or means of characterization), I pay attention to figures of speech (such as visual metaphors), stylized language and vocabulary, textual juxtapositions, but also, whenever this is the case, to how the text's formatting, punctuation, or arrangement give it a visual dimension.²¹ Also, textual narratives can conjure up certain images in the reader's head (see also Mitchell 1986: 24–25) that can correlate with, be steered by, or contradict the visual narrative of the accompanying image.²² I thus also look for the textual narrative's implied addressee and inscribed prompts (such as instructions or political appeals). In the four case studies, I trace how visual and textual narratives circulate, pursuing how image-text relations not only proliferate meaning, but also create ambiguity through their polysemic and multimodal structure.

My approach is indebted to Charles Johanningsmeier's work on periodical seriality. As he recalls about analyzing serialized periodical fiction,

[i]n order to create more solid hypotheses about the cultural work that a serialized text performed, [. . .] one need[s] to assiduously gather information about who the readers were, as well as analyze closely not only the ideology of the periodical but also the myriad printed elements surrounding that text, such as non-fiction stories, advertisements, illustrations, and so forth. (2015: 44)

In applying Jerome McGann's 'textual field' (McGann 1991: 15) for analyzing serialized periodical fiction, Johanningsmeier, in his own words, "first defined the 'reading field' in which this particular fiction appeared and then analyzed how the various elements of that reading field would likely have affected readers' understandings of it" (2015: 45, quotation marks in orig.). Johanningsmeier thus admonishes periodical scholars that you cannot browse a magazine keyword by keyword, using the "search' functions of online digitized periodical databases," but need to really "browse" a periodical page by page (47, quotation marks in orig.). This process is time-consuming, as it requires much digging, scrolling, and

21 Mitchell lists further "visual representations" that "are already immanent in the words, in the fabric of description, narrative 'vision,' represented objects and places, metaphor, formal arrangements and distinctions of textual functions, even in typography, paper, binding" (1994: 99, quotation marks in orig.).

22 Note that this study focuses on illustrations (that is, images that refer to an existing text), and not ekphrasis (that is, texts describing a given image). For a distinction between illustration and ekphrasis, see Karnatz (2015: 17). It can be assumed that, based on the work processes underlying magazine illustration, the text was produced first, and the illustration was created second or simultaneously, but usually based on the text or editorial stipulations. Indeed, texts were often selected according to their potential for (subsequent) illustration. There were, however, cases where the text was added in hindsight to a previously produced illustration, or cases where the illustrator produced both text and image and where the text she provided (a caption, for example) was replaced by another one (see chapter two on Rose O'Neill).

waiting for pages to load (or to be served by a helpful librarian), but rewarding as you develop a ‘feel’ for a magazine and its target audience. While the process of finding a single image in a certain magazine resembles the proverbial search for the needle in the haystack, you experience the “all-important contextual elements,” such as surrounding visual and textual narratives, that influence how this particular image could be understood and read (47).

Johanningsmeier focused on serialized periodical fiction, but his approach works well for periodical illustration, too. Although the etymology of the word illustration signals the Latin word *illustrare*: ‘to shed light on,’ or ‘to elucidate,’ the following case studies will reveal that this enlightening dimension is often missing, and that illustration can also confound or complicate readers’ initial understanding of an adjacent illustrated text (or vice-versa), allow for a different or new interpretation of the text, or create intertextual links to other images and associations, which all diversify the meanings of femininity presented in a particular visual narrative. At the outset of the twentieth century, when ideas of femininity and female roles increasingly fanned open, also their visualizations and meanings circulated.

The methodological approach of viewing images and texts in relation has its drawbacks, since often archives (particularly art collections or illustration databases) only retained the illustration itself without the surrounding texts, necessitating the scholar to search through the archives and databases to dig up the concomitant magazine and the corresponding page – a process that is not only lengthy but oftentimes also downright futile as not all magazines or issues are digitized.²³ When it comes to advertisements, the search is particularly tricky as many advertisement sections (in early magazines, advertising had its own section) have been torn from the magazines prior to binding, archiving, or digitization.²⁴

For the context of this study, I focus on illustrations made explicitly for the magazine medium. This connection to the modern periodical press is reflected in illustration historian Roger Reed’s definition of illustration as “handmade art-

²³ In a particularly frustrating incident, I had just discovered Rose O’Neill’s amazing back covers for *Puck* on microfilm at the Library of Congress, but kept looking for a high-resolution, color print of one particular back cover, preferably with its concomitant magazine issue (unfortunately this particular issue was not available on *HathiTrust*, either). The well-stocked LoC even possessed this very issue, but as the Print and Photographs Division’s curator regrettably informed me, it was too fragile to serve. This and many similar incidents – familiar to researchers of historical material – have obviously impacted the selection of the material covered by this study.

²⁴ For a good explanation of this process, see Ellen Gruber Garvey’s article “What Happened to the Ads in Turn-of-the-Century Bound Magazines, and Why” (1999). See Margaret Beetham (1989: 97) on how the meaning of objects of study is altered by this archiving practice.

work created to be published” (Reed 2019a). In his introductory talk at the 2019 “Illustration Across Media” symposium at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri, art historian and critic Michael Lobel (2019) characterized illustration as “a modern visual form” that is “not a thing, but an activity,” which is “meant to be reproduced,” “cuts across and encompasses existing visual mediums,” and, finally, “cannot be construed as autonomous or independent, but rather is defined by dialogue and collaboration.” As the writer, illustrator, and theorist of visual culture D. B. Dowd once said in an interview, “[t]here is no illustration without reading” since “[b]oth the practice and the profession [of illustration] are intimately tied to the advent of mass literacy and industrially-scaled printing and publishing” (2021). To acknowledge the dual, visual-textual nature and reception practices of the material under analysis, I adopt Christina Meyer’s terminology of the ‘reader-viewer’ (2013: 1535). The reader-viewer, in Meyer’s understanding, juxtaposes visual and textual narrative elements to create meaning.²⁵ Also, magazine illustrations invite ‘browsing’ as a magazine-specific, non-linear reception practice: There is a certain dynamic in browsing a magazine and suddenly stopping because of an image that sets a metaphorical hook that pulls the reader out of the reading flow, asking them to focus or contemplate and thereby engage with the individual illustration, but also its surrounding, more closely.²⁶ In this case, I argue, one literally ‘reads’ the visual narrative of an illustration. My analysis of illustrations in various periodical media will take into account these specifically temporal affordances of ‘reading’ and spending time on a format that is characteristically condensed and ‘brief.’

At this point, I must also express some caution about too easily assuming historical readers’ responses to historical periodical texts as Margaret Beetham (2000: 90; 1996: 11) and other periodical scholars have pointed out before. Unless I state otherwise, actual readers’ reading or viewing patterns and reactions to the material presented here are not documented. Lacking empirical data, I thus dis-

25 Meyer has since distanced herself from the use of the term ‘reader-viewer’ because it might imply that viewing does not involve reading (which, of course, it does). However, given my analytical approach, I use the term, as it highlights that a magazine’s audience can be confronted with contradictory narratives in text and image from which they must derive meaning. Jennifer A. Greenhill also uses the term of the “beholder” to refer to a composite figure of illustration viewers as “viewers/readers/handlers” (2017: 3).

26 Jennifer A. Greenhill (2019) notes that illustrated magazines “increasingly catered more to the glance than to the focused, line-by-line attention” (429) – a way of taking in the magazine page that “stimulate[d] the production of new pictures in the mind of the magazine consumer” and that especially advertising agencies therefore capitalized on with “the art of suggestive or indirect advertising” (430). On the different experiences of time when reading text vs. viewing images in bi- or multimodal media, see Grave and Gibhardt (2019).

sect readers' potential perception, exploring the 'reading options' (Meyer 2019b: 10) of these images and texts and the potential meanings created by them.²⁷

What plays into processes of meaning-making within illustration is also the commissioning process in magazines, that is, how “[t]he illustrated magazine format by its very nature foregrounds intertextuality and the collectivity of authorship” (Tucker 2010: xxi) – and yet, the present study strives to show how meaning-making goes beyond this. The story is not as simple as ‘the art director assigns a commission with clear instructions, and the artist delivers.’ Instead, the work process and the artistic license of the individual illustrator depended on “an artist’s social background, past experiences, expectations, artistic style, reputation, connections, geographic location, client, and budget” (Bogart 1995: 66), so that it could happen that an artist’s work was used in entirely different contexts that generated entirely new meanings. In D. B. Dowd’s words: “[I]llustration is *contingent*, as opposed to *autonomous*” (2021, italics in orig.). Illustration always depends on a cultural context, and, particularly in the magazine context, illustrations were made-to-order, and illustrators were given instructions. And yet, I agree with Dowd that the idea of a “dutiful, obedient [i]llustrator” (as opposed to a “pathbreaking, transgressive [a]rtist”) does not do justice to the illustration profession (2021). The following case studies demonstrate that illustrations more often than not fail to perfectly synchronize with accompanying texts, let alone with potential instructions given by a magazine’s art director, editor, or by an advertising agency.

My idea of an image’s surrounding ‘textual’ narrative then also adopts a wider, descriptive idea of ‘text.’ The surrounding text can be anything from a simple caption to the advertisement copy that complements an illustration, an accompanying poem or story, or even an instructive text, such as the texts in magazines’ service departments or beauty columns. Just as illustrations or subheadings that accompany texts can provide “visual cues for readers” (Johanningsmeier 1997: 201) and trigger a certain preset interpretation on their side, conversely subtitles, captions, and texts that accompany magazine illustrations may inform the responses to a visual narrative.

Close-reading these images hence is no end in itself where images figure as stand-alone artifacts. Instead, I always regard them as part of a larger network in which various factors cause images and their meanings to circulate. Everything, including the nodes and connections in this network, is in motion, creating mean-

²⁷ Johanningsmeier calls historical, ‘actual’ readers “elusive beings who rarely recorded how they reacted to written material” (1997: 184, qtd. in Meyer 2019b: 10). Following Christina Meyer, I therefore present mere “reading options that are inscribed in and the potential uses generated” by the material at hand, as well as the diverse activities encouraged by such material and any underlying “frictions” resulting from these options (2019b: 10).

ing. At the same time, the work areas and publication outlets of the individual artists also regularly underwent transformations: Illustrators sometimes published in diverse periodicals and print forms at the same time and thereby created interesting cross-references, while others pursued illustration as one output next to their engagement in fine art projects – another reason to leave behind the old distinction between ‘trivial’ commercial and valuable (fine) art or between cheap mass and complex avant-garde publications (see Adams, Keene, Koella 2012: 11). Considering these factors and how they interact in this multi-agential formation of meaning then allows us to understand the aesthetics of illustrations and their specific image-text relations in turn-of-the-century magazines.

1.4 Expanding the Lines: Women Illustrators’ Strategies of Professionalization

The work of early American women illustrators unfolded by way of networked structures. I argue that (much) more than male artists, women artists and their work processes were intertwined within complex networks on many levels, which also influenced their visualizations of femininity. One cannot separate the illustrators from the images of femininity, since the illustrators are always also caught up in their own as well as others’ images and imaginations of women.

How illustrators imagined and depicted female lives in their illustrations is determined by a multitude of intersecting factors and forces: first of all, the conditions of the periodical market (including the individual publication medium, the mechanisms surrounding its production and distribution, such as editorial policies and strategies, its targeted readership, or periodical and technological affordances). Further factors are the editorial stipulations during the commissioning process, but also the illustrators’ individual creativity, social or political interests, and personal experiences. Also, the multifactorial formation of meaning was influenced by individual and collective readers and their (real or implicit) responses. External real-life events or intertextual references to similar images in the same or other media played a role as well. Whenever contextual information or primary sources are available, I draw from surrounding magazine pages, information on editorial policies, publication rhythms, or other mechanisms for my contextual reading of image and text. Finally, the immediate magazine context with its text-image nexus, that is, an image’s accompanying textual narrative and resulting visual-textual relations, reinforces the impression of an overdetermined interaction – there are not simple cause-and-effect relations but intricately entangled force fields at work.

These factors – the magazine market, the gendered, imbalanced power networks at play between mostly male editors²⁸ and female illustrators, inter- and extratextual references, as well as visual-textual narrative relations – will play a role in the subsequent case studies. To familiarize the reader with female illustrators' working conditions and possibilities, I shed light on their personal and institutional networks and their collective authorship as exemplary factors informing their creativity. This network-approach to illustrators' collective authorship helps highlight the conditions shared by women illustrators during the Golden Age. Following sociological network theory, an individual's enacted role, that is, "what [she] know[s] and who [she is]," is informed by a "set of relationships in which [that] person is embedded" (Smith-Lovin and Miller McPherson 1993: 224, 225). Individual illustrators are actors within a network shaped by power dynamics, social and professional relationships, educational possibilities, market conditions, and gendered societal expectations. In the following, I will focus on three exemplary nodes in these networks: the artists' formal arts education, their membership and participation in professional clubs or associations, as well as shared houses and studios.

In this network model, all factors are interconnected and weighted differently. Individual 'nodes,' particularly the individual illustrators within the network, play a larger role than the network itself. The clichéd view of illustration as a feminine, domestic, and private pursuit thus overlooks how women illustrators gradually "[n]egotiat[ed] a delicate balance between their personal lives and public personae, their domestic spaces and studio environments" (Scanlan 2015: 3). Ideas of powerful female networks and group identity existed long before the turn of the twentieth century²⁹ and have most successfully been described by Carroll Smith-Rosenberg in her 1975 seminal essay "The Female World of Love and Ritual" in which she outlined the centrality and power inherent in eighteenth- and mostly nineteenth-century homosocial bonds between women. Based on friendship rituals such as letter writing, mutual diary-reading, and long visits, these bonds were most of all justified through a strictly gendered allocation of separate spheres where white women were indeed "born into a female world" (1975: 17). This world granted them independence, mobility, and a mutual support network where men were considered an "out group" (20).

²⁸ Most early magazines were edited by men. A few women's magazines, such as the *Ladies' Home Journal* and *Woman's Home Companion*, had both male and female editors-in-chief over the years. With its female editorship as early as the 1870s, the children's magazine *St. Nicholas* stands out.

²⁹ See, for example, Martha Vicinus (1984) on women's same-sex "adolescent crush[es]" at late-nineteenth-century and early-twentieth-century English boarding schools (601).

Whereas in the nineteenth century, female same-sex relationships were casually accepted and existed next to marital cross-gender relationships, in the twentieth century, Smith-Rosenberg's "female world of love and ritual" went underground, as it were. Several reasons account for this devaluation of a once powerful and exclusively female private sphere: For one, close same-sex relations increasingly fell under the suspicion of lesbianism, so that behavior that had previously been seen as socially acceptable appeared now deviant and was increasingly pathologized with the advent of medical and psychological literature. Further, the gradual dissolution of the separate spheres, the increasing acceptance of cross-gender friendships, and the diminishing importance of marriage contributed to a reconceptualization of female networks.³⁰ Towards the late nineteenth century, women's increasingly professional self-understanding and activist participation in the public sphere's social structure, for example, brought about what sociologist Mary Jo Deegan refers to as the 'Chicago female world of love and ritual.' This more public form of female same-sex relationships between unmarried, powerful academic and political leaders was rooted in feminist pragmatism surrounding the Hull House social settlement and the "formation of sociology as a profession" at the University of Chicago where this all-female community formed synergies based on "their collective skills as writers, speakers, lobbyists, teachers, lawyers, and physicians" (1996: 591, 604). Rituals included "graduations, congressional hearings, book publications, and travel" rather than the weddings and childbirths that Smith-Rosenberg's nineteenth-century women celebrated (604). As Deegan writes, "[t]he Chicago women forged a new, woman-centered, intimate relationship that merged women's traditional values with the formerly male worlds of ideas and public service" (604). Dimensions of practical co-habitation and mutual professional support also characterized the friendships of turn-of-the-century women artists, although I am careful with externally labeling these friendship forms.

Women illustrators' networks that likewise worked through homosocial ties – whether in study, work, or shared households and studio spaces – all re-negotiated and redefined Smith-Rosenberg's powerful concept of an exclusively female world. Specific to my topic, powerful networks among female illustrators were no longer exclusively female and set in the private sphere, but increasingly dissolved female gender roles and expectations. Women participated in public educational systems

30 As such, Lillian Faderman views the increasing pathologizing of women's same-sex relationships in the early twentieth century as a reaction to anxieties caused by social shifts as college-educated women increasingly contemplated evading heterosexual marriage by way of same-sex Boston Marriages (1981: 227, 237–238). For a use-case example of reconceptualizing Smith-Rosenberg's 'female world' "across boundaries of race and class, as well as time" in a twenty-first-century classroom, see McGarry (2000: 10).

and cross-gender professional networks, they traveled and engaged in occupational relations to (mostly male) magazine editors and advertisers. On the other hand, factors that call to mind nineteenth-century ideas of a secure, exclusively female sphere lie in shared female households and studio spaces that were quite common. This is what forms the backdrop to the processes of professionalization that shaped the careers and work of the artists that I investigate.

1.4.1 Going to Art School: Women Illustrators' Education

Susan Nichols Carter, author and for twenty years the head of the Art Department at Cooper Union in New York, wrote in a piece from 1892 that “[a]mong new directions of art, pen and ink illustration furnishes a promising field. Newspapers and magazines are filled with many a sketch from the busy brain of a woman” (1892: 384, qtd. in Scanlan 2015: 5). While the educational system and the market provided attractive occupational opportunities for women, both also reduced women to the role of producers of female-interest content. In William Dean Howells’s 1890 novel *A Hazard of New Fortunes*, the protagonist and magazine editor Fulkerson refers to women illustrators as “God-gifted girls” who attract female readers to his publication (Howells 2001: 126, qtd. in Scanlan 2015: 4). However, he still has doubts about their professionalism, since he suggests to his employed artist Angus Beaton to “get up a School of Illustration” to ensure that submitted illustrations are no “amateur trash” (Howells 2001: 110). Female artists attempted to refute these charges of dilettantism or amateurism with a “strong work ethic” and often “went to great lengths to achieve accuracy in their illustrations” (Scanlan 2015: 24),³¹ or by formal schooling (Walls 1998: 129–130).

Both Morse’s statement and contemporary advertisements for art schools that addressed female magazine readers emphasized the need for professional training: An ad for a correspondence course in cartooning, published by the Federal School of Applied Cartooning in Minneapolis in the October 1918 issue of the *Ladies’ Home Journal*, invited the targeted female reader to “[t]urn [her] [i]deas [i]nto [m]oney”

³¹ As was expected of illustrators, regardless of gender, women illustrators intensely researched the “details about their historical and ethnological subjects, often clothing their models in historic costumes and traveling around the country to infuse their works with authenticity” (Scanlan 2015: 25). They also did “extensive preparatory studies,” or, as I saw in Alice Beach Winter’s archived material in the Smithsonian Archives of American Art, “used photographs as *aides-mémoires*” to realistically copy poses, gestures, or props (25). Despite working on par with men to get proper reference material, it can be expected that female illustrators had to work even harder to have their professionalism recognized.



Turn Your Ideas Into Money

IF you like to draw and have ideas, there is a big opportunity for you in cartooning. May Wilson Preston, of The Saturday Evening Post Staff, Rose Cecil O'Neill, with her "Kewpies," Nell Brinkley, with her impressionistic pictures, Helena Smith-Dayton, with her clay caricatures, and many other women have attained financial and artistic success through clever illustration.

Now is the time to learn to make your liking for drawing profitable. Many of the men cartoonists are at war. Women must take their places.

You can train yourself to step into a permanent position or to develop a profitable side-line. The Federal Course in Applied Cartooning gives you the benefit of the experience of America's 31 greatest cartoonists. Girls in school, as well as business women, teachers, and mothers, are learning cartooning from the Federal Staff, which includes such men as McCutcheon, of the Chicago Tribune, Clare Briggs, author of "Skinny" and "When a Feller Needs a Friend," and Herbert Johnson, of The Saturday Evening Post.

"A Road to Bigger Things"

This 32-page book in color tells how women are succeeding in the congenial, profitable field of cartooning. Contains studio pictures of the cartoonists on the Federal Staff. We will send it to you for 6c in stamps to cover postage. Write at once to:

Federal School of Applied Cartooning
8012 Federal Schools Building, Minneapolis, Minnesota

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Figure 1.1: "Turn Your Ideas Into Money." 1918. Advertisements in women's magazines encouraged female readers to enroll in art or cartooning schools. Courtesy of *Hathi Trust* via University of Michigan.

(“Turn Your Ideas Into Money” 1918: 54, Figure 1.1).³² The reader, as she peruses the women’s magazine, may have been familiar with the drawings or advertisements illustrated by the artists mentioned in this ad: May Wilson Preston, Nell Brinkley, or Rose O’Neill. This ad appeared some 25 years after Morse assured “a profitable return” to “any woman possessing the requisite talent, training, and practical experience in working for reproduction” (68). Next to knitting for the Red Cross and corseting for war-time activities, the female middle-class readership of this ad section was encouraged to fill the positions of “the men cartoonists [who] are at war.” Yet, whereas the language in this 1918 ad resembles Morse’s statement, “[n]ow is the time to [. . .] make your liking for drawing *profitable*” (“Turn Your Ideas Into Money” 1918: 54, my emphasis), the illustration accompanying the ad relegates any aspiring female artist to ‘her’ place: The glimpse into an artist’s everyday work discloses that female artists will be surrounded by men in suits – one of them peeks over her shoulder, keeping a close eye at her drawing board, while he probably utters instructions in what could be a magazine’s advertising or editorial department. Read between the lines, even the ad copy reveals that women’s “permanent position” or “profitable side-line” in illustration or cartooning is temporary or at least conditional: Now, in 1918, “the men cartoonists are at war,” but, by the time a woman finishes her cartooning course, the war might be over, and the work itself taken up again or contested by men.³³ Also note that, while the text uses the names of successful women artists for advertising purposes, the mentioned instructors of the “Federal Staff” are all male. Finally, ads that promised female readers that, “[i]n this modern profession you are not handicapped: you are paid as much as a man with the same ability” (“Girls!” 1919: 194, qtd. in Scanlan 2015: 5, italics removed)³⁴ are debatable: Women were “customarily paid much less than men” (Grove et al. 2019: 294) and often signed with their last name only to avoid prejudice.

Art schools and courses did not only offer skills, but also important contacts and opportunities for jobs and collaboration, all of which widen personal and career networks. Of course, this close personal contact was only the case with brick-and-mortar schools, but not with correspondence schools, as in the case of the

³² The first correspondence courses in illustration emerged in 1914, enabling aspiring illustrators from poorer or rural backgrounds to mail in and receive feedback on their work (Grove et al. 2019: 297–298).

³³ In the context of this study, I regard cartooning as a style that can be subsumed under the larger field of illustration. Most of the artists discussed here were famous for their cartoons, and their styles covered a wide range between (largely) full-color illustrations and (mostly) black-and-white cartoons.

³⁴ Particularly during wartime, ads for correspondence courses would highlight the possibility for women to “earn [their] own living” to “support a family” (“Ambitious Girls” 1918: 101).

Federal School of Applied Cartooning. And yet, for a long time, women's professional arts education was met with obstacles, as they were initially barred from certain classes or art school altogether.

More than half a century earlier, in 1860, outside the campus of America's oldest art institution, the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts (PAFA), on-lookers would have witnessed a curious spectacle: Frustrated with their exclusion from the Academy's life-drawing classes, some of its young female students took matters into their own hands, "posing for each other sometimes clothed, sometimes half-draped" (A. Carter 2000: 15). Ironically, young women artists' middle-class status initially posed a hindrance, rather than affordance, to full participation in art classes. Although the Academy had started to admit women in 1844, it treated them differently: They were only allowed to draw from antique casts if the delicate parts were covered by fig leaves, and they could only draw in museums on so-called Ladies' Days (Havemann 2012: 34). Negotiating their space creatively, female students therefore organized their own 'DIY'-like life classes and "petitioned for the use of the life school and a model" (35) until the institution finally gave in and held its first life drawing classes for women in 1868.³⁵

Morally ridden middle-class values were the cause for introducing segregated women's art and design schools across the United States. A pioneer in the field, Sarah Peter founded the Philadelphia School of Design for Women in 1844 (Goodman 1987: 14; A. Carter 2000: 17), and others soon followed.³⁶ Contemporary newspaper articles recommended aspiring artists to "[s]tudy in a good art school – and these are almost all located in the large cities" (Marshall 1912: 11), to be exact: in Philadelphia, Boston, and New York – the major publishing hubs for magazines, newspapers, or books that had established themselves in the nineteenth century.³⁷

³⁵ One viable alternative for middle-class women was "European study," for example at London's Female School of Design, the Lambeth School of Art and Design, the Slade School of Art, or the Parisian Académie Julian. Study in Europe required "courage and cash" (A. Carter 2000: 15; see also Waldrep 2010: vi). Contrary to French and English art schools, American art schools were often "private institutions," so that they "simply could not afford to bar women students from attending classes" altogether (Prieto 2001: 26).

³⁶ The National Academy admitted women from 1846, whereas New York's Cooper Union Free Art School (opened in 1854) established its own Female School of Design, and Brooklyn's Pratt Institute (opened in 1887) started by offering only a range of courses to women.

³⁷ If art schools constituted networks, Philadelphia would have formed a hub. As Alice A. Carter writes, "[b]y the 1840s the city had emerged as an important manufacturing center for textiles, wallpapers, floor coverings, upholstered furniture, and publications" so that "[d]ecorative artists were in great demand to embellish these products" (2000: 17). They studied at PAFA (founded in 1805), the Philadelphia School of Design for Women (later named Moore College of Art & Design), the University of Arts (established in 1876 through a merger of the Philadelphia College of Art

Already by the 1880s, female art students “[o]utnumbered” men (Swinth 2001: 5; see also Prieto 2001: 4). The figures reflect women’s professionalization through education: The 1890 census counted “nearly 11,000 women artists, sculptors, and teachers of art, [. . .] rising stunningly from the 414 women counted [. . .] just twenty years before” (Swinth 2001: 3).³⁸ Under the tutelage of famous art professor Thomas Eakins (1844–1916), the number of female students at PAFA even quadrupled (from 37 to 149, see Havemann 2012: 37) about 30 years after it had opened its doors to women in 1844. PAFA would help develop the careers of many famous illustrators of the time, among them Jessie Willcox Smith, who studied at PAFA from 1885 to 1888. Women also attended coeducational schools: Alice Beach Winter attended the St. Louis School of Fine Arts and completed her studies at the progressive Art Students League of New York, where also May Wilson Preston studied. Other artists, like the self-trained Nell Brinkley, never attended art school at all or, like Rose O’Neill, received their professional art education after they were already established artists.

Next to formal schooling itself, particularly art teachers formed vital nodes for establishing and expanding women illustrators’ professional networks and career opportunities. Dubbed the “father of American illustration” (von Schmidt 1984: 48) and a central figure to American illustration’s “development, and particularly to the training of female artists” (Waldrep 2010: vi), Howard Pyle (1853–1911) was a famous art teacher at the Drexel Institute for Art, Science, and Industry (today: Drexel University). As Waldrep points out, “[n]early half of the students in his first class were women, and during the course of his teaching career, he trained sixty female illustrators” (2010: vi).³⁹ In 1900 Pyle founded his own

and Philadelphia College of the Performing Arts), and the Drexel Institute of Arts and Sciences in Philadelphia (founded in 1891 as the Drexel Institute of Art, Science, and Industry).

38 Note that these numbers refer to all art practices, not just illustration. The numbers hint at a beginning high-low culture divide in arts and arts education in the late nineteenth century: Whereas the proportion of professional artists who are female peaked at almost 50 per cent by 1890 (Swinth 2001: 3), their number declined throughout the 1890s due to a “reorient[ation of] the art world” (5). This included a “move from genteel and academic art to avant-garde art,” the development of a gallery-dealer system, and more exclusive market structures all of which favored men (8). This development prefigured the gendered divide between masculine avant-garde high culture and feminine commercial art, such as periodical illustration, that began to take shape during the 1890s.

39 Goodman lists famous female Pyle protégées: “Ethel Pennewill Brown Leach, Ellen B. Thompson, Sarah S. Stillwell, Dorothea Warren, Elizabeth Shippen Green, Charlotte Harding, Violet Oakley, Katharine Pyle, Jessie Willcox Smith, Olive Rush, Anna Betts, Anne Mhoon, Bertha Corson Day, and Katherine Wireman” (1987: 15). These famous names notwithstanding, Pyle is also known for his discrimination against women: He complained about some of his female students’ alleged lack of artistic imagination and, as Michele H. Bogart writes, “did not want to contribute to the femi-

school in Wilmington, the so-called ‘Brandywine School,’ which also became known as an illustration style. Most of Pyle’s female students stayed in the Philadelphia area and got known as the ‘Brandywine women’ whose works shared characteristics of “large expressive forms, broad flat areas of color, and a strong sense of composition and design” as well as an overall “greater concern for elegant line and detailed decoration” (Herzog 1993: 11) – characteristics that are also reflected in Smith’s artwork.

That “career outcomes depend on the structure of network contacts” (Smith-Lovin and Miller McPherson 1993: 230) becomes evident in how women illustrators (in the making) were able to profit from their art teachers’ contacts to publishers (Scanlan 2015: 11). Pyle also provided his students with practically oriented instruction and commercial opportunities to exhibit their works in a real-work environment that facilitated their entrance into the commercial market. This was at least true for the few selected female students he decided to mentor to the same level as his male students. Yet, once they were equipped with hands-on and market-oriented training, prospective women illustrators could either “work on actual commissions” or show their work “to art directors for possible use” (von Schmidt 1984: 48). This was also the case at the other famous art schools of the era: Jessie Willcox Smith created her first published artwork (for *St. Nicholas Magazine* in 1888) during her final PAFA year (Nudelman 1989: 12) and, after graduating from PAFA, worked for the advertising department of the *Ladies’ Home Journal* in Philadelphia.⁴⁰ Unless they received scholarships, most female students financed their studies “through paid work, such as fashion illustrations and advertisements for department stores, magazines, and newspapers” (Scanlan 2015: 7; see also Cuba 1992: 4–7), combining the necessary with the useful. As Pyle himself once wrote to his Advanced Illustration student Bertha Corson Day: “There is no better criterion of fundamental excellence of work than to have it accepted and paid for by the Art Department of a magazine” (Pyle 1896, qtd. in Scanlan 2015: 10).

nine identity of the field any more than necessary” (1995: 31). His active discouragement of women led to a drop in the number of female students who attended his classes: from 85 per cent (1897) to 49 per cent (1899) (31).

⁴⁰ Unlike illustrating “fiction and news” segments, illustrating ads was deemed more suitable for women (Holahan 2019: 301). As such, in 1889, Smith’s initial commercial “assignments were limited to supportive work for some of the more established artists” until her illustrations caught the attention of “various national advertisers” (Nudelman 1989: 12). Smith rapidly gained recognition and, four years later, in 1893, was an “active” member of the “advertising department of *The Ladies’ Home Journal*” where she illustrated ads for “gloves, root beer, stoves, and facial soap” (12–13).

And yet, these teacher-student relations easily turned into ones of dependence: Incidents at women's art schools reinforced concerns about sexual abuse. PAFA was an institution "rife with scandal" due to the teaching methods of the infamous Thomas Eakins who allegedly let his female students "take turns posing nude for the impromptu class" or "invited students to his studio for free private instruction" (A. Carter 2000: 19). Also, the fact that there is only one Pyle student among the illustrators covered in the subsequent case studies shows that attendance of famous art schools as well as male teachers' influence on female careers in illustration should not be overrated. Female art students also profited from assisting and "teach[ing] one another" (Rubinstein 1982: 159, italics removed) and certainly also inspired each other, as also becomes evident from the co-habitation or the lifelong support networks that art students formed. Organizational and work-related ties helped create strong all-female professional and social networks and opportunities.⁴¹

1.4.2 Shared Spaces: Clubs, Houses, and Studios

In scholarly literature on women illustrators, one professional club stands out. In 1897 Philadelphia, art educator, painter, and engraver Emily Sartain (1841–1927) founded the Plastic Club, an all-female organization open to visual artists in response to a similar all-male art club in the city. 'Plastic' refers "to any work of art unfinished, or in a 'plastic' state," but also speaks to "malleable, changeable, and ever-in-progress work" ("The Plastic Club: About" 2023). As one of the oldest art clubs in the United States, it provided women artists with a professional platform and social-support network, following its agenda "to promote a wider knowledge of Art, [. . .] to advance its interests by means of social intercourse among artists," and "to bring the work of [its] members into the light" ("Plastic Club First Annual Report" 1897–1899 and "Constitution" 1897, both qtd. in Scanlan 2015: 19). Further means to raise women artists' profiles were "activities, including lectures, classes, teas, and exhibitions," among them its rather bohemian New Year gatherings (Kennedy 2018: 12; see also Scanlan 2015: 21). Particularly during the 1910s, female illustrators active in the suffrage movement, such as May Wilson Preston or Lou Rogers, organized or attended similar all-female gatherings to promote the cause and form synergies ("Chelsea Suffrage Dances" 1917: 10; "Suffragists Give Parties"

⁴¹ It should be noted that it was not least these (white) women's middle-class status that gave them the opportunity to participate in new educational and professional networks in the visual arts in the first place (Swinth 2001: 3; Goodman 1987: 15). There are "close to nil" examples of women who worked themselves out of poverty with illustration (Grove et al. 2019: 294).

1916: 7). Also, the Heterodoxy Club (early 1910s–1940s), although not exclusive to the visual arts, provided an institution by and for creative feminist women who “questioned forms of orthodoxy in culture, in politics, in philosophy – and in sexuality” (Lewis 2017). Considering women artists’ discrimination and suppression by their male counterparts and continued ridicule in the press,⁴² separate female art institutions were part of a *conscious* turn towards sexual segregation for the sake of women artists’ professionalization and their unshared recognition. Also, considering that the New York Society of Illustrators (founded in 1901, with prominent members, such as Charles Dana Gibson, Howard Pyle, W. J. Glackens, and Harrison Fisher, to name but a few) only granted associate membership to a few selected female illustrators (May Wilson Preston, Jessie Willcox Smith, Elizabeth Shippen Green, Florence Scovel Shinn, and Violet Oakley), female-only institutions were necessary.⁴³

Drexel and similar institutions widened female networks also because friendships took shape during the artists’ studies at the institutions that sometimes persisted for lifetimes. Artists established all-female households that “preserved the appearance of propriety despite the unconventionality of women living on their own,” in part because “[t]he definition of family was flexible enough to include relationships quite unlike the nuclear family” (Prieto 2001: 49). It did not matter whether they opted for communal living arrangements, or so-called ‘Boston Marriages,’ out of financial necessity and practicality, friendship, or romance, since, at the time, these “living arrangements excited such little commentary,” making it “difficult (and probably unnecessary) to distinguish between the platonic and the passionate” (49).

The most famous of such households among women illustrators, the Red Rose Inn, was jointly leased by illustrators Jessie Willcox Smith and Elizabeth Shippen Green, and the muralist Violet Oakley, who lived and worked together after they became friends at Drexel.⁴⁴ The Red Rose Inn, an elegant country estate in Villanova, a suburb of Philadelphia, encouraged their former teacher and men-

⁴² In 1907, the New York Society of Illustrators organized an exhibition on female illustrators at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel that was ridiculed by a sketch in the *New York World* (A. Carter 2000: 138).

⁴³ The Society finally granted full membership to these five women illustrators and 20 others in 1922 (Reed 2019c: 324).

⁴⁴ These joint households maintained by female artists were common. Also, Alice Barber Stephens and her protégé Charlotte Harding shared a studio between 1899 and 1903 in Philadelphia (Kennedy 2018: 10). May Wilson Preston, Edith Dimock, and Lou Seyme, who all met at art school, were known as the ‘Sherwood Sisters’ given their eponymous joint apartment and studio at 58 West 57th Street, New York City, and the “fun and high jinks at their weekly studio open house” (Rubinstein 1982: 166).

tor Pyle to dub the artists the 'Red Rose Girls' (A. Carter 2000: 73; Figure 1.2) – a name that was quickly adopted by the press. Living together enabled these women to negotiate the era's gender codes and yet have “the time, freedom, money, and control over their lives necessary to succeed as professional artists” (Herzog 1993: 11). This “sisterhood in art” (11) was contradictory for its time: “They were independent yet feminine, feminine and maternal yet childless, attractive yet without beaus, and financially successful without male providers” (13). Co-habitation was also practical for single or divorced female artists for other reasons: Rose O'Neill, for example, lived with her sister Callista, who was also her secretary and business manager (Scott 2019), at Washington Square in New York City, from where both advocated for women's enfranchisement.



Figure 1.2: “Elizabeth Shippen Green, Violet Oakley, Jessie Willcox Smith and Henrietta Cozens in their Chestnut Street studio (c. 1901).” The so-called ‘Red Rose Girls’ (Elizabeth Shippen Green, Violet Oakley, Jessie Willcox Smith, and Henrietta Cozens) posing as roses. The handwritten identification on verso, possibly written by Violet Oakley, reveals that the photograph mimics the poster for an exhibition at the Plastic Club in the background. Courtesy of Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

The Red Rose Inn was no Bohemian artist commune or artist colony, though. Other than the eclectic artist studios that were emerging in New York's Greenwich Village at the time, where Alice Beach Winter and Rose O'Neill lived, or the

artist colony of New Rochelle, where Nell Brinkley and other illustrators of her time resided, the Red Rose Inn was meant as a repose from the bustling city of Philadelphia.

As complex middling places, studios within shared houses or apartments spatially represented women artists' navigation between conflictive behavior and traditional domestic middle-class values. In her eponymous book, Prieto writes how female artists were "at home in the studio – not invading male space but rather claiming it as an extension of their own space" (2001: 2). The studio was both a professionally and socially significant space in an early woman artist's career: Whereas the idea of middle-class women renting a public studio was deemed incompatible with the era's codes of the domestic private sphere, a studio at home presented a non-subversive extension of the private sphere that allowed professional women illustrators to navigate their professional status within socially acceptable realms of middle-class domesticity (2).

Following the ideas of feminist spatial theorists, I argue that the studio, as a gendered space, is constantly being (re-)produced by women's everyday performances (Rose 1993: 18, 112). The fact that women artists often shared these studio spaces allows for a revisiting of Smith-Rosenberg's ideas. On the one hand, the secluded nature of the Red Rose Inn building invoked ideas of a quintessentially feminine private sphere, where women could pursue their professional work at a place hidden from the (masculine) public sphere, evoking Smith-Rosenberg's thoroughly "female world": Eva Karlen refers to it in idyllic tones as a "a country estate of several buildings that were separated by gardens and surrounded by trellises" (2017), and Alice A. Carter describes its style as "romantic, charming, and very English" (2000: 66). Quite in contrast to the property's decorative outside, however, Scanlan's semiotic reading of the Red Rose Inn's studio space with its "clean-lined furnishings and the accoutrements of busy artists" (2015: 18) complicates contemporary gender clichés. The photos of the Red Rose Inn's skylit barn-turned-studio space reprinted in Carter's book reveal a plain interior with wooden furniture, easels, and bare walls – appearing modern, masculine, and minimalistic, instead of genteel, feminine, and decorative (2000: 69, 89). Underlining the place's purpose-oriented design, the artists shared the Red Rose Inn not least for practical reasons of collaboration: They assisted each other, designed "elaborate costumes," jointly "reconstruct[ed] the situations they would be illustrating," or "modeled for one another" (A. Carter 2000: 153).⁴⁵

⁴⁵ The close work relationship between Smith and Green is reflected in their joint projects: the Bryn Mawr Calendars in 1901 and 1902, and the illustration of Mabel Humphrey's *The Book of the Child* (1903), to which Smith and Green contributed four illustrations each (including a cover illustration by Smith) (Nudelman 1989: 15).

In a situation where they become producers instead of consumers of culture and enter the public sphere through exhibitions, employment, and excursions, the three young women widened their own social and professional networks and chances of subsistence on the art market in a socially acceptable and legitimate way. They cleverly exploited existing nodes of true womanhood and private-sphere domesticity by repeatedly stressing their communal living styles and “through an extension of their feminine roles” (Prieto 2001: 2). Socially sound perceptions of domestic family-life are also triggered by the role of Henrietta Cozens in the Red Rose Inn: While it is not clear how she joined the creative female group, Cozens is described by Alice A. Carter as “not an artist,” but as someone “managing the property and overseeing all domestic chores” (2000: 68) – systemic obstacles in female artists’ careers.

The implications of women artists’ education, peer networks, and shared studio spaces were twofold: They allowed women artists to both establish a coherent professional female (group) identity based on notions of femininity and, at the same time, *extend* the conception of femininity (Prieto 2001: 2). Defying clear-cut dichotomies of public-private, male-female, powerful-powerless, this study thus highlights how women (both as artists and as the women visualized by them) were neither in control, nor victims; instead, within a network model, several interacting factors determine how women and their ideas of femininity were visualized and perceived – some of which I introduced here.

1.5 Coloring it in: Five Illustrators and their Creative Visions of Femininity

Focusing on the works of five female illustrators, I conduct four case studies, with the last case study offering a comparative approach between two illustrators. These case studies provide an overview over the wide range of female illustrators’ work. I analyze magazine front or back covers, illustrated serialized fiction, fashion and health advice columns, political cartoons, advertisements – and the impact of illustrators on this material. The five illustrators I selected have a lot in common and yet they all disclose different articulations of femininity, female life stages, and roles in their illustrations for magazines at the turn and outset of the twentieth century. All five artists worked for one or more of the major magazines, including what scholars refer to as the “Big Six” of women’s magazines: *Delineator*, *McCall’s*, *Ladies’ Home Journal*, *Woman’s Home Companion*, *Good Housekeeping*, and *Pictorial Review* (Zuckerman 1998: 3; see also Adams, Keene, Koella 2012:

11).⁴⁶ What makes their art especially interesting is that most of these illustrators worked for both mass and smaller publications. While the contributions of Rose O'Neill or May Wilson Preston to the big domestic and fashion magazines have been the focus of scholarly attention before, I juxtapose these with glances at material from less visible outlets, from a humor magazine to a political party journal. Conversely, Alice Beach Winter's work for a socialist little magazine is set in relation to her so far less regarded commercial advertising illustrations. In addition, I shift the focus from Nell Brinkley's much-discussed lavish illustrations for newspapers' syndicated and widely distributed Sunday supplements in the 1920s and '30s to her lesser known earlier illustrations for *Harper's Bazar* during the early years of her career. Like Brinkley, other illustrators I investigate began the work they would become world-famous for in the 1910s or later: Rose O'Neill's Kewpie figure was first produced as a toy doll in 1912, while the heyday of Jessie Willcox Smith's art occurred between 1917 and 1933, when she was under contract with *Good Housekeeping* to produce now widely collected covers showing mothers and children. The works I analyze in the four chapters cover a timeframe of roughly 25 years, between 1896 and 1920, and largely follow a chronological order.

Further similarities between the artists include their drawing style and their depicted topics. Influenced by Japanese decorative prints that were popular in that era, both Smith and Winter drew their child scenes in strong lines that they filled with flat color (A. Carter 2000: 45). Influenced by Art Nouveau, Nell Brinkley's and Rose O'Neill's art was more flowing and feminine, drawn in very fine lines (possibly using pen and India ink) and rich in detail. Compared to Brinkley's or O'Neill's drawing style, May Wilson Preston's simpler black-and-white sketch-like drawings used the hatching common for the cartoons of the era and, among the illustrators in this study, closest resembled the style of Alice Beach Winter's drawings for the little magazine *The Masses*. Some of Alice Beach Winter's commercial work also shows clear influence of the Arts and Crafts movement, as did many classically trained illustrators of the time (Goodman 1987: 21). At least two of the focus illustrators participated in the visual spread of 'Girl' types that are usually ascribed to famous male illustrators like Charles Dana Gibson (1867–1944) (Kitch 2001: 3, 191), and Nell Brinkley even created her own iconic Brinkley Girl that was marketed via various products. Finally, while I did not come across evidence suggesting that these five illustrators ever collaborated, their working on

⁴⁶ Periodical scholars also know of the newer term "Seven Sisters," which refers to a group of seven women's magazines (some of which emerged in the 1920s and 30s) catering to married white middle-class women.

very similar art for similar or sometimes the same magazines or clients, created during roughly the same time, invites speculation that they were very much aware of each other's work and influenced each other.

All of the illustrators I take into consideration are white women. To reflect on this circumstance, I aim to address images and imaginations of whiteness throughout. I will be concerned with the ways in which U.S.-American-born, white middle-class female illustrators imagined U.S.-American-born, white middle-class femininity. I decided not to include contributions by Black female artists or any art showing non-white female experiences in general. This is not due to a lack of material – indeed, the historiography of illustrative art and especially comics would look a lot different without the “groundbreaking imagery of strong, career-oriented, articulate Black female characters” from the 1930s to the 1950s, such as in the African American character Torchy Brown, created by Jackie Ormes (1911–1985) (Kennedy 2018: 42). However, it is a fact that African American (female) illustrators have been studied far less than white ones, although I believe that there is plenty that waits to be uncovered in the archives. Some of the illustrations produced by Black female artists have already been studied by authors like Amy Helene Kirschke, who investigated female illustrators' work for the NAACP publication *The Crisis* or *Opportunity* (2014b).

The reason for my choice of material and perspective is that illustrations of and by women of color would require entirely different interrogations than those that I use. The fact that white people dominated (and, in fact, still dominate) the imagery in periodical and visual media calls for questions regarding racial hierarchies, othering, and the systemic exclusion of non-whites from (white) media, to name just a few. Also, in a white-dominated visual culture that perpetuated racist stereotypes in turn-of-the-twentieth-century cartoons and advertisements, African American artists developed their very own and distinct visual-textual strategies to counter these stereotypes – some of which I briefly illustrate in the following.

The Harlem Renaissance was characterized by a strong collaborative effort between illustrators and writers, for example for short stories in *The Crisis* (Sherrard-Johnson 2010: 228). And while the female bonding and collaboration that authors like Shari Benstock make out as one of the features of “female modernism” (1989: 23) also pervaded white female illustrators' working strategies, African American female artists made particular use of these joint projects, as can be seen in the two-part travelogue for the April and May 1925 issues, created by Harlem Renaissance writer and *The Crisis* literary editor Jessie Redmon Fauset (1882–1961) and the prolific illustrator Laura Wheeler Waring (1887–1948, see Waring 1925: 19). Without going into further detail, which Cherene Sherrard-Johnson (2010) does in her intriguing analysis, the illustrated travelogue is only one of many examples in *The Crisis* where the visual narrative cannot be fully grasped without the textual narrative (see also Kirschke 2005). That is, both image and text only reveal their true implication when being

read together. This image-text divergence was no coincidence. It was part of a strategy to teach Black audiences about “processes of representation,” encouraging them to become “critical consumers of images” where the “true understanding of a subject required information gleaned from multiple sources” (Carroll 2005: 106, 116). This combined strategy of visual-textual conveyance makes sense given the racist images and texts pervading periodical media at the turn of the twentieth century. That is, while there are certain parallels to the professionalization and collaboration strategies mentioned in this introductory chapter, as well as to the visual languages of white female illustrators, African American (female) artists encountered and depicted a different world, ‘beyond the white canvas,’ and they did so by using their own strategies.

Next to a strategic image-text interplay in illustrated magazine pages, particularly the medium of photography seemed to play a more dominant and tactically decisive role for magazines like *The Crisis* – an interesting observation (made by Susan Bragg 2020: 80 and Sherrard-Johnson 2010: 228–229) that a book with a clear illustration-only focus would not do justice to cover. Frustrated with white photographers’ vision of African Americans (Sherrard-Johnson 2010: 228), especially the editor of *The Crisis*, W. E. B. Du Bois (1868–1963), used photography politically as a “tool of social reform” that “provide[d] evidence of African American respectability and civil rights readiness” (Bragg 2020: 80). Images showing children reading books or proud Black female college graduates in cap-and-gown were familiar from white artists’ illustrations for the mainstream magazines of the era. However, in *The Crisis*, these images become “testaments to education, industry, and progress” (Sherrard-Johnson 2010: 228), providing a visible and strong counterargument against the racist stereotyping of Black personas in the era’s visual language. Particularly the blatantly racist language in illustrated advertisements of the era, which I reflect on in my last case study, calls for a larger visual-textual study and questions that go far beyond the ones I ask in this book. However, I hope that the findings of this study offer points of departure for further research and studies on marginalized female experiences and imaginations during the outset of the twentieth century.

The first chapter focuses on Rose O’Neill’s cartoons and covers for the popular humor magazine *Puck* (1877–1918) that were published between 1896 and 1901 and thereby present the oldest work in this study. The eccentric, flamboyant O’Neill would gain worldwide fame for her Kewpies – before there was Mickey Mouse, these baby-like figures were the most famous cartoon characters, and their licensed merchandise made O’Neill presumably the world’s highest-paid female artist of her time (“Here Comes Rose O’Neill” 1917: 9) – a title that is only contested by her contemporary Jessie Willcox Smith. Also, O’Neill is known

among comic scholars for “The Old Subscriber Calls” (for *Truth* in 1896), presumably the first comic strip by a woman in the U.S. (Robbins 2013: 8, 10).⁴⁷

Yet, her early contributions to the political humor magazine *Puck*, which targeted a male readership, at the very turn of the twentieth century are less known, which is surprising given that the magazine has for decades provided scholars with a rich historical source of turn-of-the-century political and social debates. In this chapter, I delineate how *Puck*’s at that time first and only female staff illustrator contributed to the humor magazine’s editorial and visual shifts in the 1890s. At a time of a growing social (but also political) female presence in the public sphere and on the magazine market, O’Neill’s serially printed and markedly feminine, eye-catching (back-)cover art prepared the ground for *Puck*’s diversification of readership and eventual embrace of women’s political demands. O’Neill contributed to the development of *Puck* from a magazine that, in the late nineteenth century, lampooned women, to one that visually and textually supported women’s political demands in an extra Woman Suffrage Number in 1915. At the same time, this chapter draws a link between O’Neill’s large-format, full-color visualizations of young womanhood and the humor magazine’s strategic demonstration of the new chromolithography printing technology via her artwork. Changing and visually attractive magazine covers were crucial to a magazine’s success, since the very form of magazines, but also their speed of consumption, depended on effective visuals: Following the “cardinal rule” of consumer culture, magazines are “disposable” and “replaced each month by a fresh set of images” (Scanlon 1995: 8). A good cover would attract attention on newsstands and street cars, “strategic spots to post covers” (Zuckerman 1998: 30), and so-called ‘cover girls’ were used to embellish not only mass, but also smaller or niche magazines.

This first case study will show that illustrations that at first glance engage clichés can turn into a powerful aesthetic device. Through her nature imagery, O’Neill actively participated in the visual construction of a modern experience of femininity, highlighting the notion of young womanhood as a short window of possibilities about to close down. The chapter correlates the specific temporality of modernity – ephemerality, urgency, and acceleration – with periodical mechanisms of temporal

47 The work of the Bonniebrook Historical Society that houses the O’Neill Kewpie Museum, Fine Art Gallery, and Research Library in the place of the artist’s former mansion, has helped to shed a more nuanced light on the multi-talented artist, who contributed illustrations to over 50 magazines, wrote and illustrated novels, and, after studying with Auguste Rodin himself, even created and exhibited her own sculptures in the early 1920s. To my knowledge, O’Neill is also the only of the five illustrators who attended the 1893 World’s Fair where she encountered paintings and sculptures for the first time (O’Neill 1997: 53). I owe thanks to Susan Scott, President of the Bonniebrook Historical Society, who provided me with new insight on O’Neill in numerous emails.

and spatial contraction, and thus uses the history of the political satirical magazine *Puck* to show how the economic and technological demands of the modern magazine market were intertwined with the processes of women's emancipation and an emerging new (visual) public sphere.

In Rose O'Neill illustrations, the terminology of the 'season' in nature and high society plays a central role. The same terminology informs the contemporary fashion magazines to which I will turn in my second case study, which looks at the drawings of Nell Brinkley. Brinkley garnered a fandom with her lavish, florally imbued fine-line drawings for cartoons, advertisements, children's books, magazines, newspaper comic serials, and sheet music covers. The "Queen of Comics" ("Nell Brinkley" 2015) has only recently received scholarly attention by comic historians like Trina Robbins, and her often very colorful art for early-twentieth-century magazines and newspapers is in demand by collectors worldwide.

The high-school dropout never received a formal arts education. Instead, after she had already made a name for herself at her hometown *Denver Post*, editor Arthur Brisbane scouted and hired her at age twenty-one to work for the media magnate William Randolph Hearst and his *New York Evening Journal*. She would become an audience favorite in Hearst's various publications – particularly for her Brinkley Girl, whose trademark mass of curls, frilly dresses, and long eyelashes posed a counterexample to the sleeker, more uppity look of the Gibson Girl. The Brinkley Girls graced the cartoons and covers of newspapers, like the *New York Evening Journal*, the *San Francisco Call*, or the *American Weekly*, Hearst's Sunday newspaper supplement, which were distributed nationwide via Hearst's vast magazine and newspaper empire, including his comics-centered King Features syndicate, for decades.

From the beginning of the twentieth century, Hearst began to establish a magazine division for which he acquired various magazine titles, among them also the women's fashion and society magazine *Harper's Bazar* (this is the spelling it used until 1930), which he purchased in 1913 (Zuckerman 1998: 19) to target an upper-middle- and upper-class audience. Between February 1914 and December 1915, Brinkley illustrated two authors' advice columns for the *Bazar*, which will be the topic of this chapter.

At a time of changing (self-)perceptions, magazines gave their young female readership orientation and much inspiration (Holahan 2019: 300). A cross-reading of the diverging visual and textual narratives in these advice columns brings out an array of options for the young female readers addressed in the columns. I argue that Nell Brinkley probes the emancipatory middle-ground within these two magazine columns, inviting her targeted reader-viewer to tentatively deviate from gendered *idealization* towards greater *individualization*. In these illustrated columns, fashion becomes a performative act and potentially emancipatory tool for young

women's 'self-fashioning' within and beyond the narrow, mainstreamed confines of the fashion magazine. This chapter further highlights the parallels between Nell Brinkley's syndicated art and her merchandised fashion, both of which adhered to similar temporal and industrial mechanisms, including seasonal cycles. It concludes with a meta-reading of how images and meanings of femininity circulated within Brinkley's oeuvre and publication formats.

The third chapter looks at how illustrations were strategically used to convey political narratives. To demonstrate how illustrators devised, used, or reshaped the various visual-textual types of young femininity that populated the era's periodical media, I focus on May Wilson Preston's illustrations for the political serialized magazine story "Portia Politics," published between 1911 and 1912 in the *Woman Voter*, the party journal of the Woman Suffrage Party.

Listed by *Vanity Fair* among "the [m]ost [d]istinguished [i]llustrators in the [w]orld" ("Dozen" 1915: 28–29), Preston was one of the first female associate members in the Society of Illustrators (Society of Illustrators 2011; J. Grant 1971: 99; Kennedy 2018: 210).⁴⁸ She illustrated stories by (then lesser known) authors like F. Scott Fitzgerald or Mary Roberts Rinehart for the *Saturday Evening Post*, *Harper's Baz(a)ar*, and *Good Housekeeping*, to name but a few. An impressionist painter, she also exhibited at the 1913 Armory Show, among other places, and, although she was no Ashcan artist herself, she was associated with the School's realist style. Unlike O'Neill and Brinkley, Preston gained a formal arts education, studying at New York's Art Students League and School of Art, Ohio's Oberlin Art School, and even in Paris. She was also a suffrage activist in the National Woman's Party.⁴⁹

At a time when anti-suffrage cartoons ridiculed women's demands, pro-suffrage cartoonists had to be inventive to attenuate and market radical political demands. In "Portia Politics," Preston presents a sympathetic perspective on women's new (political) identity, which stands in an interesting tension to the illustrated story. Instead of meticulously following a given textual narrative, illustrators had some freedom of interpretation, as Wesley Stout, the former editor of the *Saturday Evening Post*, to which Preston was a popular contributor, wrote in a 1932 article: "She must cast and act as well as direct" (9, qtd. in Nolan 2017: 71) when she illustrates. Preston's Portia poses a multi-dimensional counter image to the stereotypical image of the 'furious suffragette' circulating elsewhere in the periodical market. With her visually appealing characterization of the story's protagonist,

⁴⁸ Note that the Society of Illustrators distinguished between associate membership and full membership, the latter of which was granted to female artists only much later, in the early 1920s.

⁴⁹ Next to May Wilson Preston, also Rose O'Neill, Nell Brinkley, and Alice Beach Winter were active in visual advocacy for suffrage.

Preston also differentiates herself from the more radical, suffragist imagery of artist colleagues like Cornelia Baxter Barns (1888–1941), another PAFA student and member of the Socialist party (M. C. Jones 1993: 171). Barns’s more straightforward visual language, produced with heavy crayon lines, found a space in such niche outlets as the *Birth Control Review* or *The Masses*, where she criticized social inequality, male political dominance, and middle- and working-class women’s lacking access to birth control (see, for example, her 1917 cartoon “We Accuse Society”; see also Sheppard 1994: 192–193). In this cartoon, a heavily pregnant woman, who is surrounded by five small children and her miserable looking husband, literally confront a court, metaphorically accusing society and a ‘system’ that perpetuates poverty and socioeconomic inequality by barring especially poorer families from legal and safe access to birth control measures. The comparatively sympathetic visualization of conflictive situations in “Portia Politics” thus also contributes to the era’s general discussion among activists and (activist) artists about the ‘best’ visual and textual strategies to promote and advocate women’s suffrage.

Apart from political demands for women’s suffrage, the Golden Age of American Illustration also coincided with progressivist causes that targeted women and care work, among them the ideology of ‘educated motherhood.’ How these ideas came to the fore and were negotiated in the imagery and texts of commercial advertising is the topic of the final case study that deals with Jessie Willcox Smith’s and Alice Beach Winter’s illustrations for Ivory Soap advertisements that were published in various women’s magazines between 1901 and 1921.

Although Smith discovered her talent for illustration rather coincidentally, while working as a kindergarten teacher, she would become one of the Golden Age’s most prominent illustrators. She is so synonymous with the field that the Wikipedia entry on ‘illustration’ displays one of her works at its very top. Smith studied with Thomas Eakins at PAFA and, while she was already working in the advertising department of the *Ladies’ Home Journal*, studied with Howard Pyle at Drexel. Her child illustrations appeared in the major women’s magazines of the time: As the editors of *Good Housekeeping* wrote in 1917, they “hold[] up to our readers [. . .] the highest ideals of the American home, the home [. . .] one associates with a sunny living-room – and children” (“Secret” 1917: 32, qtd. in Goodman 1987: 17). Between 1918 and 1933, she contributed about 200 consecutive covers showing children or harmonious mother-child scenes to *Good Housekeeping* magazine (Holahan 2019: 302; Rubinstein 1982: 161), and for each she earned “between \$1,500 and \$1,800” (“Shop Til’ You Drop” 2017; see also James, Wilson James, and Boyer 1971: 316) in the 1920s or even \$3,000 during the 1930s, amounting to a total of “about a quarter of a million dollars” during these roughly 15 years (Goodman 1987: 17) – a compensation that corresponds to more than \$20 million at the time of writing this text (“Purchasing Power” 2023).

Like Smith, Alice Beach Winter attended art school and was celebrated for her illustrations of children – so much that, in addition to her magazine illustrations, she earned an income portraying the children of New York City’s elite families (Zurier 1988: 182; M. C. Jones 1993: 186). Living in New York’s Greenwich Village with her husband, the illustrator Charles Allan Winter, she was a member of Branch One of the Socialist Party and a yearslong contributor, art director, and co-founder of the socialist, radical little magazine *The Masses* together with other New York artists. Like Preston, she was also a suffragist and contributed to the *Woman Voter*.

The Golden Age of American Illustration was also the age of nationwide distributed advertisements, and both Smith and Winter were known for their excellent work in advertising. At a time when magazine publishers shifted “from selling magazines directly to readers to selling their readership to advertisers” (Garvey 1996: 11), beautifully illustrated ads, such as the ones by Ivory Soap, became more important than ever before. They were collected by magazine readers or sold as full-size reproductions to decorate nurseries (Kitch 2001: 169; Higonnet 1998: 61–62), blurring the bisection between mass-reproduced commercial illustration and fine art (Bogart 1995: 8–9). While much has been written about early women’s magazines, close readings of advertisements, let alone advertisement illustrations, are rare,⁵⁰ since early archivists often discarded ad sections during the archiving process. This is a scholarly gap, considering advertisement illustrations’ potential for sociopolitical readings.

By shifting the perspective from magazine covers or story illustrations to advertisements, I aim to disclose the impact that personal authorship can have on commissioned advertisement artwork. The latter question is particularly interesting in the Progressive era, where visual and textual narratives in advertisements helped shape discourses and convey class- and gender-related messages of ‘proper’ mother- and womanhood.

A conclusive outlook at imaginations of femininity beyond the Golden Age of American Illustration underscores the substantial impact these five outstanding illustrators had on subsequent generations of female artists and their creative imaginations of female characters in the first half of the twentieth century.

⁵⁰ For an excellent exception, see Ellen Gruber Garvey’s chapter on the construction of female roles in 1880s scrapbooks and advertising material in her book *The Adman in the Parlor* (1996).

2 “Flirting with Time,” Or: How Young Women in Rose O’Neill’s Illustrations for *Puck* (1896–1901) Have the Summer of their Lives

2.1 Taking Her Time



Figure 2.1: O’Neill. 1897. “Flirting with Time.” At the dawn of the new century, young women were caught between a new and an old sense of time, depicted here as a whirling dance with Father Time. Courtesy of Bonniebrook Historical Society Museum.

A young woman is caught in the dramatic embrace of Father Time. Upon a closer look, the odd couple is dancing: The woman's wide pink dress expresses a dizzying dynamic with its swirling, circular motion that blurs across the entire width of Rose O'Neill's cover for *Truth* magazine's March 18, 1897, issue (Figure 2.1).⁵¹ Engrossed in her Serpentine-like dance, she seems unperturbed by Father Time. Expressing carelessness towards the mortal scythe that reaches dangerously close to her pretty head, as well as to the notion and the passing of time and all that it entails for her young female life, she is indeed "flirting with time," as the illustration's title suggests. Flirting with and brazenly mocking the old man, she will likely outpace Father Time, leaving him behind in the old century, while she, glancing coquettishly backwards over her shoulder into the onlooker's eyes, dances effortlessly forward into the twentieth century and all the new possibilities it holds for her.

Time – its passing, acceleration or deceleration, contraction or expansion – takes up a central role in young women's lives towards the close of the nineteenth and the outset of the twentieth century. Metaphorically swirled around and turned upside-down in the whirlwind-dance with Father Time,⁵² previous notions of time and life phases were left behind in the old century. Instead, time received a *new* meaning as the young turn-of-the-century woman,⁵³ who shall be the attention of this chapter, gained an overall *new* perception of time in breaking down 'her' time in *new* manners and making *new*-found use of it: She entered and graduated from college, took up professional occupation, and delayed 'subsequent' life stages of marriage and motherhood (or did not factor them into her time formula at all). For this young woman, claiming control over her time presented an act of self-assertion or defiance.

This social productivity in young women's negotiation and claiming of time becomes apparent in an analysis of Rose O'Neill's illustrations, which she contributed between 1896 and 1901 to *Puck* (1877–1918), another popular humor maga-

51 The New York publication *Truth* (1881–84, 1886–1905) began as a society journal and, after several revamps, became a comic journal in 1891. The publication was famous for its concerns with high-society "problems of love and marriage, romance and money," and its covers were adorned by "statuesque, full-bosomed, and fine featured" women who "wore low-cut gowns exposing shoulders and a deep cleavage" (Linneman 1987: 289) as exemplified in O'Neill's cover.

52 Father Time was a "recognizable icon" that "long symbolized time" in all kinds of print matter, including magazines and advertising, towards the close of the nineteenth century (Iskin 2003: 44). Ironically, "[his] fate was sealed" in the early twentieth century when he suddenly appeared 'out-of-date' (44).

53 I demarcate the life phase of young womanhood in connection with turn-of-the-century middle-class conventions of courtship (roughly starting at age 18) for the ends of marriage and motherhood (roughly at 25).

zine of the time. Founded in 1876 and at first issued only in German, the success of Austrian-American Joseph Keppler’s (1838–1894) *Puck* called for an English edition by March 1877. Following its Shakespearean mascot Puck’s motto, “What Fools These Mortals Be,” the publication poked fun at contemporary political events and social mores, making it a popular source of American social and political history among scholars today.⁵⁴ *Puck* is credited with having laid the ground for comic journalism and was so successful, evident in its high circulation of nearly 90,000, that its editors created spinoffs and various collections, such as *Pickings from Puck*, *Puck’s Annual*, *Puck on Wheels*, *Puck’s Library*, or *Puck’s Monthly Magazine and Almanac* (Secor 1987: 225, 226). Although its political leanings were never rigid, *Puck* was reform-minded, inclined towards liberalism, and is even said to have bolstered the Presidential election of a Democratic candidate in 1884 (“History of *Puck*” n.d.), whereas its competitor *Judge* leaned Republican. In its publication of political or social satire, often in the form of cartoons, caricatures, and literature, *Puck* also competed with *Life* and *Truth*.⁵⁵ Published weekly in a 16-page quarto format for a price of ten cents, *Puck* prided itself on its elaborate full-color drawings, made possible by the use of the new chromolithography printing technology (Secor 1987: 226). Ironically, these colored drawings also predestined its eventual demise: When newspapers began to print daily cartoons, the elaborately printed humor magazine could not keep up with their topicality – in addition, Sunday newspaper editions soon adopted four-color printing (224). Another reason for *Puck*’s demise was the advent of mass advertising that did not respond well to *Puck*’s support of partisan politics (Dueben 2014). The magazine was eventually bought by William Randolph Hearst (1863–1951), turned black and white in 1916 (Haden-Guest 2017), and saw its last issue in September 1918 (Secor 1987: 225).

Over the years, *Puck* employed the crème-de-la-crème of artists at the time, many of whom used *Puck* as their testing ground: among them Frederick Burr Opper, Bernhard Gillam, Eugene Zimmerman, C. J. Taylor, Frank A. Nankivell, Louis M. Glackens, and Art Young (Secor 1987: 223, 224). One of these artists was *Puck*’s first, and at the time sole, female staff illustrator, the self-trained Rose O’Neill, who is credited with having contributed “more than 700 cartoons including

54 The child-like, curly-headed Puck made his regular appearance in the weekly’s masthead: Wearing a hat, a mirror, a walking stick, and a satchel, he embodied the hobgoblin character from Shakespeare’s “Midsummer Night’s Dream” who alternately poked fun at corrupt politicians or polite society.

55 The humor magazine *Life*, not to be confused with the photojournalist publication, was read by East-Coast college elites, whereas *Truth*’s readership “could be found everywhere” (Linneman 1987: 289–290).

at least five cover designs for *Puck*” (Kennedy 2018: 207). According to her autobiography, O’Neill was a staff member of *Puck* for seven years (O’Neill 1997: 72), but she was never out of work: Her list of works for more than fifty other magazines, from *Life* to *Cosmopolitan*, *Good Housekeeping*, *The Smart Set*, and *Everybody’s*, is significant and, with “The Old Subscriber Calls” (for *Truth* in 1896), includes the presumably first comic strip by a woman in the United States (Robbins 2013: 8, 10). O’Neill was a true all-round talent: Apart from her work for magazines, she wrote and illustrated novels, and studied sculpture with Rodin, leading her to exhibit her own sculptures that were inspired by her more serious art. And yet, she is best remembered for the Kewpie craze that she set off with her drawings of these goodhearted little cherubic figures for the *Ladies’ Home Journal* in 1909. Licensed Kewpie merchandise would turn her into the world’s highest-paid female artist of her time, according to a 1917 article in the *San Francisco Chronicle* (“Here Comes Rose O’Neill” 1917: 9).⁵⁶ In 1915, a cartoon of marching Kewpies would even call for “Votes for Our Mothers” in a special guest-edited Woman Suffrage Number of *Puck* – reflecting O’Neill’s involvement in New York’s suffrage activism.

Long before the political humor magazine would diversify its target audience and contents so far to endorse women’s political enfranchisement, *Puck* spoke to a predominantly male readership. Consequently, this chapter offers a rare glimpse at how femininity was visualized in a magazine that, for once, was *not* part of the abundance of women’s magazines that flooded the early periodical market.

This chapter traces how temporality is negotiated by the young women in Rose O’Neill’s illustrations for *Puck*. I demonstrate that, just like these carrier and publication media – that is, illustrations for a weekly humor magazine – were underlying certain temporal ‘demands’ of serial and circular (re-)production, women’s modern experience was intricately informed and affected by temporality. O’Neill’s cartoons and colorfully illustrated front and back covers discuss how young women claim their time and which implications the passage of time has for them. O’Neill visualizes aspects of temporality in these women’s lives (that revolve around courtship, marriage, generational conflicts, but also education) through allegories of nature’s life cycle and seasonal progression. She thereby specifically signals the ephemerality of life, and with it the life stage of young womanhood, demarcating these years as a significant period of ‘blossoming’ for

⁵⁶ Sold as dolls made from bisque and celluloid and as all sorts of other imaginable paraphernalia produced in up to 17 different factories across Germany (Skalicky 2015), the Kewpies were the most widely known cartoon characters before Mickey Mouse. They were used in advertising for Jell-O and decorated pro-suffrage promotional material. Today, the Japanese Kewpie Corporation owns the Kewpie trademark and uses the Kewpie name and image on their products, such as mayonnaise and baby food (Scott 2021).

young women’s emancipation and social experimentation prior to marriage and motherhood. Associations of femininity with nature build on clichés that traditionally present women as ‘timeless’ and exclude them from notions of modernity. I argue that particularly O’Neill’s heightened attention to the contraction of time in young women’s lives under the guise of nature presents a powerful aesthetic device. Her use of nature imagery thus allows the artist to actively participate in the visual construction and deconstruction of young women’s narrow contours and spheres of action.

In the following, I first familiarize the reader with how Western philosophical thought and modern-era sociological discourses had relegated women to an Edenic, primordial idea of nature, enmeshed them in a repetitive cyclical order of time, and thereby written them *out* of modern time, history, and cultural production. With its seasonal and biological character, however, nature draws attention to time and its passing, thus evoking characteristically *modern* notions of the structuring and management of time. After a first glance at two cartoons which introduce the reader to how Rose O’Neill intuited a heightened awareness of time in young women’s lives at the turn of the century, I demonstrate how O’Neill’s placement of young women within nature settings or floral embellishments mobilizes imagery, according allegorizations, and visual or textual metaphors of seasonal progression and thereby redresses popular imaginations of women’s atemporality. Given this visual connection between botanical and female biology, O’Neill visualizes a specifically feminine realization and negotiation of time and its structuring in the modern era, where nostalgic, feminized, and often highly aesthetic renditions of nature turn out the actual omnipresence and centrality of time in young women’s lives, decisions, and opportunities at the turn of the century. Images of nature thus prompt an active recognition and negotiation of time in the light of brief female youth. Depictions of young womanhood as informed by nature, rather than settling into clichés of atemporality and the anti-modern, therefore lend themselves to a reversed (and hence productive) reading of nature. Nature, in my reading, *emancipates* women from these clichés and draws them back into the very discourses of temporality and modernity that these associations with nature had originally banned them from.

2.2 ‘Out of Time’: Woman’s Positioning within Modern Time

In her essay “Telling Time in Feminist Theory,” Rita Felski notes the centrality of time in feminist thought. She speaks of a “dizzying proliferation of times,” in which

woman is a faithful yet fluctuating presence. She bears the brunt of time's meaning, is called on to represent many measures of time. She stands for the behind and beyond, for the sublime mystery of temporal otherness; she is the token of a far-distant past as well as a future that exceeds our grasp. She is the New Woman, the primeval goddess, the postmodern cyborg, the new traditionalist; she is the symbol of flux and continuity, of the archaic and the new. (2002: 21)

With such an omnipresence of time, it is surprising how predominantly male philosophers, scientists, and sociologists, from Aristoteles and Plato to Darwin, Veblen, or Simmel, have traditionally written women 'out of modernity,' rendering them "timeless" (Parkins 2010: 98) or "atemporal" (Felski 1995: 38). The gendered hierarchization of time, with the "valoriz[ation of] masculine time" and the "marginaliz[ation of] feminine time" (Murphy 2001: 4), rests largely on a gendered nature/culture divide insisting on woman's biological *reproduction* and man's cultural *production*. With the rise of a moneyed leisure class during the Second Industrial Revolution in the United States, particularly sociology, as the emergent modernist discipline towards the late nineteenth century, reinforced this nature/culture divide with a gendered division of labor between the 'atemporal' female consumer and the 'temporal' male producer.

A central line of argumentation in the essays (1890–1911) by sociologist Georg Simmel revolves around gendered temporal patterns of (masculine) linearity and (feminine) circularity. Caught in an incessant loop of her daily routines in the domestic sphere, her quotidian tasks of social reproduction, and immersed in the processes of life and biorhythmic cycles, woman experiences her life in a circular manner (Felski 2000: 19–20; Simmel 1985c: 211–212). That is, while modern philosophical, sociological, and literary thought presented man as an active and experiencing agent 'in the crowd,' woman was lost in nature, "driven by the tidal currents of her cyclical reproductive system, a cycle bounded by the pivotal crises of puberty and menopause and reinforced each month by her recurrent menstrual flow" (Smith-Rosenberg 1973: 59).⁵⁷

Simmel draws another gendered opposition of male objectivity and female absoluteness: Woman "rests" in her own "unity" and containment based on her association with a tranquil, atemporal idea of nature (1985c: 223), while her female domesticity equilibrates the public sphere's contrariness through a sense of "steadiness, containment, unity" (1985b: 177), providing a safe haven to man's diz-

57 While Victorian-era medical discourse kept woman as "a prisoner of tidal currents" (Smith-Rosenberg 1973: 68), she was not necessarily kept indoors: To avert degeneration of their reproductive health, young women were told to spend ample time outdoors in fresh air and otherwise "limit their activities to the home" (62). This ambiguous relation between an 'inside' domestic sphere and an 'outside' public sphere in nature, in connection with allegedly 'old' and 'new' imaginations of female roles, becomes apparent in O'Neill's back cover discussed in this chapter.

zing sensation of modern progress and acceleration. As Felski sums up, “in contrast to male becoming, woman represents being; whereas he is dynamic, she is beyond historical time” (1995: 46). Situated ‘beyond time,’ woman turned into the “overt object of nostalgic desire,” and femininity became imbued with the more ‘authentic’ and ‘stable’ “cyclical rhythms of a preindustrial organic society” (16, 37–39) that loomed large over the fin-de-siècle yearning for a ‘lost’ past. This adds to the idealization of femininity, but also cements the power divides: While women were the “classic *objects* of nostalgic affection,” they were no nostalgic “*subjects*” (41, my emphases).

Simmel’s view of the feminine experience of modernity as ‘tranquil’ and unaffected by the modern speed of steady production, however, only applies to women of the (new) leisure class. As I have shown elsewhere with the example of the female garment factory worker, working women experienced such idiosyncratically modern notions as acceleration, efficiency, change, anonymity, and modern urbanity more profoundly (Friedrichs 2018).

Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer trivialized leisure-class women’s experience of modernity as one of “pleasure” and consumption, whereas men’s modernity was characterized by “rationalization” (Felski 1995: 6–7). The non-productive ‘trophy-wife’ plays a central part – already much earlier – in leisure-class patterns of wasteful ‘conspicuous consumption,’ as described by economist and sociologist Thorstein B. Veblen in 1899. Paralleling Simmel’s arguments with a U.S.-American perspective, Veblen assigns women of the *nouveau riche* the role of vicarious consumers of their husband’s production: With the “disappearance of servitude” towards the turn of the century, “the middle-class wife still carries on the business of vicarious leisure, for the good name of the household and its master” who may have to work due to “economic circumstances” (Veblen 2007: 56–57). The repetitive character of her wasteful effort in household duties follows purely aesthetic and “decorative” motives with no function or visible result whatsoever apart from keeping up the household’s pecuniary reputation and “showing that she does not and need not occupy herself with anything that is gainful or that is of substantial use” (57). Not least, “women are identified with repetition via consumption” (Felski 2000: 19), and Veblen points to this consumption as a distinguishing marker of class (Beetham 1996: 132). The repetitive, circular, but also useless character of female ‘work’ as trophy-wife is best expressed by the dresses she wears: the latest fads from Paris, every season, and “appropriate only for leisure rather than productive work” (Förster 2021: 204). What is important for my argument: Veblen pictures this middle-class wife as both wasteful “of goods” and of “time and effort” (2007: 60, my emphasis). Apart from signifying her class status, her wasteful ‘consumption’ of time also defines her role in turn-of-the-century society. Without ever “leaving a substantial result” (Simmel 1985a: 174, my translation), woman becomes the he-

donistic “ceremonial consumer of goods” and, as I would add, time (Veblen 2007: 58; see Simmel 1985a: 161; Felski 1995: 43).

Especially in the relentless modern machinery of progress, however, repetition without producing visible results became associated with “laziness, conservatism, or bad faith,” in short, retardation (Felski 2000: 20). Even worse, whereas antiquity regarded repetition as a “treasured” ritual, modernity imbued it with “horror” (Felski 2002: 25). In other words, while woman was not deemed fit to participate in the modern discourse of industrial production and acceleration, her subjection enabled man’s modern progress, as well as humankind’s reproduction – a notion which I scrutinize in my analysis.

In her numerous, and yet widely overlooked or even unknown, illustrations for *Puck* between 1896 and 1901, O’Neill visualizes young women whose lives are informed by temporality and who, simultaneously, remediate such gendered time patterns. Particularly the decades around the turn of the century, characterized by the “[a]cceleration of [s]ocial [c]hange” (Rosa 2016: 129, my translation), allowed for a reviewing and negotiation of temporal experiences in the contracted life phase of young womanhood.

The technological, economic, but also social developments surrounding women’s emancipation instilled young women with newfound possibilities and effected a new and modern, distinctively feminine perception and mediation of time at the outset of the new century. College education, but also innovations such as cars or phones, and newly created office jobs in the city looked attractive to young working- and middle-class women. Seeking independence from the scrutiny of the motherly home, the church, and small-town communities, they increasingly flocked to the anonymous city. The big city’s promise of freedom and unprecedented opportunities is a theme that also resonates in contemporary novels like Theodore Dreiser’s *Sister Carrie* (1900/1917). By the 1910s, so-called kitchenette-apartments came to epitomize young women’s alleged moral decline that Progressive-era lawmakers and reformers campaigned against (McGovern 1968: 318–320, 332). This thin line, between desires for social climbing and threats of moral decline, is also addressed at the very outset of *Sister Carrie*:

When a girl leaves her home at eighteen, she does one of two things. Either she falls into saving hands and becomes better, or she rapidly assumes the cosmopolitan standard of virtue and becomes worse. Of an intermediate balance, under the circumstances, there is no possibility. (Dreiser 1917: 2)

Next to the newfound spatial freedom resulting from these notorious “job and kitchen revolutions” (McGovern 1968: 320), young women could also freely dispose of their time – items such as their own latchkeys permitted them to leave and return home whenever (and with whomever) they wished. These develop-

ments encouraged the young woman to increasingly set her own clock and live according to her own accelerated female ‘tact’ as becomes manifest in Rose O’Neill’s black-and-white cartoon “Woman’s Tact” (1901, Figure 2.2).



Figure 2.2: O’Neill. 1901. “Woman’s Tact.” Living life in her own ‘woman’s tact,’ a young woman thinks that “life is too short” to listen to sermons. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

The young Miss Deering in this cartoon flouts traditional conventions of feminine time, or rather, feminine time-*lessness*. Confronted by a reverend who asks her whether his sermons are too long, she retorts with telling evasiveness, while digging her fingers nonchalantly into her Gibson-Girl hairdo: “Oh, dear, no! I merely think that life is too short.”⁵⁸ A woman who seems to be her mother, dressed in proper nineteenth-century frilled attire and resting her folded hands, looks in startled disbelief at her daughter’s outspokenness towards this man of authority. Also, no ring visible at Miss Deering’s fingers, she represents the mass of young

⁵⁸ The cartoon’s underlying joke can only be understood through the accompanying gag line. Helen Goodman explains in her 1989 exhibition catalogue *Art of Rose O’Neill*: “As was true of the cartoons by many artists of the period, O’Neill’s drawings are rather general, while the captions are pointed, irreverent, and sometimes virulent” (1989: 16). As Goodman also confirmed with American illustration expert Walt Reed in an interview for the catalogue, “it was the idea that sold the drawing rather than the image” (16), even though, early on in her career, O’Neill also submitted caption-less drawings to which the magazine then added its own gag lines.

women who prolonged their life stage of young woman- or even girlhood by delaying marriage and motherhood.⁵⁹ She may sit in a middle-class parlor, but she is not ready for the time regimes, let alone the rigid courtship patterns and marital decisions, that await her in the conventions of this middle-class parlor.

The cartoon connects this new perception of restlessness to the turn-of-the-century's new young woman of the leisure class. After all, as this chapter's selection of Rose O'Neill's cartoons also suggests, the young women who were able to actively claim, renegotiate, or only play with their time were mostly those of the upper or middle classes with an ample amount of leisure time, money, and opportunities at their disposal.⁶⁰ For young women of the upper social circles, the life stage of young womanhood was characterized by preparing to become a debutante at so-called 'finishing schools' or 'young ladies' seminaries' to eventually become the wife to an eligible young man of good social standing (see Kaufman 1903: 499). Young women of the working middle classes instead attended all-women or co-ed colleges for higher education. Also, facilitated by the emergence of public entertainment in amusement parks or movie theaters, courtship became an increasingly private endeavor that allowed young women and men to meet without a chaperone or parents watching them in the parental home (Lystra 1993: 159, 164; Patterson 2008: 20–21; see also Peiss 1986).

This and other cartoons printed in *Puck* provide a good idea of the publication's presentation of the idiosyncratic young, white middle-class woman. This issue for the week of March 13, 1901, printed a cartoon by Frank A. Nankivell that shows several members of a Woman's Club who discuss an absent woman's exclusion from club membership – she had asked her husband for permission, and, as a result, the other women decided to vote against her and her dated understanding of submission to male control (Nankivell 1901b). A cartoon by Nankivell in the same issue pokes fun at the upper classes: A mother asks her daughter what made another young woman refuse the millionaire, to which the daughter

⁵⁹ Urban women, between 1890 and 1920, still widely embraced marriage, but exercised greater control over the number of children born through improved access to birth control information (M. Wilson 1979: 41), turning motherhood into one (voluntary) *option* of many (Patterson 2008: 22). Thanks to a more stable nation that relied less on marriage “as a means of governance or as a symbol of republican political virtue,” control over the form of one's marital life shifted from the state to the couple, who increasingly formed so-called companionate marriages (Simmons 2011: 110–111).

⁶⁰ As Miriam Formanek-Brunell and Leslie Paris write, “middle-class girls experienced a gradual lengthening of girlhood, especially its final stage” [that is, the phase prior to courtship and/or college, my addition] (2011: 8). Young women of the middle class could count on their parents' extended “financial support” and stronger “emotional connection” (8; see also Smith-Rosenberg 1975).

replies, “A multi-millionaire” (Nankivell 1901a). The magazine ridiculed particularly women of the snooty upper classes (in the same issue, Miss Upperten and Miss Gotrox discuss the “great deal of misery among the poor” for a certain “Reggy Van Pelt” has to live on “only ten thousand a year,” see “Moral Lecture” 1901), casting them into role patterns of the good-looking, yet dependent trophy-wife. Especially younger (white, middle-class) women, however, were presented as independent, brazenly showing off their own opinion, while breaking free from their parent generation’s conventions (Goodman 1989: 19).⁶¹ These perceptions of young women are all the more remarkable in a humor magazine that, at least judging by its advertisements for Wilson Whiskey, Williams’ Shaving Sticks, Pathfinder Cigars, and Smith & Wesson Revolvers, seems to have addressed a male audience (see Goodman 1989: 14) – a supposition to which I will return later.

Next to repositioning this young woman in discourses of time, O’Neill also establishes a specifically feminine appropriation of time. As Patricia Murphy writes, the “subjective assessment” of time vis-à-vis a “public measurement” of time was a common modern-era “strategy for reasserting individuality” (2001: 228, see also 229–231). Demonstrating her own keen awareness of time and its passing, Miss Deering shows herself impatient and restless towards past ideologies of a stagnant, pious female life – a time-consuming and burdensome schedule that dictated long hours of dutiful sitting still at church or meticulous needlework in the parental home. Victorian ideologies and social constraints had caused women to basically *lack* time and to be limited in their pursuit of time for endeavors outside the domestic realm so that they had to come up with strategies to manage or ‘make’ time by “manipulating” their daily time windows, for example by shifting endeavors of personal and intellectual development to the time before dawn (Murphy 2001: 158, 161). Miss Deering therefore seeks to claim (back) her time, and with it her life, to make good use of them while she is young.

Even more, the resulting sense of impatience manifest in “Woman’s Tact,” but possibly also in other young women’s ambitions to enact as many of the new experiences on offer in their brief youth as possible, was politically productive: Just like “Miss Deering” – who easily can be read as ‘Miss Daring’ – flouts traditional ideas of the immobile, passive woman, also first-wave feminists articulated

⁶¹ Compare this combination of class and women’s (in-)dependence with how Henry James’s novels treated money, marriage, and women’s increasing control over both in a money-driven society. As Martha Banta writes, Henry James was “quite attentive to matters of a woman’s marital status” and lent ‘his’ women a certain degree of power of choice which allowed them to ask: “Have I money enough to allow me to choose either to marry well or not to marry at all?” (2012: 79, quotation marks in orig.).

restlessness and a growing dissatisfaction with the status quo and thereby played a decisive part in triggering a feminist emancipatory movement.

Young women's appropriation and remediation of time during their brief life phase of turn-of-the-century adolescence caused intergenerational conflict. In the old century, etiquette manuals had dictated mothers to control their daughters' use of time (Murphy 2001: 159). These social constructs and traditional time patterns were now increasingly deconstructed as more and more young (middle-class) women lived within a male-connotted linear temporal progression of career opportunities and personal development beyond hearth and home where they decided over their time at their own command. Breaking loose from the constraints of their cyclical and circular time patterns implied menace to traditional 'codes' of female behavior in the minds of such moral guardians as the church, parents, or Progressive-era reformers, who blamed these women for causing alleged 'race suicide' due to the declining birth rate or ridiculed them for 'defeminizing' themselves.

As also demonstrated in Miss Deering's reaction, modern-era female life was instilled with a novel sense of urgency, where the young woman of the turn of the century suddenly perceives of time, its acceleration, and passing in a new acute manner. In her illustrations, O'Neill intuited the 'restlessness' that many young women may have sensed: This life phase of relative freedom, of seizing opportunities, of maybe even climbing a career ladder was of short duration, as marriage and motherhood in most cases put a stop to this phase and to the fulfillment of their aspirations. In delaying traditionally subsequent life stages of marriage and motherhood, it appears that young women increasingly challenged the famous gendered Joycean opposition of 'Father Time' and 'Mother Nature' as their new linear sensation of time did not leave time for 'Mother Nature,' that is, motherhood, as the era's declining birth rate illustrates.

Given her new sense of 'no time,' listening to an old reverend's time-consuming sermons did not fit into this young woman's busy schedule. As a new, 'busy' contender at the very turn of the century, young women like Miss Deering constantly navigated old and new regimes of time: While she tried to make best use of her new opportunities and undoubtedly 'flirted' with time, discriminatory ideas of women as static or passive were still echoing traditional associations of feminine life with repetition, or even retardation and deceleration. Female role expectations that cling to the 'everyday' are also renegotiated in the cartoon "Full Time" (O'Neill 1904), which builds on the discussed conflicts young women faced as they appropriated time for their personal development.

The cartoon's title, "Full Time," is pure irony as it refers to central conflicts of time separation and negotiation in young women's lives – particularly at the outset of new life stages. Belle and Kate, two young women in a drawing class, en-

gage in a gossipy conversation about “Madge” (who may be the nude model on stage, the art instructor, or another aspiring art student). Belle, conspiratorially leaning in towards Kate, reveals that Madge apparently “signed a life contract to lecture.” Having aroused Kate’s curiosity, Belle affirms: “Yes, it’s true,” and discloses more about the nature of this ‘life contract to lecture,’ which turns out to be “[a] marriage certificate.” The joke was typical for *Puck* whose cartoons and texts tended to mock courtship conventions and worked on gender stereotypes of the incessantly preaching or complaining wife and her cowed husband. Whether Madge therefore pledged to lecture her husband for life when she signed the marriage documents or awaits a lifelong ‘lecture’ herself remains open and is part of the irony.

Noteworthy, though, the text presents Madge as ‘busy.’⁶² As a matter of fact, this cartoon plays with three different notions of time: the linear time of these aspiring artists who possibly seek a career path in the arts after their education in this field, the “full time contract to lecture” that one of the young women has apparently ‘signed’ by consenting to marriage, as well as the circular time that is hinted at by this ‘full-time’ devotion to married life and the quotidian life patterns and (biological) role expectations associated with it. These three differing notions of time mirror young (white, middle-class) women’s central dilemma at the outset of a new century of possibilities: The young women artists presented in this classroom are literally *drawn* between personal self-fulfillment through full-time employment (hence the title) on the one hand, and a (full-time) regulation of their time through domestic married life on the other. This dilemma is embodied in the opposition of linear vs. circular time: Whereas these artists possibly strive for full-time employment and a relatively linear and dynamic career path in the arts, they face prospective retardation through marriage and motherhood and, henceforth, a return to circular or cyclical time patterns of domestic tasks and biological roles of motherhood – also a literally ‘full-time’ job structured by regularity and repetition.

Female artists faced a similar dilemma when they lacked the time to balance domestic and artistic labor. Set in an all-women life-drawing class, this cartoon could not be more self-referential of the artist. While Rose O’Neill only attended professional art schooling after she had already established herself as an artist,⁶³ she nevertheless could identify with the conflictive state of young female artists

⁶² See also chapter four in this book on May Wilson Preston and her descriptions of the ‘busy’ ‘Girl of To-Day’ in her eponymous 1913 *New York Times* interview, “‘The Girl of To-Day’ Seeks to be Useful.”

⁶³ Rose O’Neill studied art at the Parisian Académie Julian under guidance of Jean-Paul Laurens in 1908. She also attended Académie Colarossi in Paris in 1912 (Armitage 1994: 46).

in society: The picture of a seemingly progressive education is deceptive as female artists still had to justify their aspirations – particularly when confronted with traditional expectations of women's biological reproductive 'roles.' Many female artists gave up children and married life for their career. O'Neill herself broke with turn-of-the-century conventions of female domesticity by divorcing twice and remaining childless. Instead, she lived with her sister at New York's Washington Square, from where she advocated for women's enfranchisement.

Whereas these cartoons introduced a distinctively feminine perception of time and its passing, often while instilling a sense of urgency to seize one's time, the following illustrations of young women convey these negotiations and implications of temporality in young women's lives through allegories of nature and seasonal life cycles. These illustrations therefore expand on and at the same time literally visualize, and markedly aestheticize, how young women came to terms with conflicting time patterns and societal expectations.

2.3 'Lost in Nature?' 'Natural' Negotiations of Time in Illustrations of Young Womanhood

The rest of this chapter turns to O'Neill's largely full-color illustrations for the magazine's inside or its front and back covers. Markedly different in style, placement, and format, the following illustrations present fashionable, beautiful young women in feminine and flowery settings that use elaborate color and ornamental elements – conventions that one associates with contemporary women's magazine covers rather than with a magazine of political and social satire. The fact that *Puck* featured almost all of these highly aesthetic, lavishly colorful renditions of young womanhood on its prominent front or back cover – and the meaning or 'effect' underlying this editorial decision – receives further attention.

The flowers in O'Neill's illustrations are often ornamental: They appear arrayed as garlands in the *mise-en-scène* or provide decorative frames around her images, and sometimes they pattern women's dresses that are shaped or draped in ruffles like blossoms themselves. In line with the flowery theme and the hue of petals, both soft and bright pinks, pale yellows, and light, blueish lavender tones, painted in dense gouache or watercolors, dominate the color palette of these lavish illustrations. Instead of aspiring to a detailed, let alone naturalistic, rendition, O'Neill tends to merely approximate the flowers, influenced by her cartoonist style of flattened forms. Highlighted by her use of black india ink or graphite, the flowing, curvilinear drawing style (that also came to epitomize her characteristic signature) calls to mind "the fluid voluptuous line" of art nouveau (Goodman

1989: 22) with its likewise organic, floral shapes and decoratively framed images of women.⁶⁴

This prominence of flowers is at once striking and telling given flowers’ signification of both femininity and temporality in the following examples. I argue that O’Neill uses allegories of nature and seasonal cycles with two outcomes: to highlight the importance and the passing of the life phase of young womanhood, and, on the other hand, to negotiate new conceptions of time and space for young women.

In her untitled illustration and accompanying a self-authored poem for the full-color back cover of the October 26, 1898, issue of *Puck*, O’Neill compares “The Old” to “The New” girl as well as the differing roles available to them, while both the aesthetic image and the rhyming verses play with traditional conceptions of courtship and beauty standards. Underlining the passage of time, but also changing female idea(l)s, O’Neill equips this visual-textual description of a young woman and man in a natural setting with seasonal allegories of winter and autumn. These allegories are enriched with pertinent binaries of indoor and outdoor – including references to the private sphere and the (socially) liberating freedom of the outdoors and the public sphere in new imaginations of girlhood and young womanhood in the periodical press. As will become clear, these references are not always clearly drawn, and what seems like binary oppositions at first often blends into each other.

A male speaker reminisces his “old” girl, “[a] pale girl, a frail girl, a lily-of-the-vale girl,” a “very angel” with whom he danced in winter (O’Neill 1898c). Now, however, his “heart is calling” the “new” girl, who enjoys the outdoors and physical activity: “a round girl, a browned girl, by wind-blown tresses crowned-girl.” Emphasized in her capitalization of “THE OLD” and “THE NEW” and the poem’s clear spatial division, O’Neill works with contemporary widespread old vs. new juxtapositions in her textual narrative. This does not imply that the ‘old girl’ is necessarily a remnant of the Victorian era, and the ‘new girl’ a quintessentially modern type, let alone a ‘new woman.’ Regardless of temporal attributions, the presumably male admirer compares his *previous* sweetheart to a *new* flame, the latter presenting an improvement from the former.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, juxtapositions of ‘old’ and ‘new,’ including a positive connotation of ‘novelty,’ pervaded media formats from peri-

⁶⁴ The “lifelong romantic” O’Neill constantly expanded her style and would come to acquire a more painterly style, reminiscent of the flowery language in many Pre-Raphaelite paintings, from the late 1910s onwards (Goodman 1989: 22, 24).

odicals to commercial posters.⁶⁵ We are familiar with the prefix 'new' from modern-era phenomena like 'new journalism' or 'new woman' that were part of a larger "concatenation of cultural novelties which manifested itself in the 1880s and 1890s" (Ledger 1997: 1), but also from twentieth-century art movements. At the turn of the twentieth century, newness was positive and desirable, it signaled optimism, excitement and, not least, youth, as seen on the *Truth* cover in this chapter's introduction.⁶⁶ It almost seems as if "[t]he *need* to formulate novelty was an *imperative* that modern artists and writers shared with the sciences of their time" as Michael North writes (2013: 205, my emphases). In *Novelty: A History of the New*, North takes a critical look at the modern era's obsession with novelty, looking at the impossibility of defining anything as entirely 'novel' per se, since everything is always a "recurrence" or "recombination" of what has been before, as North delineates following ancient philosophical discourse (2013: 7, 203). As much as the artists of aesthetic modernism sought to 'make it new,' to borrow Ezra Pound's mid-1930s 'slogan' (which it, ironically, only became by the late 1950s), this desire has been debunked as a "hoax," as North writes, since "there is nothing new, so that the old will inevitably emerge" (204).

What does this negation of novelty imply for O'Neill's 'new girl' who carries the promising marker of 'newness' in her name? Can the new type of young womanhood on this back cover truly present a 'novelty?' That is, in how far does the 'new girl' at all differ from, offer a development, or emancipate herself from her bygone counterpart? And which role do allegories of nature and seasonal progression play in these descriptions of 'the new' and 'renewal?'

Let us first consider O'Neill's use of nature and the outdoors in her illustration and accompanying poem. Medially spread visualizations of young women at the turn of the century, such as in the Gibson Girl or the later Brinkley Girl types, were often placed in outdoor settings where they play tennis or sit at the beach. Magazines like *Puck* associated these images of physical activity with emancipated womanhood as evident in numerous covers and cartoons that presented, but also mocked, modern-looking women in golf attire or on bicycles.

⁶⁵ Feminists mobilized juxtapositions of old vs. new for their political purposes. They claimed modern ideas of 'the new' for heralding a new era of political progress and new possibilities in women's lives – often by deploying wordings of evolution or revolution (Felski 1995: 145–173).

⁶⁶ As Yvonne Förster writes, the optimistic, progress-oriented idea of the "future as a temporal space that has to be filled" had its "peak between 1890 and 1950" (2021: 206). Still, the category of 'the new' is not that clear-cut, and 'the new' was also approached with skepticism, anxiety, and an initial resistance as is the case with all novelties before they are accepted, become stable, and turn into innovations (North 2013: 4). As a result, the modern era was simultaneously invested with a sense of innovation, progress, and acceleration, *and* a longing for the past, stability, and deceleration, on the other hand.

Fitting this context of the outdoors (and the autumnal publication date), this illustration invites to a parallel reading of seasonal progression and the development of female gender ideologies. The ‘old girl’ is ‘frozen’ in a metaphorical setting of wintery hibernation and torpor that befits her embodiment as passive, “pale,” “frail,” and angelic (O’Neill 1898c). Accordingly, her portrait (in her best ruffled dress and polite posture) is cast into a round and rigid frame that resembles a locket – a guarded memory to be tucked away in the past. The body of the ‘new girl,’ on the other hand, is portrayed in full length, caught in movement with its curves revealingly accentuated. She wears a hat so large and adorned with flowers that with her posture and flowing dress she resembles the twisted tree trunk nearby – a shape that was inspired by the era’s art nouveau sculptures with their flowing lines as if they were dancing. Unlike the ‘old girl,’ she embodies nature in its full maturity.

The comparison of active and passive states of motion and life on this seasonal back cover can be associated with a confrontation of an old and a new clocking of time. Like Miss Deering above, the ‘new girl’ visibly sets her clock to a faster pace that instills her with a sense of urgency and literally pulls her outside into the open, while the ‘old girl’ follows a decelerated clocking of female time that befits her relegation to the past, her passive state of ‘winter,’ and nineteenth-century ideals of femininity.

While the poem and the illustration clearly invoke binaries of new/old, active/passive, outside/inside, acceleration/deceleration, agility/fragility, these binaries do not remain stable. They collapse and repeatedly blend into each other as they are caught within a continuous cultural negotiation of ‘old’ and ‘new’ at the turn of the century, where the ‘new’ cannot be clearly split from the ‘old’ and rather presents a *recombination*, instead of absolute novelty.

To complicate this juxtaposition further, the ‘new girl’ is explicitly *not* a blooming ‘Spring’ or ‘Summer Girl’ (as would be the ‘perfect’ counterpart to the wintery ‘old girl’ in the metaphor of seasonal progression and annual return), but an “October Maid” (O’Neill 1898c). While this may point to the admirer’s preference of a grown-up (“round”) and ‘outdoor-proof’ (“wind-blown tresses”) partner, it also shows how diverse visual-textual imaginations of women in turn-of-the-century media were. Just as an ‘Indian summer’ is a season for harvesting summer’s ‘products,’ the ‘October Maid’ is a woman in her full (biological) maturity. Despite the actual proliferation of ‘Summer-Girl’ numbers on the magazine market⁶⁷ and the

⁶⁷ See *Puck’s* Mid-Summer Number of August 17, 1904, that carried a supplement called “*Puck’s* Summer Girl” and presented a beautiful fishing girl on its cover. She is encircled by other smaller images of women who are engaged in physical activity in the outdoors, playing tennis or golf, sailing, or who are just standing by the sea.

praising of physical outdoor activity in numerous women's magazines (see Lowe 2003: esp. 1, 29–30, 46–47; see also chapter three on Nell Brinkley's illustrations for *Harper's Bazar's* health and beauty columns in this book), this cartoon is not the only *Puck* cartoon by O'Neill that favors a more 'settled' or 'matured' type of woman. In her black-and-white drawing "Autumn Conquest" (O'Neill 1898a), a man has been wooed all summer by a whole crowd of active 'new women,' including a sailor-uniformed "yachting maid" or a short-skirted "golfing maid." Even "seashore beauties tanned and brown" could not win this man's heart who, upon his return to town, is now going for an "Autumn maid in a tailor frock," a woman who wears more clothes and is possibly more conservatively minded than any of the agile beach-bred 'Summer Girls' who appeared so easily available to him. The text, written by O'Neill herself, plays with what were common beauty, fashion, and behavioral ideals in popular media's imaginations of young women only to reject these in a nonchalant manner and resort to more traditional standards of feminine beauty and behavior. Also, this literal "Autumn Maid" might have already passed the 'summer' of her youth and now looks to 'settle down.'

Further, for the admirer, this person presents not so much a young and agile 'girl' (as in the medially spread fantasies of the 'outdoor girl' or 'outdoor pal'), but a curious amalgam of "new woman, true woman, my brown October Maid" as written in the last line of the poem for "The Old/The New" (O'Neill 1898c). As this last line also suggests, the poem plays with associations of the cult of true womanhood and the widely circulated idea of the 'new woman,' and, at the same time, *merges* these ideas. The ideologies of womanhood at the turn of the century were hybrid and their hybridity became nowhere clearer than in the discursive imaginations of womanhood that pervaded the likewise "hybrid form" of the periodical press – a form that, next to a diversity of genres and visual-verbal mix, allowed for an inherent openness and heterogeneity of voices (Heilmann and Beetham 2004: 5). At the turn of the century, these gender doctrines were mostly open constructs, which the periodical press perpetuated and harnessed for consumerist purposes or in 'new woman' fiction, and whose denomination changed depending on context. Defying such medially constructed categorizations, this "brown October Maid" is simply everything at once: a "new woman, true woman," and, whatever else lies in between (O'Neill 1898c). More than a simple juxtaposition of the 'true' and the 'new woman,' these women cannot be dissolved into distinct stereotypes, illustrating how tangled turn-of-the-century ideologies of womanhood were.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ As Ann Heilmann and Margaret Beetham write, the 'new woman' was a "hybrid identity," and her popular imagination in the periodical press was entirely inconsistent and "brought together elements of the traditional and the radically new" (2004: 3).

The poem points to another, much more stable, binary: the common turn-of-the-century trope of the ‘Dark’ and the ‘White’ Lady, or “the seductive enchantress and the soulful aesthete,” which Helen Goodman ascribes to several of O’Neill’s drawings for *Puck* (1989: 19; see also Eldredge 1979: 58–61, 68–70), and which the humor magazine’s readers were surely familiar with. The ‘new’ girl, who entices the man with her nature-imbued vivacity, represents the Dark Lady, whereas O’Neill’s frail, pale “maid of porcelain” mimics the White Lady (O’Neill 1898c). The invoked binaries of active/passive, outside/inside, acceleration/deceleration are thereby instilled with differing notions of turn-of-the-century femininity between seduction and piety.

The poem and illustration closely link nature to ‘seduction,’ as, for the admirer, the “October Maid” competes with nature’s beauty herself. In her texts, O’Neill repeatedly employs tropes of personified nature: The nuts “have [the ‘new girl’s] hue” and “copied after [her],” too “afraid” to “ape [her] roses,” whereas the ‘old’ girl’s looks, with skin as white as “porcelain” or snow, appear almost hostile to nature.

In an ironic manner, this illustration also quotes familiar iconography of the Biblical Fall.⁶⁹ Particularly the setting in a humor magazine suggests a reading along the lines of a wild ‘femme fatale’ who lures this man into her control.⁷⁰ Making this man kneel subserviently at her feet (“at your feet my heart is laid”) and tempting him in a sexual manner (“go a-nutting” – an old term used in folkloristic songs and plays as a synonym for sexual temptation, see “Nutting Girl” 2014), she makes this man ‘fall’ for her just like the nuts around her fall (O’Neill 1898c). If one were to read this man as emblematic of ‘culture,’ and the woman as representing ‘nature,’ nature would place culture under ‘her’ control and trigger its ‘fall.’

The seasonal progression implied here allegorizes the cyclical structures of female (biological) life. Comparisons of the ‘new’ girl to bountiful autumnal nature, i.e. harvest, call up associations of female bodies that carry the ‘fruits’ of nature, thus emphasizing women’s reproductive ‘roles.’ Sexual allusions in image

69 Next to a clear “fin-de-siècle fascination with the archaic and the elemental,” Felski writes how “the narrative of the Fall was repeatedly deployed to highlight the insufficiency of an overcivilized, overrational present by contrasting it to an earlier, more primal, more authentic time” (1995: 50). In her analysis of various English, French, and German late-nineteenth-century texts, Felski thus traces a strong sense of fin-de-siècle pessimism and anti-modern sentiment (49) that enhanced this idea of femininity imbued with nostalgia.

70 As Margaret Beetham notes, ascriptions of wildness and revolt had often been used to demarcate deviant behavior among women and to “pin down and therefore control women and the meaning of sex/gender relations” in the 1880s and 90s (1996: 115).

and text were common in this humor magazine. It therefore remains questionable whether depictions as active and outdoorsy truly emancipate this 'new girl' from traditional female (and hence biological) role expectations. Instead of modernizing or updating the latter, the nature imagery in this illustration embellishes a scene of *courtship* between man and woman and thereby reaffirms traditional heterosexual role expectations. This woman is not studying, nor is she depicted in an office surrounded by new-fangled technology. She is outside in a forest and playfully entices this man with what the image and text describe as her nature-imbued and (mature) womanly beauty. Beyond these sexual allusions, the image thus draws on traditional equations of women with nature, not to mention Edenic settings that call forth nostalgia in the modern era. As North writes, "newness [. . .] always remains circumscribed within the limits of the old" (2013: 11), so that evocations of the 'new' in imaginations of womanhood always rely on 'old' ideals, behavioral patterns, and expectations, and are, hence, inherently more conservative than assumed in their "rebirth and renewal" of imaginations of womanhood (152). Consequently, the admirer only comes to appreciate the "October Maid" in comparison to his wintery "angel," whose portrait still lingers over the scene. Even more, following the metaphor of seasonal progression (from a 'winter' "angel" to an "October Maid"), who can tell which 'Spring Mademoiselle' or 'Summer Girl' the admirer will turn to next? Also, in connecting the seasons' constant renewal with the development of turn-of-the-century gender ideologies, it becomes clear that women's emancipation in the public sphere did not progress in a linear manner but was a story of back and forth. Just like magazines idealize more agile, beach-bred 'Summer Girls' or mature 'October Maids' this year, the ideal of the angelic 'Winter Girl' may return to the covers next year: "[T]hat what seems new is really only the old come back again" (North 2013: 204, 205). The "October Maid" may appear like an emancipated, modern single woman, but she is out in nature, 'on the hunt' for courtship, before her 'season' is over.

In the following illustrations, O'Neill claims and mobilizes these metaphorical ideas of nature and seasonal life cycles to point out the very *centrality* of time in young women's lives. She thereby draws attention to how these women actually *realize* time and its passing before it is 'too late.' 'Realization' here holds the ambiguous meaning of 'to become aware of' and 'to make use of.' The inexorable passage of nature's life cycle, and with it the brevity of a season of 'bloom' before its impending 'withering,' is thus intimately linked to the 'turning' of young women's life cycles and the loss of unique, nonrecurring opportunities to use or negotiate their time and place in modern society.

The life cycle of nature is visibly ‘revolving’ for “The Divinity of the Season” (O’Neill and Sabin 1900). The poem by Edwin L. Sabin⁷¹ that accompanies this back cover draws upon personifications and metaphors of nature to place women’s life cycle (characterized by phases from girlhood, over adolescence, to wife- or motherhood) into the very same cyclical time structure of phases or seasons that nature traverses.

In this full-color back cover, O’Neill employs the ambiguity of ‘season’ to compare what the fittingly called ‘Summer Girl’ experiences as a youthfully ‘blossoming’ prime to the seasonal height and sumptuous flowerage of summer. Accompanied by an admiring gallant, she reclines in her hammock – she can rest assured as she is the “divinity of the season.” The societal convention of ‘the season’ marked a quintessential turning point for young women’s ‘coming-of-age,’ set between the distinct phases of girl- and woman- or wifehood at the turn of the century. Respectable (upper) middle-class women had to undergo these socially constructed patterns in their lives to find an eligible male partner, always already prefiguring the next phase of their lives that traditionally consisted of wife- and motherhood.⁷²

The whole scene is just as elaborately drawn as the poem’s stylistic devices and resembles a still life painting or a photographic still – a static snapshot of short-lived female as well as nature’s beauty. Similar to Renaissance-era Dutch still life paintings of flowers in vases, this illustration brims with flowers: The Summer Girl’s floral-patterned, lavender-colored dress spreads like petals across the hammock. The almost bouquet-like arrangement is completed by her fittingly frilled parasol, a bunch of pink roses gathered in her hand and on her hat, as well as some daisies scattered around her feet. Visualizations of women in the style of a still life that positioned them in landscapes or portrayed them in the act of reading often oscillated between depicting women in a state of contemplation and their apathetic state of reverie (Banta 1987: 358) – a conflict that is also present in “The Divinity of the Season”: We do not quite know whether this young woman with her sideward glance is contemplating the ‘potential’ of her suitor (and the next step in their relationship), or whether she is just dreaming her

71 Edwin Legrand Sabin (1870–1952) was an American author famous for his boys’ adventure stories that were mostly set in the American West. He also wrote poetry and short stories for various books and magazines, including *Puck*, where he often wrote the captions for Rose O’Neill’s illustrations.

72 Even though the ‘social season’ referred mostly to the London Social Season (where the last debutantes curtsied in front of the Queen in 1958), the institution was copied in the English-speaking world to refer to debutante balls. It is worth noting that these balls that took place during the social season were restricted to the daughters (and sons) of upper-class families.

youthful day away. Perhaps she also has other plans for this hot summer day, as her gaze seems to pass over him to something or someone beyond the frame.

While the poem lets us know that the man is suffering from the heat (“when collars wilt, and faces run”) and the woman’s stalling tactics (“O King! in vain your darts you hurl!”), she has no problem keeping up her appearance and literally cool demeanor: “[E]ver cool and ever fresh,” she is in nature’s favor (O’Neill and Sabin 1900). Even more, every flower seems to adore her, “throng[ing]” alongside this young man to “kiss” and “greet” the “divinity of the season.” These personifications in the flowers’ ‘act’ of “worship[ping]” the “divinity” evoke a scene of a “shrine” where this young man rivals the flowers (and the heat) for the young woman’s attention.

Even as allegories of this young woman’s ‘flowering’ beauty embellish the scene in a visually pervasive manner, they also point to the very brevity, and hence remarkability, of this season – again, in a dual sense. Read in conjunction with nature’s recursive circularity of the seasonal cycle, it becomes apparent that a woman’s life – albeit structured by cyclical, periodical rhythms – only knows *one* figurative spring or summer, and O’Neill’s illustration pinpoints this summer to be a debutante’s season, during which her youthful beauty is figuratively ‘flourishing’ before it starts to wither. Just as much as the summer flowers and their personified act of ‘attention’ will fade, also her youthful beauty, her suitor, and maybe the relative freedom that this woman enjoys throughout her ‘summer’ will disappear by the end of the/her season so that she only has one (literal) season to make a match. Her self-assured appearance is deceptive, as the “divinity of the season” is only the star of *this particular* season – next year it will be another young woman⁷³ – and instead of being a “Summer Girl,” she may perhaps be a married wife or even a mother by then.

Visually, the fallen-out-of-time, sometimes slightly nostalgic, nature imagery in O’Neill’s illustrations seems at first glance to contradict the idea of modernity, let alone a distinctively female modernity. Her illustrations completely lack markers of modernization, technological innovation, or urbanity: The young woman in her full-color back cover “How Summer Comes” (O’Neill 1898b) arrives in a horse-drawn carriage (not in a fast car), the female students discuss a friend’s marriage in an art class (not over office desks or new-fangled telephones), and most of the scenery is rather serene, even pastoral, instead of urban. And still, instead of rele-

⁷³ Note that the cyclically repeated social season (as the time of balls, social invitations, and eligible women’s entering of the ‘marriage market’) usually began in November, and not in spring (Kaufman 1903: 508), so that this coupling of a ‘Summer Girl’ and her ‘Summer Boy’ could already present the outcome of such ritualistic courting (provided they participated in these upper-class customs).

gating women to an atemporal site of nostalgia and repetition, this productive reading of nature imagery and its inherent cyclical temporal structure explicitly points to the centrality of time and its relentless progression in young women’s lives. Nature imagery thereby points to such inherently modern notions as progress, acceleration, and also (re-)production. It renders visible how especially women experience their lives and perceive of their time in distinct intervals or phases (such as biological life phases, but also socially constructed phases like a woman’s college years) and how they must always anticipate a season of ‘withering’ or the end of their (re-)productive years. A distinctively female idea of modernity is therefore also and especially one that revolves around time and its passing since nowhere is the lapse of time clearer than in a woman’s (biological) life cycle that threatens to put an end to this brief life phase of youth, its relative freedom and newfound opportunities.

While nature imagery thus signals the transitory character of the ‘summer of her life,’ this “Summer Girl,” apart from visibly flirting with her good-looking suitor, is also flirting with time: She does not seem too interested in seizing young women’s new opportunities for studying or developing herself professionally. Reclining in a garden hammock on a hot summer afternoon, the “Summer Girl” mocks not only this young man and his advances, but also the notion of time and particularly its passing. Aware of being a seasonal, one-time beauty, she plays with the inherent beauty of her own youth’s ephemerality, presenting her own perceived ‘timelessness’ as aesthetic. Even more, the nonchalance in face of time’s unrelenting turning and passing can count as a gesture towards the only real ‘power’ this woman can claim.

The flowery and feminine mise-en-scène in this and similar illustrations by O’Neill – often printed in lavish full-color for the front or back covers of *Puck* – is remarkable. Considered within its publication context of a humor magazine, it becomes specifically apparent how the foregrounding of aesthetics, style, and fashion in this illustration contributes to an idealization of youth. In presenting a young female as a ‘clean’ slate whose opportunities are not lived out yet, O’Neill totalizes femininity as youth within this still image of youthful beauty.

While the illustration thus captures the momentariness of female youth on this sunny afternoon, the next step of the narrative is already drawn into this still: A late-summer wedding looks likely, whereas the humorous context also allows for other projections in which the magazine reader-viewers are invited to play through certain fantasies that continue and possibly ‘perfect’ this courtship scene of a ‘Summer Girl’ and her suitor in their minds – including such titillating fantasies as sexual intimacy (instead of traditional marriage).

Also, in visualizing an inherently aesthetic and youthful ideal of femininity, the illustration could have evoked a sense of nostalgia or return. While on the one hand playing with such clichéd ideas of femininity as nostalgia-ridden object

in modern society, the scene of a young beautiful woman in an idyllic setting could also cause any (older or already married) female reader to re-imagine or revive this moment of ‘innocence’ and ‘open opportunities’ in her own life – particularly, if her current ‘status quo’ as wife or mother, or her financial situation, thwarted her attempts of acting out her own dreams and aspirations that she now projects into this scene of a young, beautiful, single woman.

This illustration therefore allows for manifold projections that can reach from a premonition of loss and aging, and concomitant evocations of youthful memories, to such exciting fantasies about the depicted couple’s immediate future. And still, this bouquet-like diversification of readings and opportunities inscribed into O’Neill’s illustrations of young womanhood always works on a sense of temporal brevity and the passing of time – even more, on the brief temporal duration of female youthful *beauty*. Goodman confirms that O’Neill explored the themes of “female vanity and the fading of physical beauty” in her works (1989: 24) – possibly a proof that O’Neill was well versed in classical art. After all, her cover for *Truth* presented in the introduction to this chapter displays nothing different than the typical ‘death and the maiden’-motif, a classic element of (predominantly German) Renaissance art and part of a larger vanitas topos, where young women’s entanglement in a dramatic, often erotic, “dance of death” warned of the vanity and the transience of both life and female beauty (Pollefeys n.d.). O’Neill’s rendition may have dropped the moralizing tenor but retained the focus on female physical beauty: As intimated by “The Divinity of the Season,” young women’s seizing of opportunities and time (or their forgoing) appears to always hinge on the brief duration of their physical beauty. Ephemeral beauty becomes a competitive marker in the following two illustrations, in which O’Neill transfers the idea of the passing or scarcity of *time* to the dimension of *space* in young women vying for attention.

2.4 “Vain Roses” and “Fragrant Crowds”: Perceptions and Negotiations of Temporal and Spatial Limitation in Young Women’s Lives

As sociological and literary modern thought routinely cast woman into ‘nature,’ the quintessential modern man was a ‘man of the crowd.’ Defying these intricately gendered notions of the modern ‘mass,’ O’Neill’s imagery of nature presents young women as part of their own mass – even more, as part of a mass *production* of young womanhood and a ubiquitous, if not totalized, idea of youthful beauty in turn-of-the-century media. Her illustrations thereby also draw attention to a spatial and temporal limitation for young women to claim not only their scarce time but

also their narrow space in a mass of young women who all strive to make the most of being young and female at the outset of the new century.

In her colorful back cover “To Vain Roses and Ladies” (O’Neill 1898d) and her well-known cover “Juneflowers” (1905), O’Neill likens women during courtship and young brides to flowers. Next to calling up associations of impending decay and ephemerality, O’Neill plays with ideas of temporal simultaneity and visual similarity. In placing women within an intricately dense depiction of nature, with flowers framing, decorating, backing, and encircling them, she establishes female group constellations that form a distinctively feminine rendition of the modern crowd, visualizing how young women may have been affected by their limited time and space at the turn of the century.



Figure 2.3: O’Neill. 1898d. “To Vain Roses and Ladies.” Rose O’Neill often used flower allegories to depict young women’s ephemeral youth and beauty. Courtesy of Bonniebrook Historical Society Museum.

In the illustration “To Vain Roses and Ladies” (O’Neill 1898d, Figure 2.3) and the accompanying poem (which the artist both signed as Rose O’Neill Latham since she was married to Gray Latham at that time), O’Neill likens young women’s state of ‘be-

coming’ and youthful beauty to roses and their lifespan through nature’s personification and metaphorical language. In drawing this allegory, O’Neill writes an intricate sense of ‘carpe diem’ into the scene of two young women who inspect their faces in mirrors: The text warns “roses” as well as young “pretty, pretty ladies” against being “too proud” of their appearance, since “[i]n the [s]pring of every year,” a new “fair and fragrant crowd” of roses, that is, young marriageable women (“Vain Roses”) is growing (“budding”).⁷⁴ Just as the lavishness of nature allegorizes the prospering, youthful beauty at these women’s *one* biological prime, it also refers to a life phase of abounding opportunities. Since the poem is not available online, I print it here in full length:

To Vain Roses and Ladies

O Roses and ye pretty, pretty ladies!
Of all your sweets ye must not be too proud:
Thousands of ye just as dear
In the Spring of every year
Are budding in a fair and fragrant crowd.

O ladies and ye pretty, pretty roses,
Whom the winds sigh ever to caress!
If ye love yourselves, beware —
For it would be only fair
If your lovers loved ye just a little less.

O’Neill Latham (1898d)

Just like the ‘Summer Girl’ above was only a “divinity” of this particular “season,” O’Neill’s poem makes it understood that the “[s]pring of every year” does not apply to the same woman year after year. This *temporal* urgency to seize one’s ‘summer’ is enhanced by *spatial* ideas of a crowded mass in both the textual and visual narratives. In her poem, but also through the visual ubiquity of flowers, O’Neill draws the idea of ‘budding’ womanhood as a veritable mass phenomenon of women and youthful beauty.

Allegorized by an overabundance of roses (symbolizing beauty, but also vanity or conceit here), the young demure debutante must also familiarize herself with the presence of other competing beauties in the ‘field,’ that is, during the ‘season’ or on the marriage market. Whereas the “Divinity of the Season” was alone in her ‘field,’ these ‘vain Ladies’ face the brevity of youthful attractiveness and scarcity of individual space. The visual equivalent of the temporal sense of

⁷⁴ The widespread trope that associates budding flowers with young women in the context of a carpe-diem theme is also evident in the famous first line “Gather Ye Rosebuds While Ye May” in Robert Herrick’s seventeenth-century poem “To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time” (1648).

‘urgency’ (expressed in a ‘fear of missing out’ on a simultaneity of opportunities) is thus expressed as an obtrusive sense of visual similarity, as a ‘competition’ to be seen and noticed in a crowd of similarly pretty single women.

This inscribed idea of a competition among young, beautiful, eligible women is also addressed in Emma B. Kaufman’s September 1903 article on “The Education of a Débutante” in *Cosmopolitan*. In strict terms, Kaufman delineates the “career of a debutante” that a young woman of the upper social circles “has [. . .] to fill before she enters upon matrimony” (1903: 499). In order to set herself apart from a mass of attractive debutantes, a fictitious experienced society woman admonishes the (likewise fictitious) young debutante Dorothea to “make[] market of her individuality” and to “[a]lways bear in mind there may be a million copies, but only one original” – particularly since debutantes followed largely the same social protocols and lessons of belles-lettres, dancing, art, conversation, singing, piano lessons, and ‘graceful demeanor’ that were taught in so-called ‘finishing schools’ or ‘young ladies’ seminaries’ (502, 507). The more experienced woman advises young Dorothea to “study her world” and to “know the men and women by whom she is surrounded” to “learn to appreciate [her] good points and to make the most of them” (507). This lesson on “market[ing]” one’s individuality seems even more superficial and pointless given the widespread and prominent ‘marketing’ of young women’s beauty during the social season.

Within a mass of eligible young attractive women who all vie for attention, individuality is undeniably at stake – and, in the very sense of the title, plainly (in) vain. To underline this sensory image of a “fragrant *crowd*” (my emphasis) O’Neill embellishes the full-page illustration with bountiful garlands of roses, encircles the women with freely flowing roses and a flower vase, and even turns them into roses themselves with their oversized, frilled bright dresses resembling the shape of rose petals. As unmistakable symbols of beauty, roses overflow the scene. Although O’Neill portrays only two rivaling ‘beauties,’ each of them holding a mirror symbolizing her vanity, the illustration manages to communicate the poem’s narrative of competition and (literally) critical self-reflection. Instead of ‘the more, the merrier,’ the very *multiplicity* of beauty that is drawn up in this poem and the visual ubiquity of emblems of beauty is therefore endowed with a sense of pessimism and urgency at the sight of ephemeral youthful beauty and concomitant (youthful) opportunities that will only last one season.

Within this yearly circular repetition and against the backdrop of ubiquitous beauty, *individual* beauty becomes an insignificant standard that is mass-produced year after year after year: “Thousands of ye just as dear / In the [s]pring of every year.” Together with the fact that the ‘season’ took up the function of a unique and decisive (turning) point in a young woman’s life (if she found and married an eligible male suitor), youthful beauty can no longer count as her distinguish-

ing feature in what is presented here as a highly competitive scheme resulting from an overabundance and at the same time brief availability of youthful beauty.

The competition fostered by this spatial and temporal ‘scarcity’ seems to animate the young women presented in this illustration to groom themselves all the better – their tactic of ‘negotiating’ for getting the best out of their limited time and space. Each of them holds or searches herself in a mirror, while the woman in the lower half of the illustration even casts a flirting gaze into her mirror. According to Martha Banta, this “mirror motif [. . .] prompt[ed] further questions about solipsism, narcissism, and the attempt to escape the life of the average” (1987: 366). Visual imaginations at the turn of the century presented women who placed “platonic kisses upon their reflected images” in this “vanity mirror” (367), as they became conscious of “their monetary value in a society that prefers its women to be pretty, and salable, and apparently chaste” (370–371) – demonstrated by the visual presence of women on the magazine and advertising market at the time.

If young women only had one ‘summer’ to make a suitable match, they had to rely on other traits than their visual appearance as both the illustration’s visual language and the poem’s stylistic devices admonish. Their beauty is ephemeral: not so much through a depicted process of temporal passing and looming decay as shown in the other illustrations in this chapter, but through depicting beauty as an *indistinguishable*, and thus disappearing, feature set against an entire mass of attractive women.

Within the context of a political humor magazine that “poke[d] fun at all human folly” but that, with the advent of the 1890s, increasingly printed “lighter humor and satire,” including social satire, as well as “burlesque view[s]” and “comic paragraphs on new plays and Broadway gossip” (Secor 1987: 219, 224–225), “To Vain Roses and Ladies” not only mocks female vanity through ideas of a competitive mass. Even more, it ridicules the very pattern of sexual and societal competition underlying the playouts of upper-middle-class status and the overstated focus on beauty throughout the social season. Cherished by magazines like *Harper’s Bazar* or *Cosmopolitan* as a newsworthy society event that provided “tabloid fodder” (Anderson 2012: 7), humor magazines like *Puck* found plenty of material for jokes in this social convention. In *The Lonely Crowd*, David Riesmann, Reuel Denney, and Nathan Glazer confirm that “without the mass production of good-looking, well-groomed youth, the American pattern of sexual competition could not exist” (1950: 155). Read as the presentation of a “human folly” that capitalizes decisively on class, money, and outer appearance, the intricately beautiful illustration of “To Vain Roses and Ladies” then connects a social satire of the larger “sexual competition” (155) underlying the annual ritual of the ‘season’ to a derision of the young debutante’s individual fate to just be one in a mass.



Figure 2.4: O’Neill. 1905. “June flowers.” Like flowers in June, the beauty of these flower-shaped brides will wilt. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

The idea of a ‘mass production’ of beautiful young women is taken to a visible extreme in “June flowers,” a full-color cover for *Puck* (O’Neill 1905, Figure 2.4), which presents a mass of brides on their seemingly synchronous wedding days. The title refers both to the flowers traditionally worn by these brides on their ‘big day,’ as well as to the women themselves in a strikingly visual resemblance. Presented on the cover of *Puck*, nearly ten years after O’Neill became a staff illustrator, “June flowers” demonstrates the artist’s much more evolved and painterly style. Nearly translucent and fairy-like, fading into a mass of frosty, blueish-peach aquarelles, these brides merge and overlap just like petals, thereby forming an ornate bouquet-like arrangement of flowers themselves.⁷⁵

⁷⁵ On March 14, 1906, *Puck Proofs* advertised this illustration as an individual print available for \$1 under the title “Orange Blossoms,” as evident from Susan Ellen Wilson’s personal fan compilation of O’Neill’s *Puck* works (2002). Symbolizing fertility and good fortune, orange blossoms were a popular wedding decoration from about the middle of the nineteenth century well into the 1950s (Powell n.d.).

Next to presenting a distinctively feminine notion of a mass, this visual allegory of women as flowers in June allows for an insight into time and its passing in young women’s modern lives, juxtaposing flowers’ and young women’s (one-time) phases of ‘bloom.’ Just like these women opted for a wedding in June, that is, at the height of the biological year, they also marry at the biological prime of their own life cycle. On this cover, O’Neill consequently stages a young woman’s wedding day as a momentous break that ends her transition from girl to adult womanhood. Visually, but also on a deeper contextual level, this illustration of gloomy-looking, flower-shaped brides therefore seems to intuit what many young, emancipated women at the turn of the century could have admonished: to reap one’s (new-found) benefits and opportunities before stepping (back) into traditional life trajectories of marriage and motherhood. I argue that young women who became aware of their time’s impermanence could feel encouraged to (re-)negotiate their time constraints and perhaps even find alternatives to restrictive traditional paths.

Although a woman’s life does not end with her wedding day, it changes significantly: Marriage, at the turn of the century, still meant for a woman to surrender the new (relative) freedom that she may have enjoyed as a single woman: Married white women stopped working, and those who continued did so out of necessity to supplement their husbands’ income.⁷⁶ Middle-class married white women working as nurses or teachers faced the so-called marriage bar – a ban on hiring married women.⁷⁷

The fact that marriage led to an impasse in women’s freedom of (occupational or personal) choice is visible in “June-flowers” (O’Neill 1905). The soon-to-be-wives’ facial expressions emanate this very sense of an ending: Casting their eyes either upwards, downwards, or out of the frame, away from the viewer, they appear melancholic, perhaps even caught in contemplation or reverie. Whereas the distant four women in the top left corner smile pleasantly at someone outside the frame, most brides in this illustration have the burden of decision drawn across their faces. In her autobiographical reading of O’Neill’s own “distinctive, less than sunny perspective on courtship and marriage” into this seasonal cover, Martha H. Kennedy writes that the “brides appear subdued, and not joyful,” expressing “apprehension at possible constraints that marriage might impose” (2018: 112). O’Neill herself had been married for five years to Gray Latham, who

⁷⁶ In 1900, 3.3 per cent of women were wage earners, increasing to a still meager 9 per cent by 1920, and 25 per cent by the end of the 1920s (Patterson 2008: 12).

⁷⁷ Marriage bars were in place from the second half of the nineteenth until about the middle of the twentieth century in some states. They were explained with the rationale that married women, as opposed to single women, do not rely on their income (Goldin 1991). Sometimes marriage bars extended to widowed mothers, thereby increasing their hardship.

started living off her income, before she filed for divorce. Shortly thereafter, in 1902, she married *Puck's* literary editor Harry Leon Wilson (whom she divorced in 1907). In Miriam Formanek-Brunell's introduction to Rose O'Neill's autobiography, O'Neill is quoted with declaring in 1907 to have “withdrawn from marriage” (1997: 13).

While depicted within an almost synchronous mass of other brides – an observation that I return to below – these brides appear without their bridegrooms. In providing a rare and intimate glimpse at the very last moment of these women's single lives, O'Neill emphasized how these women are waiting in anticipation of their ‘big moment’ when they meet their bridegroom and exchange the vows that will change their lives forever and for good. Like flowers in a beautiful bouquet or in a field, they are patiently waiting to be chosen or ‘picked.’ Regarded in connection with my prior analyses of “The Divinity of the Season” and “To Vain Roses and Ladies,” this field can then represent a figurative ‘marriage market’ or a metaphorical field of relatively open possibilities.

Apart from prompting feminized, anti-modern associations of women with nature, the image of women as blossoming rosebuds that wait for *being* ‘picked’ from an allegorical field of eligible young women, may at first associate these women with atemporality, passivity, or a lack of agency that detaches them from active negotiations of (their) time. However, this visual association of young women's ‘prime’ with nature's prime also positions these women within a powerful, distinctively feminine, and modern notion of temporality where they are able to witness the dynamic momentum of time despite and exactly *through* these illustrations of nature, cyclical rhythms, and logics of repetition. As Felski explains, women are nested within the “power of biological rhythms” (2002: 26), that is, nature's seasonal or cyclical rhythms, including underlying temporal logics of repetition, renewal, or (re-)production, as well as evolutionary growth. The illustrated brief glimpse at young womanhood as a phase of (allegorical) flower and biological growth, therefore, always hints at forward movement and progress instead of atemporal stasis.

As much as this imagery points towards youth and biological cycles of growth and progress and thereby addresses positively connoted modern-era notions of acceleration and infinite progress, nature imagery, simultaneously, inherently *restricts* this seemingly endless cycle of progress and development since even in nature no process of growth lasts forever. Warm June is followed by hot July, and once a now beautiful and garden-fresh ‘Juneflower’ has been ‘picked’ by a husband and is metaphorically ‘uprooted’ from her previous life and available choices, she starts to wither and decay in the summer heat, that is, she begins to suffer from the disciplinary constraints that matrimony imposes upon her.

Yet, ephemerality also possesses a powerful dimension, “captur[ing] time in [. . .] intervals” (Buci-Glucksmann 2003: 25, transl. and qtd. in Parkins 2010: 113). Women's awareness of their life's nonrecurrent, distinctly structured ‘phases’ and

of the developments that can or cannot occur between them, points out a potential of "changeability" (Parkins 2010: 114). Particularly, in the dynamic turn-of-the-century years, women's lives oscillated between (newly) possible and impossible life changes, between plans they can, could, or could not have fulfilled. As presented in the imagery of nature's growth and imminent decay, the ephemeral always forms an "in-between-state" between "existent or non-existent" (113). The inherently productive and creative potential underlying the in-between-state (between possible and impossible, taken or untaken opportunities) of transitoriness, thus challenges the gendered dichotomy of female being and male becoming and brings out a specifically modern time dynamism that "un-fix[es]" and bestows agency to the 'static,' pre-modern woman (114; see also Buci-Glucksmann 2003). Pointing to ephemerality thus also creates a potential for *making* (new) use of time and its inherent possibilities – where it matters more what a woman *does with* her time (that is, how she claims her time and embraces its potential during her life phase of young womanhood) than what time does to her (that is, how time controls her life decisions in her place). After all, ephemerality in O'Neill's use of nature imagery, in making visible and perceivable the very passing of time, also addresses the importance of women's temporal consciousness of their actually *lived* time for their empowerment. As Ilya Parkins writes,

The emphasis on lived time is the most significant feminist contribution to the literature on the politics of temporality. For it is only in attending to differences in the qualities of temporal experience that we can understand how power operates in and through ideologies of time; how these ostensibly abstract constructs function to marginalize various cultural Others. (2010: 102–103)

Apart from referring to an impending 'loss' of one's (individual) time, ephemerality can also be translated into the realm of space and the act of claiming, or losing, one's (individual) place (and potential for action) in an already rigid space of opportunities for young women at the turn of the century. This sense of a 'spatial ephemerality' was evident in the 'vain ladies' who were in danger of giving up their individual being, hopes, and aspirations, vanishing within a homogeneous mass of young, eligible women who all vie for attention. Nature imagery here significantly aids in visualizing the individual's disappearance, or her sense of 'getting lost,' in a specifically modern idea of an estranging mass.

This distinctively *spatial* idea of ephemerality, where similar-looking brides stand so close to each other that their individuality seems to disappear, is visualized in the pale, almost translucent color scheme of these brides. Almost resembling Siegfried Kracauer's idea of a mass ornament (1995), these young women present a spectacle that works with repetitive patterns of feminine collective beauty (all have hair some shade of blonde, their faces look angelic, and even

their veils seem to be of the same shape), while prompting ideas of modern mass production and consumption. Contrary to a mass ornament’s very symmetric and ordered composition, however, this haphazard, organic arrangement of brides rather resembles a flower-bouquet. Again, just like Kracauer’s mass ornament, the visibly dense positioning of these individual, and yet strikingly similar looking brides evokes a sense of vertigo. That is, instead of forming an anti-modern, nature-related, nostalgia-imbued refuge from the alienated and anonymous masses of the modern crowd, woman here forms a part of her own disturbing, homogeneous crowd.

The effects of this ‘crowded’ visualization become clear when considering its publication context: Possibly *Puck*, which began alternating its well-known political covers with more social satire from the 1890s, poked fun at the upper-middle-class ceremonial character of weddings. In presenting a veritable *crowd* of brides, underlined by visual patterns of similarity and resemblance, this cover for a humor magazine leads the habitual idea of uniqueness and authenticity of a woman’s wedding day to an absurd extreme, even mocking it as a mass ‘production’ and routine dispatch of young brides into wifehood.

The very visual idea of young women’s mass dispatch into wifehood as well as nature-related ideas of perishability that I read into “Juneflowers” are also present in another cartoon called “Ballade of June Weddings” printed in *Pickings from Puck* (March 1905: n.p.), a spinoff publication that reprinted popular *Puck* cartoons. The cartoonist, *Puck* artist Frank A. Nankivell, was known for his socially critical caricatures that occasionally derided the institution of marriage and for his covers of beautiful young women. Taking up the tone of sentimentality that is associated with ballads, a solemn text written by Frank Walcott Hutt complements this visibly grave ceremony of a June wedding where a woman walks towards the altar, head facing down as if she were fulfilling a duty or were carrying (an emotional) load – a possibly critical perspective on marriage. To set the scene, two angelic figures carry her veil, and an ornamental, choir-like linear constellation of five angelic figures frames the scene to the left. Drawn in frilly lines and well-rounded, the angel heads resemble the garlands of roses that frame many of O’Neill’s full-page drawings. Similar to “Juneflowers,” the text that accompanies this caricature derides the idea of individuality and uniqueness on the special occasion of a wedding day by juxtaposing a woman’s wedding day and the underlying idea of outstanding ‘purity’ (underlined textually by a color scheme of “white array,” “white blooms,” or “white altars”) with a mass of “unnumbered” or “countless brides in white array” who walk towards a plurality of “white altars” (Nankivell and Hutt 1905). Just like “To Vain Roses and Ladies” warns of a ubiquity and omnipresence of young female beauty, and just like “Juneflowers” visually depicts popular June weddings as an ‘elbowing’ for the altar, also this “Ballade of June Weddings” attaches to the joyful

event of weddings the idea of modern mass production, particularly as weddings cluster in June: "O glad days all! O feast days rare! / December joys and sweets of May! / June is a month without compare, – / A June day for a wedding day" (Nankivell and Hutt 1905).

As this subchapter has shown, the conscious temporal experience is nowhere more pronounced than in nature. Whether it is the notion of getting lost in a crowded mass, the threat of losing one's individuality or individual freedom, or the sense of impending change and decay: Visual allegories and enhancements through nature imagery render visible women's distinct perception of time and expose a common denominator of temporal and spatial ephemerality and (impending) loss. This visually articulated dual sense of ephemerality in O'Neill's "June-flowers" and "To Vain Roses and Ladies" conveys how young women had to seize their (scarce) time and (narrow) space in a dynamic turn-of-the-century society. I argue that visual or spatial markers of transitoriness in the discussed illustrations lend themselves ideally to not only signal the passing of time in women's lives, but also to identify the voids and possibilities (in women's use of time). Nature imagery has the potential to mobilize women to *live out* their time. The address of nature, including such allegorical intervals as maturing, blossoming, or wilting, in O'Neill's illustrations does then not only point to the inherent structuring of women's time into phases, but also always stresses the underlying potential of power once women consciously conceive of or start to (re-)imagine their *lived* time. An *awareness* of time and its passing in phases or intervals, as well as its ephemerality, then has the potential of turning into a powerful "feminist conceptual tool" (Parkins 2010: 112) as it helps to situate femininity in modernity and the temporal. One possibility that young women at the turn of the century used in order to actively shape their lived time was education, as the next section illustrates.

2.5 Time-Out: Young Women's Negotiation of Time Through Education

Education was, in many ways, the most prominent, most fruitful, and certainly the most empowering path to personal and individual development for young women at the turn of the century – the first three decades of the new century alone saw women's attendance at colleges and universities triple (Patterson 2008: 11). Higher education, through newly founded women's colleges, such as Wesleyan College, and coeducational institutions, such as Oberlin College, Ohio, enabled young women to achieve personal and intellectual growth and pursue alternative life paths beyond the traditional roles of homemaker and wife (2008: 11). Together with new professional opportunities that built on the knowledge

provided by colleges, education also paved the way to women’s financial independence from their parents or (future) husbands: Equipped with skills, experience, and personal and intellectual development gained through four to five years of college education, young women confidently fulfilled a more comprehensive role in modern society and the workforce. On the other hand, the ideology of New Motherhood propagated by feminists like Charlotte Perkins Gilman (Patterson 2008: 9–10), as well as the companionate ideal of marriage, also entailed women’s education exactly because it was believed to make “better wives and mothers” (Lystra 1993: 127). Nevertheless, education allowed young women to gain control over their place and their utilization of time in modern-era society: As Martha H. Patterson writes, “[b]etter educated women enjoyed greater opportunities in the paid workforce, and before the 1920s at least, such women tended to delay marriage and childbearing” (2008: 11).



Figure 2.5: O’Neill and Sabin. 1898. “She Graduates.” “Sweet Girl Graduates” were a popular visual type used across turn-of-the-century postcards, cartoons, or magazine covers. Courtesy of Bonniebrook Historical Society Museum.

O'Neill's full-color back cover "She Graduates" for *Puck's* June 15, 1898, issue (O'Neill and Sabin 1898, Figure 2.5) clads young women's graduation from college in a ceremonious setting. The vibrant colors and the ubiquity of flowers and bows visually celebrate these women's accomplishments as well as their entry into a new promising life phase that allows them to reap the benefits of the time invested in their education. At second glance, however, it is also this pompous aesthetics of 'blossoming' beauty in the illustration and the accompanying poem by Edwin L. Sabin that point to the actual temporal limitations of these women's personal and intellectual development through education. Instead, both the visual and the textual descriptions of this graduation of young women from college reposition these women within the very confines of sexualized female beauty standards and concomitant courtship expectations to which education could provide a viable alternative. As I will discuss below, this highly aesthetic display on the back cover of a humor-magazine was as much a part of editorially, temporally, and especially financially motivated strategic considerations as it was reflective of *Puck's* unfurling towards more social and societal topics, including the growing representation of women in the public sphere.

In "She Graduates," O'Neill portrays a "s.s.g.," or "sweet girl graduate," who just received the certificate that seals the efforts of her past few college years in writing. As if to underline this moment of closure, the illustration provides a snapshot of the very moment in which the graduate returns to take her seat among her fellow graduates who appraisingly look up to her as they eagerly await their own turn to receive the final diploma.

Honoring this joyful occasion, the whole scenery is rendered colorful and celebratory, resembling what Sabin describes as "[a] mass of fluffy, shimmering clothes" (O'Neill and Sabin 1898). The page is decorated by a heap of flowers worn by the women in their hair, in their hands, or decorating the ceremonial hall as floral garlands in the background. The 'girl graduate' herself also attached flowers to her hair and wears a birthday cake of a dress, draped with large bows that color-match the large floral bouquet in her hand. In aestheticizing and embellishing the event, the illustration celebrates this major (and still new) accomplishment in a young woman's life with visible pomp. As much as the ceremonious visual rendition of flowers and frills closely associates these graduates with their femininity, it also celebrates and allegorizes these young women's personal moment of 'flourishing.' Figuratively 'blossoming' with opportunity at their graduation, these young women now face an open future – or do they?

As we learn from the accompanying poem, the graduate called Mabel excelled in Music, Art, French, and History. Judging by the poem's (male) speaker, she also 'graduated' in several other subjects: "gen'ral wiles," "flirting," "smiles," "using eyes," "figure," as well as "kissing" (O'Neill and Sabin 1898). After listing her accom-

plished marks (“E” for “excellent,” “S” for “superior,” “A” for “angelic,” “F” for “fine,” “D” for “divine,” and the summa-cum-laude “P” for “perfect”) on these ‘disciplines,’ her admirer grants Mabel a final degree of “M.S.” – which here does not refer to ‘Master of Science,’ but to “My Sweetheart.” On her graduation day, that is, on a day that marks her entry into a new field of opportunities beyond traditional role conceptions of housewife and mother, the poem reduces Mabel’s serious attempt at making the most of herself intellectually and her ‘realm’ of excellence to her sexualized body and her ‘aptitude’ for heteronormative expectations of courtship.

This seeming divergence in visual and textual messages calls to mind an anecdote on the artist’s work processes that is shared among O’Neill scholars. It seems that, at least in her early years, O’Neill had occasionally lost control over her gag lines. As Susan K. Scott, President of the Bonniebrook Historical Society that houses the O’Neill Kewpie Museum, Fine Art Gallery, and Research Library in the place of the artist’s former mansion, told me in an email:

When Rose first started illustrating for magazines in the 1890s, she sold her art. They owned it and profited from re-prints and post cards with her art. Then, she also learned a tough lesson that she lost control of that art because the magazines would add their own gag line (funny line) at the bottom and create what they thought was funny. Sometimes those editorial ‘funny lines’ were not something that Rose would have said and she found offensive. Therefore, Rose got smart and allowed magazines to use the art for one printing and then it was returned to her. She also often contributed her own short story or poem to go with her illustrations. (Scott 2018)

Whether Sabin’s textual contribution deliberately reversed what O’Neill ‘would have said’ is of course a matter of mere speculation. Still, as much as the poem acknowledges that Mabel “may be wise” and lists her intellectual accomplishments, the speaker insists: “And yet – and yet – I do believe / Quite different marks I’d give to her.” The poem thereby addresses the very debates and frustrations that young women seeking an education faced at the end of the century and often still face nowadays.⁷⁸

Women had to claim their righteous place in institutions of higher education towards the end of the nineteenth century to properly participate in modern-era public life, including allegedly male time patterns of linear progression, or dynamic processes of “becoming” in a true “Faustian striving” for production (Felski 1995: 43). As both the poem and the image illustrate, even college-graduated women were denied this recognition of their “becoming” and “striving” personalities. Calling to mind the purely “decorative” function of women’s tasks in Ve-

⁷⁸ See Clarke, “Sex in Education” (1873) as an exemplary, nineteenth-century treatise that repro- bated women’s education as damaging to their fertility and physical health.

blen's upper middle-class household (Veblen 2007: 57), these young women seem to be assembled here with the sole function of *embellishing* the background in a "fluffy, shimmering" mass, and thereby not differing much in function from the floral garlands.

In contrast to this overloaded, almost flamboyant scene, reports on the new phenomenon of women's higher education institutions in contemporary women's magazines painted a rather unpretentious idea of young women's graduation day. Photos of serious-looking female college graduates of Barnard College, all clad in a uniform mass of black cap-and-gowns and sitting obediently in bare and plain halls, complement the rather factual tone of a 1904 article on "The Educated Woman" by Charlotte Perkins Gilman for *The Twentieth Century Home*, in which she praises the benefits of women's education for marriage and motherhood (1904: 65–67). The photos in Gilman's article live up to the no-nonsense dedication that also Lavinia Hart attributes to young college women in her 1901 article "A Girl's College Life" for *Cosmopolitan*:

Regarding [the seriousness with which the college girl regards her course], nine-tenths of the girls at college are there for the purpose of fitting themselves to earn a livelihood. They are aiming to become professors, tutors, lawyers, doctors, littérateurs. They are not, generally, the daughters of wealthy parents. These go to a finishing school, and study the limitations, rather than the possibilities, of society. The female college students are mostly drawn from those medium walks of life wherein ambition is given impetus by necessity. (1901: 188)

In "She Graduates," an angelic figure, probably *Puck's* eponymous mascot, is the only one wearing the traditional black cap-and-gown. Without Puck and the poem's title and text, this illustration could have presented any debutante ball where attendants vie for each other's attention, and as the poem's courtship association implies, this impression is not even far-fetched. It is also worth noting that Puck himself is depicted with tiny wings, possibly embodying Cupid. The cherubic, boyish symbol of love regards Mabel with a scrutinizing glance – a subtle reminder of this young woman's omnipresent conflict between love or marriage vs. self-fulfillment (including the often-conflictive devotion of *time* between two differing life plans).

Both the poem and the decorative back cover, which stylize this graduation as a beauty pageant, draw sharp temporal (and ornamental) boundaries around young women's narrow phase of college education and concomitant scope of action for personal and intellectual development at the turn of the century. As the vivid use of flowery visuals and language in "She Graduates" points out: Young women's personal and professional development via higher education had an expiration date. College could grant young women a 'grace period' from middle-class conventions that demanded her to settle down with a suitable partner for

eventual marriage and motherhood (Smith-Rosenberg 1985: 253; see also Lowe 2003: 46). In this line, education was viewed as a merely pleasant and suitable ‘addition’ to a young woman’s accomplishments that she would bring into married life. Too much education, on the other hand, was considered impractical – an opinion that was often adopted and played out in the contemporary (humorous) periodical press.⁷⁹ As also “She Graduates” makes understood, education was not meant to *replace* a young woman’s traditional life trajectories, and the poem ridicules anyone who believes otherwise.

O’Neill’s nature-imbued illustrations do *not* present youth as a prospering, sheer endless phase of possibilities, but rather play with and always already anticipate the very next step within this temporal, cyclical pattern of women’s life trajectories at the turn of the century: courtship, marriage, motherhood. The art students discuss the impending ‘full-time’ contract of marriage life that the ‘June brides’ are already facing, gloomy as they look. Meanwhile, ‘Summer Girls,’ ‘October Maids,’ and ‘Vain Ladies’ try to seize their beauty’s prime to secure a ‘match’ before their ‘season’ is over. Even the highly visual presentation of the ‘Girl Graduate’ seems to call out her college years’ closure, charting the direction of her future career in courtship rather than Calculus. As a matter of fact, the phenomenon of women’s higher education provides only a modern backdrop or context (if not even an editorially motivated pretext) to what seems to be a clear visual and textual focus on (idealized) youthful beauty, fashion styles, and other means of attraction.

And still, while O’Neill’s illustrations pointed out the intermittent quality of the life phase of young womanhood, they can only be understood properly in the context and the format in which they were placed and presented. Seen as what they were (full-color front or back cover illustrations for a highly successful humor magazine targeting predominantly educated, white men), O’Neill’s highly aesthetic depictions of young women expand their meaning. As an inquiry into the publication context and underlying editorial as well as temporally informed considerations will reveal, the beautiful young women in O’Neill’s illustrations were visibly flirting as much with the notion of time as with the reader and his or her expectations and imaginations of young women at the outset of the new century.

79 In her cartoon “The Educated Wife” (O’Neill and Masson 1904) for *The Twentieth Century Home*, O’Neill portrays a similarly beautiful woman with a square graduate cap. Surrounded by books, her eyes pensively regard a little Cupid, who implores her to attend her household chores, while her husband already regrets his marriage to a woman who “has an education” as the rhyming verses by Tom Masson reveal.

2.6 The Aesthetic Management of Young Women's Temporalities in *Puck*

Among American illustrators, one would be hard to find who has been more widely discussed than 'O'Neill.' The odd signature, perhaps, has something to do with it, for time and again has the question been asked 'Is O'Neill a man or a woman?' But the real reason was in the drawings themselves, the intensely human, living, breathing, almost speaking people there portrayed. No modern worker in black and white ever sprang so quickly and surely into popularity as she. 'She' because 'O'Neill' is a woman [. . .]. (*Puck* 1905, unknown issue, qtd. in "Inductee's Name" 2019)⁸⁰

Puck's revelation, published almost ten years after O'Neill's initial hiring, is exemplary for the female artist's complex role in an otherwise male-dominated illustration market and as the only female staff member for a humor magazine that was popular among a male audience (Formanek-Brunell 1997: 16). To avoid prejudice, many female artists signed with their surname only. Briefly after her marriage to her first husband Gray Latham, she signed as "O'Neill Latham" – and promptly received curls of hair from several female *Puck* readers, often accompanied by love letters in which they expressed their wish for a "little Latham of [their] own" (Brewster 2011: 51; O'Neill 1997: 72). As much as this anecdote and *Puck's* declaration make today's readers smirk, they also highlight that the underlying publication context and its editorial strategies must not go unnoticed in an analysis of O'Neill's illustrations. In this subchapter I therefore shed light on the possible connections between O'Neill's stylish, full-color visualizations of young womanhood and the humor magazine's editorial agenda: What was the possible meaning and the effect of these decorative and stylish, lavishly colorful, and most of all outspokenly feminine, full-color illustrations of young women (by a female and later well-known feminist artist) in their publication context? How did these feminine illustrations play into a weekly published humor magazine known for its political, but also social, satire? Which role did its target audience play in a possible patriarchal framing of these illustrations? And, finally, how was the 1896 hiring of a female artist who presented feminine subject matter in such outspoken visual terms part of a shift underlying *Puck's* editorial strategy and agenda from political to more social satire in the 1890s? How did O'Neill very specifically

⁸⁰ This quote was first reproduced for the privately published 1950 booklet *Memories of Rose O'Neill* by Maude M. Horine (1954: 14; see also Baumlin and Cadle 2009: 195n5). It has been reprinted in a biography of O'Neill released by the Women's Hall of Fame for her introduction to the Hall in March 2019 in its celebration of the 100th anniversary of women's right to vote in the state of New York ("Inductee's Name" 2019).

prepare the ground for *Puck*'s eventual embrace of women's political demands for suffrage in 1915?

Throughout her career at *Puck*, O'Neill created a large number of illustrations that adorned covers, back covers, and *Puck*'s famous colorful centerfolds – especially after the turn of the century, her number of covers and centerfold prints increased: The personal fan collection of Susan Ellen Wilson (2002) lists five front covers, forty-three back covers, and five centerfolds (all printed in color), as well as forty-three full-page color illustrations and twenty-two in black-and-white inside the magazine.⁸¹ Both the use of vivid colors and the prominent placement, particularly on the front or back of a 16-page magazine reveal a lot about *Puck*'s underlying strategic editorial considerations in using her illustrations. Let us first focus on the *visual* side, that is the meaning of these colorful contributions for *Puck*'s distinction on the magazine market, before we take a glance at what the *subjects* presented (that is, beautiful young women) articulate about the magazine's editorial decisions.

Puck (1877–1918), *Life* (1883–1936), *Judge* (1881–1937), and *Truth* (1881–1905) were all founded around the same time, printed political or social satire, often in the form of colorful cartoons and caricatures, and were widely circulated in a similar format (typically a 16-page quarto of 9x12 inches or smaller) and periodicity (weekly, later fortnightly) (T. Grant 1987: 111–113; Secor 1987: 220).⁸² Also, these magazines, especially *Puck* and *Life*, were often competing for the same cartoonists (Marschall 1987: 145) – as a matter of fact, O'Neill had worked for *Truth*, *Brooklyn Life*, and (*New York*) *Life* before she joined *Puck* and she appears to have continued her contributions to these publications and many other magazines in parallel to her engagement at *Puck* (Kahn and West 2014: 322; Goodman 1989: 14).

Faced with this competition in the 1890s, all of these humor publications, with the exception of *Life*, capitalized on the new technology of chromolithography to achieve eye-catching, full-color illustrations, and they all competed with each other to have the most colorful pages and drawings to win over competitors'

⁸¹ Note that these are only the color pages listed for *Puck*. Susan Ellen Wilson (2002) also lists numerous works that appeared in *Puck*'s spin-off publications.

⁸² The widespread popularity of these early humor publications becomes evident in David E. E. Sloane's introduction to *American Humor Magazines and Comic Periodicals*: “*Puck*, *Life*, and *Judge* portrayed an upper-middle-class experience organized by social expectations of economic well-being. Born on the eve of the great age of color lithography and American illustration, they brought the issues of national political morality to the nation in bold and colorful caricatures in an extraordinary range of colored comic and editorial cartoons. [. . .] [I]n the mix of upper crust, localist, and political humor, bolstered by their colorful, strongly opinionated cartoons, the three magazines found mass audiences” (1987: xxiv).

readers – albeit *Puck* stood out by far: Remembered as the “most influential American humor magazine ever published,” as well as the “first American magazine to publish color lithographs on a weekly basis” (Kahn and West 2014: 11), *Puck* prided itself on its innovative printing process, so much that the magazine even exhibited its use of this technology at the Chicago World’s Fair in 1893 (14). By overprinting several colors using colored stones (a process that *Puck* also explained in a special illustrated supplement on March 2, 1887, see “*Puck* Building” 1887), the publication could achieve the remarkably colorful illustrations that it was famous for.

Puck therefore must have placed O’Neill’s highly colorful illustrations in such prominent positions of front or back covers for two related reasons: to embellish the magazine’s outside (in a way that made the magazine stand out against its competitors), and, consequently, to attract a returning audience or new readers – that is, for purely economic reasons. Printed on the full page, in lavish colors, her stylish and tasteful illustrations of beautiful women, flowery garlands, and patterned ornaments that spread across scenic backgrounds or women’s dresses, all had the function to literally *showcase* the innovative chromolithography printing technology. This is especially true for front covers, but also for back covers. A back cover was visible especially when the reader picked up the magazine, carried it around, or opened the 16-page quarto format to its full size. It also afforded entirely different reception practices than the comparatively fast-produced, monochrome drawings inside the magazine: Not only the rich color, but also the sheer size of back cover illustrations demanded extra viewing time and attention from the reader-viewer, who had to pause to survey the large illustration and perhaps read any accompanying poem. The fact that later issues of *Puck* placed large-scale advertisements on the back cover accounts for the visual prominence and strategic importance of this position.

O’Neill’s feminine back cover illustrations at the turn of the century are therefore historically set between *Puck*’s early depictions of political satire and its later printing of eye-catching advertisements. As a matter of fact, her imaginations of femininity take up a middle position: maneuvering between, on the one hand, the humor magazine’s presentation of turn-of-the-century femininity with a wink, and its increasing adjustment to prominently circulated and commercialized female beauty standards on the magazine market, on the other hand.

That *Puck*, following a larger commercial impetus of visuality, would attempt to capitalize on the feminine aesthetics and beautiful women in Rose O’Neill’s illustrations seems evident. The widespread prominence of ‘cover girls’ on the magazine market had long shown that beauty (and sex) sells and drives circulation numbers and, hence, advertising revenue. It may thus come as a surprise

that *Puck* began to tap into cover girl conventions only from the early 1910s.⁸³ I argue that *Puck*'s eventual, if late, use of cover girls, let alone its publication of a Woman Suffrage Number, was decisively prefigured by the preponderance of young, beautiful women in the cartoons and illustrations by O'Neill.

I contend that there is also a more political perspective to this markedly decorative presentation of femininity in a humor magazine at the turn of the century. Next to providing a *visual* sales argument, O'Neill's cover images also provided an increasingly *thematic* sales argument at a time when young women renegotiated their roles and their place in modern society, when they were both affected by and yet also claimed their time, and when female illustrators like O'Neill sketched and prefigured these changes in their drawings. I suggest that the editorial history of *Puck* lends itself ideally as a case study that illustrates how the economic considerations and demands of the magazine market were entangled and intertwined with contemporary events of women's emancipation and proliferation in the (visual) periodical and public sphere.

Puck's editorial and visual shifts in the 1890s and its hiring of O'Neill not only accompanied the magazine's growing recognition of its more diverse readership and thereby prefigured the magazine's later opening-up towards women's social and political manifestation in the public sphere, but also aided in the circulation and spread of the latter, as the next subsection will elaborate on. In its infancy, *Puck* had been focusing its mockery on strictly political topics, evident in its visual-thematic prominence and address of white men in both its content and its assumed target readership. As Robert Secor writes, each issue of *Puck* followed a system of “a large double-paged political cartoon at its center, as well as a different full-page political cartoon for every cover, and another full cartoon, more likely to be social than political, for the back cover” (1987: 220). An exemplary issue, marking *Puck*'s fifth anniversary on March 9, 1881, depicts the Boer War, celebrates the ending of Rutherford B. Hayes's contested Presidency, and questions the morals of clergyman Henry Ward Beecher (Marks 2018). Nothing, apart from a poem by H. C. Dodge that ridicules a “sweet old girl – of fifty-two,” diverts from the publication's lampooning of (white) men of power. In the early *Puck*, women on the covers or centerfolds

⁸³ Especially in the early 1910s, *Puck* adorned its covers by occasional ‘Bathing’ or ‘Summer Girls,’ though still in a rather chunky, humorous drawing style and mostly in the context of so-called ‘Summer Numbers’ (e.g. in 1911). By 1914, however, the women on *Puck*'s covers were indistinguishable in style and beauty from those that graced common women's magazines – see, for example, Walter Dean Goldbeck's cover girls of 1914. This shift was possibly the result of the new editorship of Nathan Straus Jr. who tried to revamp the magazine in the style of the German *Simplicissimus* by hiring established European artists and by employing the cosmopolitan artist Hy Mayer as art director for greater coverage of social mores and the arts (Kahn and West 2014: 15).

appeared only in symbolic roles when they personified the United States (June 4, 1879, back cover) or New York State (March 17, 1886, centerfold). Even in later issues, the function of women on the humor publication's cover seemed merely representational – as on the front cover of its 1000th issue on May 6, 1896, that presents a joyful dance of the publication's mascot Puck with two elderly women, who represent the Republican and the Democratic Party. Especially prior to her 1896 hiring, O'Neill's markedly feminine cartoons that cited women's social mores and manners, let alone her full-color illustrations of beautiful women in frilled dresses and flowery settings, would have contrasted sharply with the unabashed political satire of earlier *Puck* issues.⁸⁴

The prominence of political satire may have had to do with *Puck's* implied audience. *Puck's* readership was often described as consisting of “educated men” (Formanek-Brunell 1997: 16) or “white men of means” (“*Puck Magazine*” n.d.). As much as this theory of *Puck's* middle-class male addressee abounds in common literature (see also Kennedy 2018: 111, 148; Goodman 1989: 11, 14, 15) – and the occasional illustration of scarcely-clad women who appealed to a ‘male gaze’ in later *Puck* issues would underscore this assumption –, it is difficult to confirm this theory without further research into subscription names. Instead, even magazines like *Puck* were of course no closed program but rather presented a collective movement, open to be read by other secondary readers next to the addressed (presumably male) primary reader. The introduction of *Puck's* “Letter Box” in the mid-1910s gives further clues about a more diverse readership: The Letter Box of *Puck's* issue of January 23, 1915 (that is, one month before the famous Woman Suffrage Number of Feb. 20, 1915), for example, contains a letter by a female reader. Also, magazines were media made for multiple use, and the boundaries between implied and real readers might have been blurred (see also Meyer 2019b: 24; Johanningsmeier 1997: 17). Even if the female reader who wrote to the Letter Box may not have been the subscriber (subscriptions were often taken out under the name of the male ‘head of the family’), a family father was likely to read out the humorous pages at the breakfast table or pass the magazine on to his wife or daughters. As the quote about O'Neill's gender suggests, *Puck* was also read by women. It is therefore likely that *Puck* became increasingly aware of this female section of its readership.

⁸⁴ This is not to say that all of O'Neill's illustrations were as fashion- and beauty-focused as the ones presented. Mostly, her illustrations of street scenes or working-class families elicited humor and likeability (Formanek-Brunell 1997: 16), but others were steeped in turn-of-the-century prejudices about Irish or Black working-class families or Jewish New York upper-class families that nowadays would be considered blatantly racist or even anti-Semitic (Goodman 1989: 16).

The idea that magazines like *Puck* strategically experimented with and expanded their target readership over time can be attributed to magazines' larger attempts to open up towards a more diverse readership, regardless of gender.⁸⁵ Likewise, *Puck's* experimentation with a decidedly feminine aesthetic that was worth marveling at, regardless of gender, social, or ethnic background, at least suggests that *Puck* had multiple addressees inscribed. For *Puck*, this tactic move would inevitably lead to the magazine's increasing engagement with the social politics of the day, including women's suffrage.

In the late 1890s, *Puck* gradually changed the target of its mockery and its visuals. It started to include (and ridicule) more social mores, including all sorts of class-, gender-, but also race-related subject matter, began to embrace (even more) color, and increased its overall number of visuals to become the magazine that scholars would later consider to have paved the way for the institutionalization of American comics (Secor 1987: 225; Kahn and West 2014: 11). Through this shift of visual focus, also *Puck's* cartoons were now increasingly “purely comic or illustrative” in nature (Dueben 2014). Humor and satire were now lighter, often with a social focus, and the already liberal magazine became even more reform-minded, often pointing out corruption or calling for trust busting. It was in this climate that *Puck* became aware of women's increasing participation in the public sphere and embraced this phenomenon wholeheartedly in its mockery of the ‘new woman’ or women's emancipation⁸⁶ – even so-called Women's Pages, often part of contemporary newspapers, were parodied.⁸⁷ Long before the magazine would truly open up towards women's interests and turn its scorn for women's emancipatory efforts into the actual support of the cause with its famous 1915

⁸⁵ Not least, this openness contributed to the community-building function of magazines at the turn of the century: As Ruth Mayer writes, “[m]agazines catering to an emergent mass market of readers [. . .] gained their prominent position in the American print market because they managed to reach a broad cross-section of society,” so that particularly the “entertainment market,” among which I count *Puck*, more than the “educational and respectable publishing market,” significantly fostered “community experiences” (2014: 16–17, 37; see also Hinnant and Hudson 2012: 115; Meyer 2019b: 73, 118).

⁸⁶ C. J. Taylor's cover, “A Squelcher for Woman Suffrage” (*Puck*, June 6, 1894), ridiculed women's calls for enfranchisement: “How can she vote, when the fashions are so wide, and the voting booths are so narrow?”

⁸⁷ The November 5, 1902, issue printed a “Delightful Woman's Page” that mimicked the convention of ‘agony aunt’ advice columns of contemporary women's magazines. Birdie, a fictitious woman of probably upper-class descent, inquires: “Q.—I want to find out how to keep Fedora hats from scolloping at the edge. A.—So do we. But we realize that people who can afford to do it may give them to the poor. Then they will not care about the scollops.”

Woman Suffrage Number,⁸⁸ *Puck* would thus begin to tap into a growing social (but also political) female presence in the public sphere and on the magazine market.

This editorial and visual shift therefore helps to explain the engagement of a female artist who thwarted societal conventions herself, as much as it provides an explanation for the unusually prominent placement of O'Neill's lavishly colorful, outspokenly feminine illustrations and feminine subject matter in the humor magazine. Whether it was pure economic concern to fall behind coverage of the central sociopolitical developments regarding women at the time⁸⁹ or a bold attempt to tap into the growing dominance of the stereotypical female magazine reader, or both, that caused the turn-of-the-century *Puck* to rethink its editorial and visual strategy – the effect of placing O'Neill's cartoons and illustrations within this popular and allegedly male-targeted humor magazine must not be neglected: As Formanek-Brunell writes, the cartoons' and illustrations' "subject matter and tone also provoked them [an audience of educated men] to consider their prejudices about women and minorities" (1997: 16). As much as she highlighted female youthful beauty, O'Neill's depictions of female agency (that is, outspoken women who openly question gendered expectations, or who make their own decisions in the use of time, courtship, or education) stood out remarkably from portrayals of women in other humor magazines of the same era.⁹⁰ The following section will discuss what this prominently visual and serial circulation of topical issues regarding young womanhood meant for the renegotiation and public perception of women in turn-of-the-century periodical media.

88 *Puck's* "Woman Suffrage Number" (Feb. 20, 1915) was a "a full-throated, heavily promoted endorsement of women's right to vote" as part of a larger "massive mobilization campaign" preceding New York's 1915 suffrage referendum ("*Puck Magazine Suffrage Issue*" n.d.; see also Kroeger 2017: 158–160). Rolf Armstrong's cover shows a woman and *Puck* in suffrage sashes, and in an O'Neill cartoon, her Kewpies call for "Votes for Our Mothers." *Life* also published a "Pro-Suffrage Number" on October 16, 1913 – evidence for the pervasive shift to support suffrage among humor publications (Banta 2003: 351–352).

89 Many popular magazines began to embrace suffrage not only out of "general enlightenment," but also out of fear that women in favor of suffrage could discontinue to purchase their publications (Florey 2013). The commercial benefit was also apparent in *Puck's* Jan. 23, 1915, issue that promotes the upcoming Woman Suffrage Number particularly to advertisers of "any product appealing to women" ("Suffrage Number of *Puck*" 1915).

90 *Life*, for instance, portrayed women who had the sole "appointed task: to be beautiful objects, and to be beautifully available to men's desires," or they were the objects of "[s]atiric observations about the desecration of female beauty, which leads to the waste of male desire" (Banta 2003: 348–349).

2.7 The Serial Management of Young Women’s Temporalities in *Puck*

In many ways, the early periodical form is emblematic of a distinctively time-imbued modern female life experience at the turn of the century, and the discussed imaginations of female lives in transition are informed by the same temporal and spatial logics as the expanding magazine market towards the close of the nineteenth century (Friedrichs 2019a). In order to substantiate this claim, I first shed light on the historical givens that facilitated developments of popular seriality on the magazine market.⁹¹ I then seek to find answers to questions like: How is the serial form underlying *Puck*’s weekly publication and its colorful front and back covers enmeshed within and informed by a larger media landscape of serial formats that took shape in the late nineteenth century? And which multifarious activities on the periodical market form the backdrop for *Puck*’s ‘serial’ management and satirical presentation of young womanhood?

The decades between 1890 and 1920 mark an era of technological innovation, modernization, population growth, and a concomitant new mass readership – aspects that enabled the unprecedented proliferation of the periodical form. On the resulting “fiercely competitive” media landscape, magazines and newspapers vied for viewers’ attention and time – against each other and against such other means of entertainment as vaudeville (Campbell 2001: 8; see also Meyer 2019b: 72). In order to distinguish themselves, magazines availed themselves of aesthetic means like color printing or serial continuity to attract a returning audience that eagerly awaits a story’s or comic’s unfolding.⁹² Facing a steady pressure to meet the growing demand for up-to-the-minute reporting and newsworthy, engaging, and entertaining content, the magazine medium becomes then both a purveyor as well as a ‘symptom’ of explicitly modern ideas of newness, brevity, and underlying mechanisms of (re-)production, renewal, and (re-)invention (Friedrichs 2019a).

Rose O’Neill’s magazine illustrations, which visually express the pressures exercised by temporal simultaneity and visual similarity on young women’s turn-of-the-century life experiences, must therefore be placed in a larger societal and

⁹¹ For an introduction to discussions of seriality in popular formats, see Kelleter (2017b).

⁹² As the proliferation of illustrated Sunday supplements, such as the newspaper comic of the Yellow Kid, testifies, the 1890s were also the decade of important “media-historical developments of popular seriality” (Meyer 2019b: 16). These extras for city newspapers were often of comic nature, containing popular serialized cartoons or collectible cutouts that animated the reader’s regular return (3).

technological landscape of acceleration and concomitant temporal urgency. I contend that the time-related affordances of the magazine medium help to convey and understand young women's changing roles – and how these are visualized and textualized in turn-of-the-century periodical media. After all, *Puck's* publication and production was informed by the same affordances that characterize young women's explicitly time- and space-imbued experience of modern life as presented by O'Neill: temporal and spatial contraction; competition-driven ambitions for topicality, continuous reinvention, and visual exposure (the aspiration 'to be seen'); the mass-cultural (re-)production and proliferation of content; as well as the mechanisms of steady, seemingly open-ended serial continuity set against strict (episodic) containment. O'Neill's visualizations of women and their distinctive temporal experience were thus heavily imbued with notions of time and its passing, and crucially so because they were circulated through what was a 'timely' medium itself.

O'Neill actively participated in the drafting of a modern understanding of young womanhood – set between young women's unprecedented opportunities and a temporal urge to claim the latter before one's 'time' is up. In a similar way, the magazine medium on the early periodical market was informed by these circumstances of topicality and temporal contraction, always under pressure to publish 'on its *time*' and 'on time,' as I also elaborated on in more detail in the introduction to this study. Not least, this 'urgency' must have been perceptible for *Puck's* editorial staff, including its staff illustrators, who had to convey their ideas in time for the copy deadline.⁹³ After all, the heavily illustrated *Puck* had to produce its visual cornucopia in an always new, but also economic, that is time- and space-saving manner, all while meeting a tight weekly publication schedule.⁹⁴

Given these limitations of time and space, periodicals' publication processes were also informed by the "compressive dynamics of print," including the brevity and reduction of subject matter (Turner 2020: 283): In rushing to meet editorial deadlines, a magazine like *Puck* compacted as much visual and textual information in its sixteen pages as possible. Its ability to provide this 'condensed' (subjective) snapshot of turn-of-the-century (political and social) debates makes *Puck* a

⁹³ As Mary F. Holahan explains, "[m]any illustrators worked for multiple publications, receiving only abstracts of stories while equally hard-pressed authors simultaneously rushed to finish the texts" (2019: 292).

⁹⁴ Following Christina Meyer, seriality has a temporal *and* a spatial dimension: The temporal dimension refers to "the cyclic, periodic repetition of something, and the difference between each reoccurrence," whereas the spatial dimension means "the repetitive elements that organize the space in the newspaper page and the acts of consuming [this spatially structured newspaper page, own addition]" (2019b: 101–102).

fascinating historical source today. Further, this concentration of events and impressions performed an important function for nation- or community-building: Following Jared Gardner, who argues that turn-of-the-century newspaper comics offered a means for a burgeoning mass audience to ‘make sense’ of modernity by “diagramming the serial complexities of modern life and fixing the fragments of modernity on the page” (2012: 7), I suggest that *Puck’s* satirical take on current debates, political events, or social transitions (such as juxtapositions of old and new gender roles or women’s increasing participation in the public sphere) offered its readership a means to order and comprehend these rapid developments and changes at the turn of the century. After all, this reciprocal relationship is set in an era that saw the emergence of both new role possibilities for young women and a new mass magazine market, which attempted to make sense of, convey, and, particularly in *Puck’s* case, caricature the former.

While the magazine medium condensed events, impressions, and negotiations of modern-era life on the page, it also allowed for an openness within its seemingly strictly contained serial form. That is, just as a magazine medium like *Puck* was inherently propelled by temporal demands of immediacy and brevity, it was also an inherently open and creative format that lent itself for all sorts of projections, fantasies, and hopes – also and especially for its readership: As Margaret Beetham writes, the magazine format is “deeply contradictory, simultaneously rooting its readers in the present while pointing them to the future” (1996: 14). In lampooning current politics and social events, it was part of *Puck’s* nature to present and capitalize on the inherent comicality of potentially inscribed ‘plotlines’ that lie within the reader-viewer’s interpretive realm. This openness is evident in O’Neill’s illustrations through all sorts of (im-)possible readings that are inscribed or drawn into the illustrations, or in her cartoons, which, without a caption, would have been open to interpretation. Especially her full-color illustrations for front and back covers presented young women whose stunning beauty and admiration by male suitors could become a projection surface for all kinds of fantasies and (imaginary) sequels to the respective scene and thereby adhered to societal and heterosexual courtship norms, but also played with them. While these plotlines often toy with the anticipation of a ‘next step’ of marriage and motherhood in these premarital women’s lives and are thus always set within *Puck’s* larger patriarchal framing, the conclusions drawn from O’Neill’s visual narratives are, at the same time, open to readers’ fantasies and expectations. As Beetham confirms, these “qualities of fluidity and openness to the future which characterise serial forms do make them attractive to the powerless” (1996: 14). This inherent openness and creative potential to convey, negotiate, and understand young women’s time and place within turn-of-the-century society, but also within a humorous print medium, render O’Neill’s illustrations for *Puck* such

interesting material for the study of young women's changing roles and life realities.

Let us now take a closer look at the topicality within this humor publication and its potential for visualizations of femininity. As Frank Kelleter explains, seriality enables topical storytelling: A narrative's or publication's underlying seriality "enables the ongoing story to respond directly to current events and become part of its recipients' daily realities and routines" (2017a: 13). Particularly the popular weekly or monthly published magazine embodies time-related aspirations for up-to-dateness⁹⁵ and newsworthy topics – a medium to be viewed and read in a timely manner itself, before being discarded for an even newer issue next week or month (Friedrichs 2019a). This 'perceived' passing of time and the concomitant need to go *with* this time also affected the editorial decisions of a humor publication that prided itself on covering (and satirizing) the latest political events and developments. As seen, as a magazine that went *with* its time, *Puck* underlay certain market-driven demands to cover and tap into the visual-textual omnipresence of women on the magazine market. Similar to O'Neill's illustrations that addressed relatively recent developments or issues in young women's lives (such as graduation or changing courtship patterns) or charted the changes that were still to come, *Puck* also had an (economic) interest in keeping its satire on sociopolitical events up-to-date. Besides, magazines capitalized on the inherent sensational 'newness' in popular ideas of young womanhood, including such phenomena as the 'new woman,' by making a newsworthy (and often humor-worthy) spectacle out of the 'new woman's new and strange habits (cycling), fashion (bloomers), college education, and love's deferral (a favorite topic in *Puck*, as we have seen). The popular magazine thereby also participated in managing the transition between old and new temporalities for young women in a distinctively time-informed manner, week after week.

The magazine medium capitalized on this topicality and temporal contraction through the limited and essentially *brief* availability of its issues given "the serial mode of [periodicals'] publication" (Meyer 2019b: 12). Both the young woman on this week's cover as well as this week's issue itself would, by the following week or month, already be older and (especially in commercial terms) be 'out of date.' This urge to go with the steady flow of time's unrelentless turning becomes partic-

⁹⁵ One of the competing humor magazines that O'Neill worked for at the turn of the century, *Up-to-Date*, echoed this 'up-do-dateness' in its title. Ironically, it was also *Up-to-Date* that published an 1896 all-summer series of covers by O'Neill that depicted 'recent' phenomena of turn-of-the-century femininity, such as the 'new woman' or young women's college years ("Ye Sweet Girl Graduate" 1896c, "Watching Ye New Woman's Progress" 1896a, "Ye New Woman Celebrates Ye Glorious Fourth" 1896b).

ularly apparent in women’s magazines and their cyclically imbued, as well as commercially driven, focus on the seasons of fashion.⁹⁶

Next to aspirations for ‘topicality,’ that is, seizing a moment and turning it into an entertaining plotline, both *Puck* and the idea of femininity in O’Neill’s illustrations were therefore also motivated by a seemingly endless serial, respectively seasonal, continuity. Scholars have even linked the serial form of the magazine to femininity alternatively because of its cyclical structure, or because of its (developmental) openness and resistance to closure (Beetham 1996: 13; see also Mattelart 1986; Modleski 1982). Beetham dismisses these arguments as “unsatisfactory” and overtly “essential[ist],” also because they fail to acknowledge the “double-faced quality of the periodical,” where the latter is as much “part of a continuum” as it is “of [its] particular moment” so that “the series is open-ended and fluid but each number is contained” (1996: 13). Likewise, O’Neill presents transient moments (a woman on a hot summer day in her youth) that are, simultaneously, part of a larger continuum of a woman’s (biological) life cycle.

Whereas a biological definition of womanhood and concomitant societal demands regarded young womanhood as a mere phase in a woman’s biological lifetime, O’Neill’s illustrations of young women visually totalize this markedly ephemeral life phase, rendering it a contained life stage in and for itself, in which the young woman is invited to rest for a bit longer. Rather than taking in a woman’s larger life continuum, O’Neill zooms in on *one* particular life phase, characterizing it as a unique, once-in-a-lifetime occasion with a temporary, yet strikingly new breadth of opportunity. Each of these women’s special moments (such as graduation or the moment right before marriage) is exactly this: momentary. Like the weekly magazine, with its own time-related affordances of immediacy and its brief availability, the life phase of young womanhood is transitory and, hence, contained so that the magazine medium takes up a central role in these discussions of ephemerality in women’s lives. Just as O’Neill tries to fixate the fleeting moment of youth on the magazine page (and highlights it as such by using seasonal allegories), also the periodical form fixates transitory events and moments on the page, making the modern, transient experience repeatable (and hence comprehensible) for a burgeoning urban mass audience (see Meyer 2019b: 10).

At the same time, as seen in the “Divinity of the Season,” this precious moment of female youth has to be momentary and brief so it can be endlessly (re-)produced, season after season. Both the young woman of this particular season and the magazine issue of this week were as much ‘in the moment’ as they were always already planning or keeping in mind future issues. Propelled by an impulse for constant

96 I will elaborate on this observation in chapter three on Nell Brinkley’s fashionable illustrations.

renewal and reinvention of contents or looks as seen in its editorial and visual shifts, *Puck's* magazine life thereby hinged on the same time-imbued struggle to constantly renegotiate its identity as did young, single women who sought to transform their (traditional) roles and identities in order to live out their opportunities within the social, temporal, and spatial limitations of the turn of the century.⁹⁷

Still, renewal and reinvention on the magazine market are not easy to accomplish for a simultaneously richly illustrated and topical medium with a tight weekly publication schedule. The maxim of recombination, instead of a complete renewal or reinvention, which also characterizes O'Neill's 'new girl' in the discussed illustration and poem, is also evident in the economic and time-imbued considerations that must have influenced *Puck's* decision to publish several spin-off publications. Spin-offs have the benefit that a magazine can reuse or recycle its contents and, simultaneously, maximize its profits by offering more outlets or new formats for its existing readership or by tapping into entirely new readership demographics. Each of these spin-offs recombined previously published material. Given the weekly magazine's pressure for steady 'renewal' and (re-)production of its publication, the 'recycling' (see Meyer 2019b: 11) of O'Neill's cartoons for its spin-off publications made economic sense. Reproducing or repurposing previously published material in affiliated publications provided a fast, easy, and possibly economic means (as the magazine only had to commission the respective work once) to maximize coverage and impact of the original work. This also becomes apparent in the repetition and transmedial spread of O'Neill's artwork across magazines, postcards, and frameable prints, from which *Puck* benefited financially. In a way, even the contributions to the main publication *Puck* recombined and put into words or image what their authors and artists witnessed in their surroundings so that O'Neill's visual imaginations of womanhood always also 'recombine' her own impressions and are therefore intertextual.

The (at times international) meandering of her artwork through reprints in various publications and spin-off publications testifies to the reputation O'Neill held among magazines' art editors, publishers, and other media-men alike: Adding to the multiplication of her presence in the media of her time, her artwork was frequently featured in *Puck Weekly*, *Puck Quarterly*, and *Puck Proofs* (Goodman 1989: 14). *Puck Proofs* was *Puck's* catalog of selected artworks that first ap-

⁹⁷ Wanting to shed the circular time patterns dictated by their life cycles of biological reproduction, especially female readers sought advice in women's magazines that capitalized on their own circularity. Perhaps even more ironic, women's magazines relied on strategies of delay and progression in their repetitive promises of (identity-, beauty-, or life-) transformation that would of course be constantly deferred – 'to be continued in next week's issue' (Friedrichs 2019a; see also Beetham 1996: 12–13).

peared in *Puck* and that were subsequently made available for \$1 each as an enlarged frameable reproduction in photogravure on heavy paper (“1905 Catalog” 1905). According to Susan Ellen Wilson’s personal fan collection (2002), some of O’Neill’s work appeared parallel to its publication in *Puck* as postcards (published by the postcard seller Tuck & Sons) as part of the turn-of-the-century postcard-boom. In addition, the London-based humor magazine *Pictorial Comedy* republished images from *Puck*, *Life*, and *Judge* for a British audience on a weekly basis. Some of her most famous cartoons – most of which presented strong-minded single women who defy their mothers’ courtship advice – were also reprinted in several 1905 issues of *Puck’s Monthly Magazine and Almanac* and *Pickings from Puck*. The lapse in time between the original publication and the re-publication of O’Neill’s artwork accounts for her enduring popularity among *Puck’s* readership: Her cartoon “Mama’s View,” first printed in *Puck* on January 9, 1901, was reprinted in *Pickings from Puck* as late as March 1905 (the caption reads: “She.—He says he can not [sic] live without me. Mama.—Well, I’d rather have him single than married when he finds out that he can.”).⁹⁸ Such a widespread (transmedial) reproduction or multiplication of a female artist’s artwork that gained popularity in a male-targeted publication is astonishing.

If we, following Ruth Mayer, understand seriality not as a “chronological sequence, in the sense of a chain of past, present, and future, neatly aligned consecutive episodes or operations,” but in terms of a “semantics of spread,” using such “terms as sprawl, growth, dispersion, and excrescence” (2014: 7), we notice that the same notion of ‘spread’ and ‘proliferation’ is evident in the (serialized) ubiquity of young woman images and imaginations in turn-of-the-century periodicals. O’Neill not least visualized women as part of a larger group (of flowers or women), thus creating a multiplying effect. In reproducing O’Neill’s visual constructions of strong-minded young women throughout its numerous spin-offs, *Puck* then participated in a hitherto unknown serial and circular (re-)production of (re-)imaginings of young womanhood in the serial press and the (male-dominated) public mind.

⁹⁸ The same issue of *Pickings from Puck* carried Nankivell’s “Ballade of June Weddings” (1905) and a reprint of O’Neill’s “Signs” (orig. *Puck* Aug. 17, 1904, repr. in June 1905 in *Puck’s Monthly Magazine and Almanac*). The 1905 issues that I saw of *Pickings from Puck* in the Library of Congress abound in Rose O’Neill cartoon reprints, most of them ridiculing the upper classes and the institution of marriage. Several 1904 and 1905 issues of *Puck’s Monthly Magazine and Almanac* carry reprints of O’Neill’s black-and-white *Puck* cartoons. Though unseen by me, I assume that *Puck’s Library*, before it was folded into *Puck’s Monthly Magazine and Almanac*, would have reprinted O’Neill’s socially satirical cartoons in its monthly thematic issues between 1887 and 1905 (Kahn and West 2014: 23).

The fact that this satirical magazine format provided ample space and reading time for O'Neill's ironic, strikingly sympathetic, aesthetic, and sometimes socially provocative presentations of young women is remarkable. *Puck's* rather small 16-page quarto format only reserved a limited number of pages for full-color prints, creating a temporally and spatially contracted mode of conveyance. In helping to circulate the presentation of young women's new life models and perceptions of time on a visual and textual level, illustrated weeklies like *Puck* themselves participated in introducing a whole new 'calculation' and negotiation of time to young female lives and contributed to the renegotiation of women's roles and public perceptions. The placement, circulation, and multiplication of these imaginations of young womanhood within a patriarchally framed humor magazine created new meanings of, and lent new cultural significance to, the life phase of young womanhood (see Beetham 1996: 39, 40).

2.8 It's About Time: Conclusion

Rose O'Neill's illustrations for *Puck* revealed a remarkable centrality and productivity of the notion of time in young women's lives at the turn of the century – decades that allowed young women to perceive of and structure their time in new, productive, sometimes even emancipatory manners. Whether they were oblivious to time, its constraints and schedules, or felt rushed by all of the latter, the life realities and aspirations of O'Neill's women were counted by the two hands of a watch. Placed between old and new conceptions of time, O'Neill presented women who negotiated a place for themselves that did not always adhere to the socially acceptable behavioral standards and conventions of (the) time: Miss Deering grows impatient at the priest's long sermons, and numbers of female beauties enjoy the freedom of not having to care too much about being the attention of a crowd of male suitors because marriage is still far away (if at all a part of their life's plan). Their priorities lie in making the most of their metaphorical 'summer' before they eventually settle for a suitor who is their own and not their parents' choice. As Goodman writes, O'Neill's women "seek marriage but do so without sentimental and idealized notions about men or domesticity. They unhesitatingly yawn in the faces of would-be suitors who bore them" (1989: 19). These women seemed to be transcribed versions of O'Neill's own life plan: After her own experience with married life and divorce, she clearly preferred the time with her sister Callista to time spent on suitors (Formanek-Brunell 1997: 13–14). At the height of female domesticity and the nuclear family, she and her sister occupied two apartments at Washington Square. Together they used the possibilities that life in the early twentieth century held for young women of the professional

middle class, hoping to carve out even more: From 1914 onwards, the O’Neill sisters became involved in New York’s suffrage activism. As a fervent suffrage supporter, O’Neill dedicated several of her works to the cause (see Gomez 2017; McCabe 2016: 17–18). Next to her well-known contributions to *Puck’s* 1915 Woman Suffrage Number, O’Neill’s art decorated the flyers, posters, and postcards of the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA). She participated in various pro-suffrage activities, among them exhibitions and fundraisers, throughout 1915, decorated the Children’s Van at a suffrage parade with her famous Kewpies, and represented the occupational group of women illustrators in a 1917 New York suffrage parade (Scott n.d.; Gomez 2017).

The progressive O’Neill also recognized one of the (im-)practical reasons that impeded women’s appropriation of time: In a 1915 fashion design contest to find the “universal gown for women,” she was a judge in a jury of New York club women. In a newspaper interview on the contest, she openly criticized contemporary fashions of hobble skirts and corsets, which visibly constricted women in both movement and efficient use of their time, asking “[w]hy does it take a man so short a time to dress and a woman so long?” (“Wanted! Ideas for Sensible Clothes for Women” 1915). Women’s assessment and reclaiming of time thus also hinged upon such mundane aspects as clothing conventions. The roles that fashion and ideas of ‘self-fashioning’ played for young women’s claiming of time also become apparent in Nell Brinkley’s illustrations for two mid-1910s’ *Harper’s Bazar* columns discussed in the next chapter.

3 On “Well Built Girls” and “Modern Bacchantes”: The Self-Fashioning of Modern Womanhood in Nell Brinkley’s Illustrations for the mid-1910s *Harper’s Bazar*

3.1 Do You Want to Join Me for A Glass?

The young woman in Nell Brinkley’s drawing that embellishes the Countess of Warwick’s February 1915 column in *Harper’s Bazar*⁹⁹ is quite an eye-ful: Her ears hung with grapes that also decorate her hairdo of vines and curls, she is the true image of a “modern bacchante,” as the illustration’s caption asserts (Warwick and Brinkley 1915e: 39, Figure 3.1). As the 1915 female reincarnation of the Roman god of agriculture, wine, and fertility, she sends you that “champagne sparkle of her eyes” through her long lashes, throwing back her head with an ecstatic open smile (39). While she flashes her white teeth, she asks you alluringly whether you would mind joining her for a glass – or maybe even two?

Or, perhaps, this ‘bacchante’ is just the type of woman with a dangerous propensity for champagne whom the Countess of Warwick seeks to counsel in her cautionary tale on “The Problem of Diet,” which this illustration accompanies. Warning of the disastrous toll that modern life takes on the modern (socialite) woman and her looks, the Countess admonishes her column’s targeted female readers that “when a woman is tired and faded after a hard day’s pursuit of social duty, a little champagne makes all the difference – half a glass will suffice – at first. Then a glass becomes necessary, and then a couple, before the light will come back to the eyes and the glow to the cheeks. By this time champagne has become a necessity” (1915e: 92). Looking at “diet in its relation to health and beauty,” the alleged expert in fash-

⁹⁹ *Harper’s Bazaar* (in the spelling it formally adopted in December 1930, see “Corporate Changes” 1930: 36) is a still-running women’s fashion and society magazine of international acclaim. It was founded by the publisher Harper & Brothers in 1867, after they had already founded *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* (1850–today) and *Harper’s Weekly* (1857–1916). Even though its per-issue-price of fifteen cents and yearly subscription rate of \$1.50 were average (Zuckerman 1998: 29), the *Bazar* differentiated itself from other women’s magazines of the era, which primarily capitalized on household and childcare advice, by showcasing fashion for an elite audience. It highlighted European fashion trends and looked towards England’s socialite and aristocratic circles to provide its monied American upper-middle- to upper-class readership with sophisticated advice on style and culture (19). This reliance on fashion and socialite profiles necessitated the early widespread use of illustrations and photographs. In 1913, *Harper’s Bazar* was purchased by the Hearst Corporation that still operates the U.S.-American issue today.



A modern Bacchante and the champagne sparkle of her eyes

The Problem of Diet

By THE COUNTESS OF WARWICK

In these days, when books are written on every subject under the sun, I look eagerly for a monumental work on diet in its relation to health and beauty. What a vogue such a book would have, if it were simply written by a master of the subject! Some say we are what we eat, and to a certain extent that is true; certainly, errors in diet go far to make up the sum of human misery.

I think we eat too much, and to make matters worse, we eat without proper selection. The modern hostess has infinite resources; the whole world is ready to replenish her table with its choicest stores, but the effort is always directed to stimulating the jaded appetite, and after a time those

Harper's Bazar, February, 1915

who are living at ease in the heart of things lose the taste for plain food.

A man or a woman, who is in the habit of taking hard physical exercise for several hours a day, might eat rich food in plenty and suffer little inconvenience; in the absence of this exercise, the revolt of the liver and the accumulation of tissue are only a matter of time. Even then, I believe that women would not suffer as badly as they do, if they would be content to look the facts in the face. Unfortunately, the average woman, who is on the confines of middle-age, wants to run with the hare and to hunt with the hounds. She desires a good figure and yet to eat and drink without restraint. Her desperate efforts to square the circle generally land her in the

hands of the quacks. She will start with Turkish baths and massage; and a round of Continental watering places, and then she will be found taking some of the remedies that may, if she be lucky, do no harm, but can never do any good. I have known women whose anxiety about adipose tissue has ended with the ruin of their health, for they have fallen into the hands of people whose medicines have ruined their digestion. It is not easy to lay down any rules by which one may hope to escape the penalty of added weight at middle-age.

There are women who have sufficient regard for their figure to retain it despite a natural tendency to put on weight. As a rule, they are content to

(Continued on page 92)

Figure 3.1: Warwick and Brinkley, 1915e. “The Problem of Diet.” Perhaps this “modern bacchante” is not the right person to promote moderation in alcohol intake. Courtesy of *HathiTrust* via University of Michigan.

ion, health, and beauty concludes in her February column “that Nature did not intend women to drink wine or spirits, for they are bad for health and ruinous to looks” (92).

The Countess must be one who knows: Judging by the *Bazar*’s table of contents, the English socialite is herself “[a]n authority on the art of preserving personal charm” (*HB*, Feb. 1915: 2), and, irrespective of “her mature years,” she is still “one of the most beautiful women in England” (Warwick and Brinkley 1915c: 17). In thereby assuming that “what she says about fashion and health is the thing that every woman wants to know” (17), *Harper’s Bazar* invited this quasi-authority on beauty, fashion, and etiquette to share her knowledge on different topics, almost one column per month,¹⁰⁰ with the (young) female reader, to help turn the latter into a ‘*Dame qui sait*,’ the magazine’s ubiquitous ‘woman who knows,’ or *wants to know*, about all matters of appearance, fashion, and lifestyle.¹⁰¹

Having already achieved some fame at her hometown *Denver Post*, Nell Brinkley (1886–1944), who was a high-school dropout and never attended art school, was scouted at the tender age of twenty-one by editor Arthur Brisbane, who hired her to work for the media magnate William Randolph Hearst and his *New York Evening Journal* in 1907.¹⁰² In the years that followed, Brinkley’s art appeared in various Hearst publications, including *Harper’s Bazar*, which, added only in 1913 to Hearst’s International Magazine Company, was one of the more recent Hearst acquisitions. The popular American comic artist and illustrator was

100 The *Bazar*’s issues for June, October, and November 1915 carry no article by the Countess of Warwick, possibly due to the obstacles for the press during World War I.

101 The *Bazar* defined its target readership as “*la Dame qui sait*” in its emblem that embellished the table of contents page until August 1915. Still, the targeted, implied female magazine reader did not have to resemble in any way the real reader, who could have been anyone from the main subscriber’s daughter to the maid who was handed down last month’s issue to any socially mobile lower-class reader or even an (illiterate) reader who enjoyed the pictures. Often magazine subscriptions were taken out by the ‘men of the household’ as the address of “[g]entlemen” in trial subscription coupons for *Harper’s Bazar* demonstrates (“For the Woman of Individuality” 1913: 194). Given this murky background of the ‘real historical reader’ (see Beetham 2000), the present chapter ignores a distinctive allocation of actual readership and, instead, surmises the implied reader, her age, interests, and roles, from a glance at editorial and advertising material.

102 Nell Brinkley’s works covered a vast array of formats, from tableau-like, lavishly colorful cartoons to comic serials and illustrations for advertisements or children’s books. They also inspired a dance performance by the famous Ziegfeld Follies as well as three popular songs, and even sold Brinkley’s own hair-curler product line. Brinkley immortalized the unique style of the Brinkley Girl, whose trademark mass of curls, frilly dresses, and long eyelashes competed with the era’s famous, but sleeker, Gibson Girl look (named after her creator and artist Charles Dana Gibson). Nell Brinkley’s art was only recently rediscovered thanks to the engaging research by scholars such as Trina Robbins and is still much sought-after by collectors worldwide.

also the writer of her images’ own commentary – the latter just as bubbly and steeped in superlatives as her fine-lined and highly decorative graphic art. The *Bazar*’s editorial decision to illustrate Warwick’s column with drawings by an illustrator popular with girls and young women at the time also suggests that the column was aimed at a younger, that is, not yet married or only recently married, female readership.

The instruction of this ‘woman who knows,’ that is, the forming of a young female (white, middle- to upper-class) magazine reader in her fashion and looks, in the treatment of her body, and in her conduct through behavioral guidelines, is central in this column written by the English aristocratic socialite Warwick (whose real name was Frances Evelyn Greville, 1861–1938), and in another column written by Gertrude K. Colby, a physical instructor in the Educational Department of Teachers’ College of Columbia University, who seeks to “instruct the girls of the present day in physiology” (Colby and Brinkley 1914e: 22). And still, nothing in the smile of the young woman that fine-line-art starlet Nell Brinkley drew for the Countess of Warwick’s monthly column suggests that she has a ‘problem’ with her diet, let alone her alcohol intake. Instead of promoting teetotalism or underlining the textual narrative’s call for moderation in “limit[ing] very strictly her indulgence in champagne” (Warwick and Brinkley 1915e: 92), Brinkley’s visual imagination of the modern girl comes across just as charming, as bubbly, and as dizzying as the sparkling drink that she holds temptingly in front of the magazine reader’s eyes. One can easily imagine how this young woman’s buoyant behavior and lascivious looks would not only strike a chord with the occasional young lady (and lad!) of the 1910s, who came across her image while perusing the *Bazar*’s pages, but also easily provoke the era’s moralizers.

The early twentieth century witnessed the diversification of female gender roles, life plans, and realities. This diversification unleashed an unprecedented undoing of gendered boundaries and a flexibilization of concomitant traditional feminine codes of conduct. Although a clichéd historical understanding paints the ‘Roaring Twenties’ as the era that ushered in a pervasive loosening of morals and restrictions, already the 1910s offered an increasing heterogeneity and plurality of female life plans and imaginations (McGovern 1968: 315) – changes that also became apparent between the covers of the fashion magazines consulted by a growing young female readership.

As much as the fashion and smart magazines of the 1910s adopted the function of purveyors and mediators of and for progressive female role imaginations, they also navigated between strikingly diverse expectations and conventions, often by proffering diverging feminine ideals and identities within the same monthly issue, or even within the realm of a single page (see Westkaemper 2017: 2–3). In the middle of the 1910s, which, in retrospect, marked several tipping points for young wom-

en's roles, publicities, and histories, young women encountered a multiplicity of possibilities in 'their' magazines – "a full [. . .] menu from which to choose" (Zuckerman 1998: 44, see also 92–93). Just like (women's) history itself, and particularly, the history of female emancipation, must in retrospect not be regarded a streamlined development, but rather a plurality of parallel, constantly re- and over-written 'histories,' also women's and society magazines like *Harper's Bazar* offered a simultaneity of (sometimes incongruous) "models for understanding women's history" (Westkaemper 2017: 2–3). I argue that the obviously diverging visual and textual narratives in this and similar columns provide an excellent perspective onto how historical public imaginations and ideals of femininity, including the female body and behavioral codes, fanned open in the early twentieth century and, more importantly, onto how turn-of-the-century fashion magazines presented these varying imaginations and idealizations of femininity in text and image within their pages.

This chapter examines two *Harper's Bazar* columns that ran between February 1914 and December 1915 to trace how imaginations of modern young womanhood, cloaked in the commercial space of a women's fashion magazine, loosen up and are complicated through the columns' text-image interplay. In instructing young women in dress, bodily aspects, and manners, these visual-textual columns deal with appearances and surfaces while probing the potential of self-expression and self-stylization in text and image. Text and image thereby present themselves partly as dichotomies, but they also form systems that overlap or enter complex interrelationships. This is well illustrated in the present columns by Brinkley and Warwick, respectively Colby.

As becomes evident in the juxtaposition of the columns' textual and visual narratives, these historical imaginations of young womanhood oscillate between prescription and description, idealization and individualization, or sometimes plain guidance and misguidance. Written by two quasi-authorities (an English Countess and a physical instructor) and illustrated by one of the era's most famous newspaper comic artists, the two columns' imaginations of young womanhood create a tension between a 'less is more' and a 'more and more.' Warwick and Colby's reductive discourses that idealize modesty and moderation and give textual instructions for the well-mannered "girl of to-day" (Colby and Brinkley 1914e: 22), her 'proper' etiquette, clothing, and healthful behavior, are challenged by Nell Brinkley's exuberant visual narratives that toy with, or sometimes even seem to downright thwart, these prescriptive and idealized moral codes with visual imaginations of young women's tentative moves for individualization and deviance from gendered, well-mannered norms and ideals. The emphasis on fashion in Nell Brinkley's visual narrative further offers room for discussions of fashion as a performative act and potentially emancipatory tool for young women's

‘self-fashioning’ within and beyond the narrow, mainstreamed, and commercialized confines of this fashion magazine and its instruction of female readers.

Instead of ‘illustrating,’ that is, literally ‘shedding light on’ and thus underscoring the textual messages, Brinkley’s more liberal interpretations of young womanhood in the visual narrative almost convey the impression that the artist had tried to test out the boundaries to see how far she can go to *just* still illustrate the argument of the textual narrative. Within her illustrations, the artist toys with representing the era’s gendered behavioral codes, only to push these often-prescriptive ideals further with the figurative ease of a single brushstroke. Sometimes the meanings within the visual and textual narratives lie closer together, sometimes further apart, and often the demarcation between them seems to be drawn with a (literally) very fine line. On the metalevel of periodical mechanisms, the columns and their characteristic text-image relation offer insight into commercial authors’ and illustrators’ possibilities and realms for textual and visual expression, as well as readers’ scope in interpretation of the latter, in an early-twentieth-century fashion magazine.

This play of text-image relations, that is, the visual opening (and textual narrowing down or closing) of readings, meanings, and imaginary perspectives of young womanhood in the 1910s, holds the potential for underlying emancipatory readings: Woven into the commercial aesthetics of the modern mass cultural and commercial space of a middle- to upper-class fashion magazine, the shifting meanings of young womanhood are very subtly introduced and negotiated. The innocuous fashionable illustrations presented here thereby offer potentially emancipatory alternative ‘readings’ in the ‘safe’ and established middle sphere of two instructive middlebrow magazine columns.

3.2 Instructive Texts, Luring Images, and all that is Conveyed In-Between

The columns call attention to early editorial practices, but without pinning down the individual underlying processes: While this chapter cannot tell us what the original motivations and decision-making processes were behind the use of Nell Brinkley’s free-spirited *Girls* (rather than a more toned-down and corresponding visual representation for texts on drinking behavior, for example), this case study explores, through close- and cross-reading images and texts alike, how images can function alongside texts and how these images might have been received and grasped (perhaps in very different ways) by the actual reader-viewer. Since it proves futile to guess at the actual reading practices of historical magazine readers, let alone their reception of specific content, I offer some general observations

about the purpose and role of Brinkley's drawings of freewheeling, cheerful 'Brinkley Girls' in the early *Harper's Bazar*.

In *Mode, Schule der Frauen*, Hannelore Schlaffer places great emphasis on the text of magazines in its role of instructing their female readers, whereas she attributes only an accompanying, subordinate role to images: They "underline" the texts and "demonstrate" to the female reader how to "translate the written text into gestures, transform it into style, and make it visible" (2007: 23–24, my translation). This correspondence is inverted in the columns investigated: Hardly any readers would 'translate' the text of Warwick's teetotaling tale with the mental image of a beautiful, champagne-sipping bacchante.

Central to this study is that, for Schlaffer, images serve the important function of an attractant, a "Lockmittel" (2007: 24), that draws female readers into this paper-world, which requires images to appeal to and capitalize on readers' hopes and dreams. As such, Schlaffer assigns images a central role in engaging and retaining female readers in particular: "[L]esson one" in women's "weekly course" in the magazines consists of learning how to "read" images (2007: 24, my translation). Women's "school of fashion" and teaching in other disciplines, such as beauty, love, and bodily restriction is then, first and foremost, also a "Lese-Schule," a "training in reading" (magazine) images (15, my translation).

The 'luring' function of images was crucial for the reading of magazines in the 1910s, when the market for mass-produced consumer goods and fashion was booming and the use of illustrated pages proved to be a unique selling point for magazines. Among the earliest uses of images in women's magazines were illustrated advertisements, which best conveyed the images' enticing as well as educational function by guiding the female reader in a product's use and benefits and appealing to her careful, discriminating, but also allegedly emotional decision-making when it came to buying goods (Beetham 1996: 8; see also Zuckerman 1998: 34–35, 74, 81; Peiss 1998a). Especially advertising agencies knew about the "art of suggestive or indirect advertising" and magazine readers' way of 'reading' and taking their inspiration from illustrated magazine pages and the imagery used in magazine advertising (Greenhill 2019: 430). As Jennifer A. Greenhill explains, "[t]he eye-attracting sales picture on the magazine page was not supposed to just sit there, like a framed picture in a museum [. . .]; its purpose was to stimulate the production of new pictures in the mind of the magazine consumer" (430).¹⁰³ In

103 With the rise of suggestive and lifestyle advertising throughout the first half of the twentieth century, and particularly on the "competitive market of the late 1950s American popular press," this inspirational function of visually appealing magazine pages became even more important, as Greenhill (2017: 2) explains. "There could be nothing worse than for a magazine to 'lie around' as 'just paper' [. . .]. The journal had to live in some special way, had to have the sort of presence

addition to inspiration, information and service orientation, images in women’s magazines, however, also fulfilled plain aesthetic functions, where the female reader was simply supposed to marvel at the illustrated contents of ‘her’ magazine. Women’s magazines in particular stand out by their early use of visually attractive cover images and embellishing stylistic elements, which were intended to appeal to woman’s stereotypical ‘visual eye,’ her ‘visual literacy,’ and ensure her (weekly or monthly) attention.

Given images’ function to attract, retain, and entertain (and, in certain cases, instruct) the female reader-viewer, the strategic placement of Brinkley’s images – in the first quarter or half of the magazine, surrounded by the similarly aesthetic imagery of society reports and fashion plates – becomes clear. The sprawling images of style-conscious Brinkley Girls, with their masses of curls, frills, and attention to detail, were truly eye-catching as one flipped through the magazine: ‘Read’ within their contextual system, that is, within the image-text relations they belong to, but also within their commercial space of a fashion glossy, Brinkley’s images drew attention to Warwick’s and Colby’s columns, the surrounding fashion plates, but also to the rear ad-section (if the respective column was split into two or three parts across the magazine issue).¹⁰⁴

Because of their large format and tableau-like detail, Brinkley’s drawings prevent the reader-viewer from feeling directed in her gaze. Instead, the intended magazine reader, once captivated by the more than half-page image of a young, stylish woman, would in a second step try to figure out what the illustrated text is about. Even while the images certainly acted as a lure and as an invitation to digress and be entertained (as they required some time and attention to be absorbed), the text still took priority – the *Bazar* was not a picture book. This functional tension between a ‘luring’ visual ‘text’ and an actual text that provides orientation and instruction informs the following discussion of how the *Bazar* imagined and instructed its female readers – and how the visual narrative potentially helped these targeted female readers imagine and *construct* themselves.

that would allow it to stand out from the competition, had to sell itself as a thing of substance that would ‘contribute’ to the lives of its readers” (2).

104 As magazine editors increasingly juxtaposed their editorial matter with ads on the same subject, therefore breaking up stories and other editorial matter (Zuckerman 1998: 62, 73), a continued perusal of articles was often not possible. A large part of the *Bazar*’s columns is thus split into halves: The first half of the respective article appears in the *Bazar*’s first quarter or half, while the column’s latter half is printed in the magazine’s advertising rear section. The advertising section thus provides a new (visual) frame, consisting of illustrated corset ads, anti-aging creams, and dieting tips, which accompany and blur the textual narrative’s latter half.

3.3 Instructing the “Woman Who Knows”: ‘Smart’ Consumption in *Harper’s Bazar*

On the cover of its 1867 inaugural issue, *Harper’s Bazar* marketed itself as a “repository of fashion, pleasure, and *instruction*” (Mooallem 2016, my emphasis). Fashion-focused middlebrow magazines like the *Bazar* aimed at ‘managing’ turn-of-the-century definitions and performances of femininity. Schlaffer writes that “fashion magazines are [women’s] actual textbooks, their first and most widely read advice on basic domestic, professional, erotic, and medical knowledge, their credible guidelines for good behavior, in short: the most important guidelines for self-definition” (2007: 22, my translation). Similarly, scholars of women’s magazines and early popular culture, like Emily Westkaemper (2017: 18–49), Jennifer Scanlon (1995: 2, 21), Mary Ellen Waller Zuckerman (1998: xii–xiii), or Margaret Beetham (1996), tend to describe women’s ‘self-definition’ or ‘formation of character’ as external processes, where a burgeoning magazine market instructs women in how to ‘define’ and perceive of their own bodies, characters, and lives. Counter to that, the current case study explores the potential for women’s self-steered and potentially deviating definition of self, as well as for women’s forming of individual character *within*, or even *beyond*, the margins of their textbooks’ instructive pages.

The transformation in ideals and imaginations of modern women’s lives is surrounded by the *Bazar’s* omnipresent commercial discourses on consumption and fashion, as well as the female reader’s instruction, but also individualization, via such commercial means. What is noteworthy here is that Warwick’s and Colby’s reductive discourses of moderate and careful (instead of wasteful) consumption play out in the larger context of a magazine that prides itself on its exclusive taste and sends its readers consumption-propelling messages via fashion plates or ads for personal shopping services (*HB*, Feb. 1915: 89).

Upon perusal of the mid-1910s’ *Bazar*, the magazine’s peculiar middling position – between lavish *joie de vivre*-consumption and its solicitous restraint – comes to the fore. This middle position is rooted not least in the *Bazar’s* self-stylization as a ‘smart magazine,’ but is also conditioned by the historical context: An exemplary February 1915 issue attributes the key values of modesty, moderation, and practicality, but also virtue to young women. They owe largely to the ‘Great War’ that ravaged Europe at the time, as well as to concomitant messages of ‘preparedness’ that also pervaded women’s magazines (Zuckerman 1998: 93–95). With every page she turns, the reader encounters women knitting for the war effort, announcements of the latest fashions in military tones, including daring new military boots (*HB*, Feb. 1915: 31), which, while certainly indebted to “[m]ilitary preparedness” (*HB*, Dec. 1915: 106), also suggest a turn toward greater practicality in fashion. On the other side of the spectrum, the same February 1915 issue contains reports on expen-

sive cars, Arabian-Nights-themed society parties, the new club at the Vanderbilt hotel, conveying the unwavering confidence to the female socialite reader that war will not last forever (“Rien ne va plus,” *HB*, Feb. 1915: 13) and that, in the meantime, there is a lot of fun and fashion to be had.

Further, the *Bazar*'s emphasis on a lifestyle of exclusivity and calls for (selective) consumption clearly rest on its status as a “genteel” middlebrow magazine – or, to be more exact, on its status as a middlebrow magazine that envisioned, aesthetically stylized, and advertised itself as a *smart* middlebrow magazine for a select and moneyed audience (Tracy 2010: 41, 60). Daniel Tracy remarks how the *Bazar* lacked the “wit and satire” of actual smart magazines like *Vanity Fair* or *The New Yorker* (2010: 47), limiting its instruction in discriminating, that is ‘smart,’ taste almost entirely to the realm of upper-class patterns of consumption and behavior. Written ‘*pour la Dame qui sait*,’ the publication belonged to the “increasing number of apparatuses for learning ‘high culture’ [. . .] that appeared in the 1890s forward” (Tracy 2010: 39–40). Note the subtle difference: The *Bazar* did explicitly not target the ‘woman who *wants* to know’ (in the characteristic style of middlebrow magazines), but elevated (and thereby flattered) its reader to the ‘woman who (already) knows.’ She is meant to feel part of an ‘in-group,’ someone who is ‘in the know’ of a particular secret (Tracy 2010: 41). This is also intimated in a 1913 ad for the *Bazar*.

Availing itself of clever presentation tactics, the *Bazar* “sometimes market[ed] itself as another place to find smart culture” – appropriately enough, in smart magazines like *The New Yorker* (47), but also in other magazines of the Hearst corporation that evidently targeted a leisurely upper-middle-class reader.¹⁰⁵ The elaborately designed ad for *Harper’s Bazar* printed in Hearst’s *Motor Magazine* spreads an aura of exclusivity and ‘smartness.’ Showcasing a woman in extravagant dress complete with berry-bedecked hat and flowery parasol, the ad declares to address “discriminating women of taste and refinement” who “must keep au courant with the smart world” (“For the Woman of Individuality” 1913: 194). In the accompanying text, the *Bazar* outlines its agenda “for the woman of individuality,” to edify her in the secrets of high culture and the lifestyle of “smart[-]world” femininity.

As two of these sites for lessons in ‘smart-world femininity,’ Warwick’s and Colby’s columns represent how “writers started making money by summing up everything you needed to know, to be in the know, about history and art” (Tracy 2010: 40) – or, as in the *Bazar*'s case, to be a ‘*Dame qui sait*.’ The appointment of an actual English countess to instruct women in upper-class manners illustrates

¹⁰⁵ The middlebrow used the “processes” and practices of mass culture to “teach[.]” and make available high culture to a mass audience of people who desired the “pleasures of high culture” or the “recognition” as belonging to high culture (Tracy 2010: 40).

the promise of middlebrow instructive organs that high culture and taste are attainable by the masses – a promise that was, of course, only part of the *Bazar’s* deal, a *raison d’être* for its invitations to consume (*HB*, Feb. 1915: 89).

Ironic, but not surprising for a middlebrow magazine that promises an elevation in taste to ‘keep up’ with the ‘smart world,’ the *Bazar’s* female reader first must be *instructed* in fashion before she can become an ‘individual’ with a distinct taste. This “paradox at the heart of middlebrow culture” is also recognized by Joan Shelley Rubin: “[P]eople in search of self-reliance could attain it only by becoming dependent on a superior authority outside themselves” (1992: 14, qtd. in Tracy 2010: 40). Hence, the *Bazar’s* reader could only consider herself ‘smart’ if she knew the right products (exquisite Parisian fashion or expensive furniture) and consumed them in the right manner. It almost looks as if the magazine wanted to let its reader know: consumption, yes, but in a selective, ‘smart’ manner.

The *Bazar’s* ideal of consumption was, hence, one of careful and ‘smart’ decision-making to maximize effect, offering a suitable platform for the columns’ reductive discourses of ‘less is more.’ In line with the magazine’s discourse of ‘smart consumption’ as a marker of individuality and knowledge, moderation, for Warwick, becomes a marker of taste, of *smart*, that is, cool and reserved behavior and appearance. The Countess and the physical instructor Colby exercise caution and moderation in the imitation of upper-class patterns, warning against the particularly ‘vulgar’ display of wealth and excess (mass) consumption allegedly practiced by the ‘nouveau riche.’ Whether in the columns’ calls for less (conspicuously displayed) consumption when it comes to dining out (“The Art of Staying at Home”) or in their criticism of useless fashion (“The Call of Fashion”) and wasteful ornamentation (“The Use and Abuse of Jewelry”)¹⁰⁶ – in arguing that only women ‘who don’t know’ consume too much or wear too much make-up, the *Bazar* tries to elevate itself above the mainstream and its competitive middlebrow magazines.

The principle of modern-era (reserved and cool) smartness contrasts – even visibly collides – with the romantic and sentimental excess of Nell Brinkley’s Victorian aesthetic. With her visual proclamation of ‘the more, the merrier’ and her blunt confrontation of the columns’ alarmist tone, Brinkley even seems to parody these principles of modern ‘smartness’ characterized by restraint and reduction with Victorian visual excess. Not only does Brinkley’s visible predilection for impractically expansive nineteenth-century dresses with lengths of drapery, ruffles,

106 These topics of thrifty consumption appear almost biographically motivated considering the Countess’s own poor financial situation at the time, which she probably sought to alleviate by passing on her ‘skills’ as an English aristocratic socialite to a fashion magazine’s American audience (“Society and Scandal” 2011).

and embroidery counteract the Countess’s understanding of dress. Also, the ‘*Dame qui sait*,’ as Warwick and Colby envision her, is ideally as sober in her sentimental expression as in her drinking behavior, or at least not as boisterous as Brinkley’s Girls. Staying true to her romantic art, Brinkley’s illustrations metaphorize, euphemize, or even subvert Colby’s scientific, rigorous, and moderation-centered approach with the sentimental excess of love, joy, indulgence, and passion otherwise found in Victorian-era epistolary novels: In Colby’s April 1914 column on the “Circulation of the Blood” (26, 76, 78), Brinkley’s finely lined drawing, captioned “[a] sudden attack of the heart,” shows a Brinkley Girl who is ‘attacked’ by Cupid’s arrow – quite a different ‘attack of the heart’ that seems to parody, even ridicule Colby’s detailed textual description of the “arteries, capillaries and veins” (Colby and Brinkley 1914d: 26).

3.4 Making the Female Body Modern: Instructions for the ‘Well Built Girl’

With its appeal to (and proposed education of) the “fashionable woman of to-day” (Warwick and Brinkley 1915a: 27), the *Bazar*’s self-stylization as a smart magazine and its instructive discourse clearly rest on fashion, but also extend far beyond ‘fashion as dress’ by drawing on fashion(s) of all kinds: Indeed, despite their larger (visual) focus on fashion, the columns evade classification: Warwick and Colby attempt to instruct the ‘modern girl of to-day’ in every aspect of her life ranging from healthy breathing, eating, drinking, dancing, and corset-wearing (as ill-fitting corsets are an “unpardonable crime against women,” see Warwick and Brinkley 1915d: 31), to what clothes to wear for a hiking trip, how to take care of your skin and hair, and how to entertain your guests at home (hint: staying at home was already proclaimed as conducive to wellbeing and beauty more than 100 years before #stayathome). The curious scholar of medical history may also find an interest in reading (though, by no means, following) the instructions in first aid given by Gertrude Colby.

Throughout Warwick’s and Colby’s columns, fashion manifests in several guises: next to questions of proper and sane clothing, the authors prescribe (and instruct the reader in) fashions of the body, its movement, and postures, even ascribing fashions to certain forms of sane and (im-)proper behavior and conduct. The instructive discourse of fashion therefore serves as an umbrella term for a whole series of topics dealt with. Also, at the very time when young women began to use the possibilities of mass fashion production for their own self-stylization and -expression, fashion also becomes a “performance art,” as Elizabeth Wilson (2003:

60) phrases it. In this chapter, I demonstrate how not only dress, but also the body, its movement, and young women's conduct were all part of this larger performance.

The body, its shaping, movement, and posture, occupies a central place in this debate: Under the quasi-mechanical title, "The Well Built Girl," Colby's monthly column gives scientific explanations of the female body's 'construction,' that is, its parts, functions, and work processes. As such, "The Well Built Girl" treats the female body as an intricate mechanical system: The girl is 'built,' and in order to 'function' properly in this modern world, and to be a 'well built' girl, she has to adhere to Colby's instruction manual for her 'maintenance,' consisting of lessons on the alimentary canal, blood circulation, and exercises of morning breathing or first aid. Her columns systematically cover the entire bodily 'apparatus' from the respiratory organs, the digestive system, to the right skincare for the modern girl – one bodily function or organ per month of the year 1914.

Just as fashion is shaped by the mechanisms of the modern era – industrial capitalism, mass production, technological innovation, dynamization, and the constant drive to optimize production, so is the body. As Tim Armstrong writes in his introduction to *Modernism, Technology, and the Body*: "In the modern period, the body is re-energized, re-formed, subject to new modes of production, representation, and commodification" (1998: 2). To keep up "with the modern, technologically advanced world" and "capitalism's fantasy of the complete body" (3), the body needed to be optimized and be malleable. Surgery, cosmetics, or dietary restrictions, as well as various new forms of therapy and questionable medical prescriptions provide examples of "prosthetic" methods that were meant to "compensat[e]" for this "body as lack" (3). Colby and Warwick add regular exercise, posture correction, moderate alcohol consumption, sane clothing, as well as lessons in blood circulation and a 'digestive system 101' to the comprehensive bodily curriculum. In the modern era, reflected by this instructive physical discourse, the body is no longer natural (not that it ever was) but increasingly culturally marked and accordingly shaped by fashion(s). The body, its movement and posture, are increasingly being *designed* and molded. Counter to the Romantic era's nature-inspired forms of expression in fashion, the body, and sentiment, modernity produces, even designs, the body as a machine, whereby the body's maintenance and constant optimization is guided by an increased faith in science and managerial approaches (E. Wilson 2003: 60–61).

Next to 'education' in all matters love and sexuality, women's magazines past and present capitalize to a large extent on educating, optimizing, and managing women's health and bodies, as well as body images (see also Entwistle 2000: 17). In her view of the fashion magazine as women's school (22), Schlaffer makes out the female magazine reader's extended "curriculum" that covers all three of women's "skins": her "body," her first skin, and her "dress," her second skin, as well as her

third “skin,” which extends from the house to the garden fence (2007: 27, my translation) and which teaches her ‘salon-lady’ behavioral codes.¹⁰⁷ Schlaffer’s vivid explanations deserve quotation at full length:

Health education places tougher demands than love education. With it begins the art of Masochism. The magazines draw up a timetable for food intake and physical training not unlike that of a high school: It specifies days of the week and exact times of the day for the exercises, the level of difficulty, which gradually increases, and it gives nutritional instructions so that the body is supplied with calories and vitamins at the right time. This curriculum consists of theory and practice, medical lessons, gymnastics, and cooking courses. (2007: 28, my translation)

In line with a Progressive-era scientific focus on bodily optimization and regimentation, the title “The Well Built Girl” makes clear that Colby’s modern girl is “vigorous” (Colby and Brinkley 1914d: 26). While she concedes that the “modern up-to-date-girl sometimes reverts to that weakness more common in her grandmother’s day,” what Colby refers to as “two feminine failings, – fainting and hysterics,” she equips her modern girl with “the principles of practical first aid” (Colby and Brinkley 1914c: 29). Similarly, Warwick’s column “Breathe Deep” for the *Bazar*’s “Outdoor Number” is supertitled with an address that makes clear that ‘febleness’ is not allowed in the twentieth century: “Every narrow-chested girl should read this article. Sound advice for the woman who has headaches, and every woman who has ‘off days’” (Warwick and Brinkley 1915b: 23, quotation marks in orig.). With this pervading rhetoric of instruction and practicality that teaches the ‘girl of to-day’ how to ‘maintain’ herself in the modern age, it is striking that the central topic of female body health is left out: The reproductive system, let alone female hygiene seems too sensitive a topic for a column in *Harper’s Bazar*.

Colby’s 1914 columns add a crucial bodily component to the magazine’s ‘smart’ instruction. In the modern era, the body does not only present yet another fashion fad. Even more, I argue that, in the present columns, bodily movement, shaping, and posture themselves can be read as forms of dress and, hence, as tools for young women’s self-expression, performance, and potential emancipation through self-fashioning. The body’s movement, shaping, or posing here relates to the body

¹⁰⁷ Schlaffer’s delineation of women’s distinct ‘skins’ extends to the realm of interior design. *Harper’s Bazar*’s home-decoration section resembled their fashion plates as both were underlying a sense of ‘dressing up’ and keeping up an outward appearance, where ‘fashioning’ one’s house became just as important as ‘fashioning’ oneself. After all, the “[o]utward appearance of house and body mattered,” and it was women’s magazines like the *Bazar* that not only contributed to the conflation of fashion and interior design, but also presented both as women’s responsibility (Gordon 1996: 285).

the way (individual) dress relates to fashion (as a larger underlying system).¹⁰⁸ That is, analogous to dress and accessories, the body is being formed and sculpted, even literally (self-)fashioned as a new form of expression.

Both the female body and how it is moved and 'fashioned' are thereby presented as forms or realizations of the young woman in her appearance, individuality, and outlook that need to be managed and monitored by the physical instructor and the English socialite in this mid-1910s women's fashion magazine. The dense and 'closed' narrative of prescription in Warwick's and Colby's columns does not leave much room for readers' interpretation.

The column is not only emblematic of women's magazines' advice-giving nature regarding health – a staple topic still pervading women's magazines today (Zuckerman 1998: xv). It also addresses turn-of-the-century fears over young women who run out of control and who concurrently endanger their physical and psychological health in a period that saw young women enter the wage labor market, city life, and college education (Beetham 1996: 10–11).¹⁰⁹ Conservative moralists, religious authorities, and instructors of manners or censors of supposedly licentious and immodest behavior disapproved of modern life's alleged effect on young women's bodies. This alarmist tendency that informs the discourse on female health becomes evident in Colby's and Warwick's columns – though in slightly differing nuances: Whereas Colby calls for moderation, simplicity, and natural remedies by vacationing in nature, hiking, or exercising in fresh air for the sake of physical health (she is a physical instructor, after all), Warwick's main impetus stems from an obsession with physical *appearances*.

Brinkley's images defuse the texts' alarmist tone: In Colby's column on the digestive system and the alimentary canal (Colby and Brinkley 1914a: 32, 76, 78), Brinkley presents beauty as an effortless given – as an attribute rather than an achievement that one must work towards. Whereas the texts explain how to maintain or optimize youthful beauty – regulating and cautioning the reader with all sorts of warnings –, Brinkley's illustrations celebrate this ideal state of youthful femininity. Thus, instead of heeding the text's warning to eat in moderation, the Brinkley Girl whom the caption refers to as "The Criminal and her Sweets" (Colby and Brinkley 1914a: 32), abandons herself to vice and does exactly what the text prohib-

108 Entwistle defines 'dress' as "an activity of clothing the body with an aesthetic element (as in 'adornment')," whereas 'fashion' is "a specific system of dress" consisting of the underlying economy, designers, production and distribution systems, but also rules (2000: 48, 45). Thus, "fashion is only one determining factor on dress" (49), or, simpler put: "fashion structures dress," and "dress always involves the creative interpretation of fashion by individuals" (55).

109 On promotions of health and bodily fitness for modern college girls, see Margaret A. Lowe, *Looking Good: College Women and Body Image, 1875–1930* (2003: esp. 29–53).

its – “[t]he candy habit is one of the worst digestive crimes women commit” (78). However, she would not be a glamorous Brinkley Girl if she were not committing her ‘crime’ by elegantly holding up one single praline, pinky finger splayed, from her box of chocolates. What is interesting here is that Brinkley’s illustrations do not (only) create a glamorous counter-narrative to Warwick’s and Colby’s warnings. Also, two of Brinkley’s signature Cupids, who decorate the header, make fun of the texts’ serious tone and style: Presenting the reader with the visible result of excess sugar intake, the Cupid on the left tries to flatten his stomach with a sash, while the Cupid on the right, equipped with a measuring tape, looks alarmed at his increased girth. The Brinkley Girls, it seems here, are immune to the dangers of life that Colby presents: While the textual narrative pathologizes and criminalizes the neglect of her body’s ‘maintenance,’ the Brinkley Girl herself is envisioned as slender as ever: blithe, young, attractive, and oblivious of the dangers of modern deterioration.

3.5 “Only More Conservative” and “Less Exaggerated”: Calls and Democratizations of Fashion

Venturing into a modern (paper-)world of gleeful excess, Nell Brinkley’s stylish Brinkley Girls explore the interests and roles of young women in a changing world under the mantle of fashion. In a nineteenth-century shift “from display to identity” (E. Wilson 2003: 155), dress, which had previously fulfilled a “protecti[ve]” function (137), became a means of differentiation, of “self-presentation,” and “manipulation of self” (138) in the modern era to “let the world know what sort of person you were” (137). The manipulative and creative possibilities of fashion became significant means of articulation for young women, granting their marginalized group unprecedented visibility and agency: Fashion allowed them to indulge their desires, express their individuality, or even play with and appropriate new personalities, behaviors, and perceptions of turn-of-the-century femininity (see McGovern 1968: 318–319, 333). As Elizabeth Wilson concludes, with each fashion piece purchased, young women bought an “image,” a promise of emancipation circulated in the pages of their favorite fashion magazines (2003: 157).

I argue that Nell Brinkley’s elaborate, fashion-focused art highlights and activates this emancipatory potential in a process of self-fashioning. This inherently enabling and creative process entails elements of play, experimentation, temporary appropriation, or performance, which allow the young female magazine reader of the 1910s to imagine or even test out new behaviors, looks, or alternative conceptions of self in a safe commercial middle ground (on the magazine page or in the fitting rooms at Bloomingdale’s, see below), between conformity with and defiance of gender norms.

The first examples in this chapter have shown a divergence between textual and visual messages, with images proving to be the more ‘open’ sign systems, in which the female body becomes a slate for self-fashioning, clad by ornaments instead of rules, while texts appear to regulate the behavior displayed by the images. In a feminist analysis of the *Harper’s Bazar* columns, the distinctively powerful dimension of self-fashioning comes to the fore in a visually creative narrative of individualization and emancipation that diverges from the textual narrative’s (constrictive) idealistic, uniform, or traditional imaginations of femininity and the female body. Viewed in the larger context of this chapter’s central dichotomy of visual descriptions vs. textual prescriptions, one could hence easily conclude that ‘written’ forms of fashion function in a more regulatory and normative way than fashion images. This distinction coincides with classic insights of fashion theory following Roland Barthes or Georg Simmel.

In a Saussurean dichotomy, Barthes distinguishes between “dressing (*parole*)” and “[d]ress (*langue*)” (2006: 27). The former refers to “the individual dimensions of the clothing item” and “the wearer’s particular way of wearing clothes” (27), whereas the latter refers to the “tightly controlled” rules or “controlled game[s],” rituals, and “verbal or schematic descriptions [of fashion]” as a system, which, by this definition, remains “always abstract” (27). Barthes’s logic is closely linked to Georg Simmel’s dualism of fashion as a means of both imitation and distinction that pervades his 1904 essay “Fashion” (Simmel 1957: 543). Simmel explains how fashion is being imitated top-down (i.e., the lower classes imitate the rules and codes of fashion that they observe in upper classes’ fashions) and, simultaneously, provides a means of distinction – between the classes and between individuals (1957: 543) – or, in the terminology of this chapter: a means of self-presenting or self-fashioning.

What these debates – some of them developing parallel to or after Barthes – have in common is that they assume a clear-cut dichotomy between fashion as a system and fashion as a practice. The former often presents a ‘bad’ and suppressive (patriarchal and industrial) pole (“Fashion is tyrannical”: Barthes 1983: 263), and the latter a ‘good’ (feminine, if not even feminist, consumerist) pole that regards fashion as an emancipatory and liberating tool for women’s self-fashioning, where, according to Simmel, the consumption of fashion compensates women for the ‘proper’ sociopolitical emancipation and the reasonable work they are denied in the workplace and elsewhere (Simmel 1957: 551; Vinken 2016: 159, 280).¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰ Simmel’s critiques of fashion, which rest on the era’s common conception that women’s “weak sensitivity” and their alleged vanity turned them into victims of fashion (1911: 21, see also 27, my translation), was later adopted by second-wave feminists.

At first glance, the material that I have reviewed here seems to lend itself to a reading along the lines of classical fashion theory, following Barthes and Simmel: Fashion, in its written form, appears more normative and prescriptive, whereas Brinkley’s fashion images appear to be liberating the female reader-viewer from these suppressive norms. But ultimately, the fashion style of the Brinkley Girls troubles this neat dichotomy, as I will now show.

Already in 1995 – ten years after the initial publication of Elizabeth Wilson’s text – Rita Felski cautioned: “[T]he celebration of the resistive agency of the female consumer is currently in danger of becoming a new orthodoxy” (1995: 63). After years of dismissing fashion as oppressive, shallow, and self-absorbed, and promoting a “manipulation thesis” in women’s consumption of fashion, feminists and scholars of cultural studies had turned to “the potential for active negotiation and recontextualization of meaning in the process of consumption” (63). However, as Felski reminds us, one should not now fall into the other extreme by reading practices of fashion and consumption only as an expression of critical self-fashioning (see also E. Wilson 2003: 231–232). Fashion is both “a game” that “can be played for pleasure” (E. Wilson 2003: 244) *and* is externally determined – and it is precisely this ambivalence of fashion that finds expression between the texts and images of *Harper’s Bazar*. The magazine, like many other media of ‘lived’ fashion blurs the boundaries in the discourse of fashion – between text and image, system and practice, norms and deviance. Fashion is play, I argue, but fashion is also fraught with power.

Warwick’s and Colby’s columns, including Nell Brinkley’s illustrations, all act and react within a rule-system of fashion. The columns, which fluctuate between rigid (written) instruction and more openly designed, imaginative incentives for one’s own individualization, function in a parallel manner to fashion magazines’ discourses of fashion where style columns or fashion plates may prescribe certain trends in a rule-like manner (“you *must* wear a fur coat this winter”), whereas the ‘practice’ of fashion, exercised on the street, does something else entirely. Between these two poles, however, the consumer forms her own individual impression by following the ‘dictates’ of the fashion magazines or deviating from them by writing her own rules as she pleases. After all, the pleasure of fashion always consists of both: system and practice, that is, the regularity and structure *and* the personal appropriation.

Who decides over fashion? What exactly happens between fashion as a system, that is, magazines’ quasi-authorial instruction, and fashion as practice, that is, what the consumer makes of magazines’ instruction and advice, varies. And yet, the ‘divide’ between the two seemed insurmountable on the burgeoning mass-fashion market of the early twentieth century and the changes it entailed. Fashion in the early twentieth century was “schizophrenic,” as Jennifer Craik

writes (1994: 74). Whereas department stores and ready-to-wear-fashion advertised in the magazines facilitated the mass “access” to trends and thereby the “democratiz[ation]” of fashion (74), particularly elite magazines like *Harper’s Bazar* tried to keep up “older hierarchies” and divides by celebrating the authority of the designer (Beward 1995: 183). At the same time, (English) aristocracy, celebrated in numerous photos in the *Bazar* as the main source of style inspiration, was increasingly replaced by a new ‘fashionable set’ consisting of (U.S.-American) “socialites, artists and movie stars” (Craik 1994: 74) – those personalities whose success relied on the same mechanisms of mass production and mass entertainment that also steered early-twentieth-century fashion production and the periodical market.

With the advent of department stores and ready-to-wear-fashion, fashion magazines gradually developed a guiding function, catering to a female shopper who increasingly selected, paid, and matched the pieces of clothing herself and, hence, wanted to be “informed about the current mode and ways to achieve it” (Fields 2007: 55). As a “repository of fashion, pleasure, and instruction” (Mooallem 2016), but particularly via its fashion plates, personal shopping service, and columns that perpetuated the ‘rules’ of fashion, the *Bazar* promoted itself as a ‘smart’ guide on fashion and took the female customer by the hand.

Fashion magazines like the *Bazar*, however, are always situated on the verge, navigating between fashion as a system and fashion as a practice. As Eugenia Paulicelli writes, “the fashion system is one of the vehicles that a given society uses to convey and maintain its values and ideology and to decide what is trendy and what is not” (1994: 172). Thus, the (written or unwritten) rules of the fashion system disseminated through fashion magazines ‘prescribe’ and perpetuate certain looks and trends, manifesting and inscribing distinct societal codes and values into women’s dress and bodies. However, *Harper’s Bazar* simultaneously feeds into, as well as seeks to rewrite the rulebook for this larger system of fashion by offering different ways to style a certain trend or by even offering its own critical account of the latest fashion, for example, when it comes to compromising health. How far the ‘system,’ that is the rules dictated by the ‘authorities’ of fashion, should be adhered to and taken at face value by the real magazine reader and wearer of fashion – and in how far concerns of physical health, reason, and sanity should be taken into account in spite of “[t]he [c]all of [f]ashion” – are questions that the Countess of Warwick addresses in her first column for the *Bazar* of 1915 (Figure 3.2).

In the drawing that illustrates this column, Dame Fashion appears unrelenting. Surrounded by her fashionable subjects, the beautiful, yet merciless, tyrant ruler casts down her eyes imperiously and points her long, bejeweled finger at the foot of her throne. Her “votaries,” two Brinkley Girls, clad in daring strapless



To Fashion's throne must the free, untrammelled girl be brought for sacrifice. Drawing by Nell Brinkley

The Call of Fashion

By THE COUNTESS OF WARWICK

ALTHOUGH I can boast a rather long acquaintance with Dame Fashion, I have never been able to learn the secret of her birth. The trouble is, perhaps, that she has so many births, she is always being done to death and born again, her reincarnations are quite baffling. But it is generally understood that her parents have always been resident in Paris, and connected with the great dressmaking and millinery houses of the Rue de la Paix and the Rue de Rivoli.

Naturally I have a certain respect for Dame Fashion, in some if not all her aspects, but speaking as woman to woman, I cannot help regretting that her parents were not put through a course of medical training before she was born.

They should in the first place take a short course in anatomy and physiology for themselves; half a dozen simple lectures will save many old time errors. They, like the rest of us, must learn before they can teach. Then they must tell their daughter that she wants to achieve a success she must be something more than merely eccentric. Her votaries are as eager as ever they were to look at their best, to attract the admiration of the other sex and the envious curiosity of their own, but they are no longer prepared to submit to mere eccentricity, for the simple reason that they know it is ineffective.

What form of absurdity have we been spared in the past? I look back almost with a shudder to the days of the wasplike waist and the misplaced internal organs, to the seasons of bods so high that

“Charm,” declares the Countess of Warwick, “is the outcome of sane, healthy living, and there is no beauty at the expense of health.” The Countess of Warwick, in her mature years, is one of the most beautiful women in England, and what she says about fashion and health is the thing that every woman wants to know.

natural movement ranked among the unattainable gifts. The rage for hair dye and the unblushing change of colour at the season's dictation, the fashion of keeping a dead complexion and giving it a semblance of life-in-death for all social occasions, the abuse of powder and cosmetics—these crazes are diminishing to a remarkable extent, chiefly because they have not fulfilled their purpose—for they have failed to disguise the simple truth that health is the first condition of beauty. I am a lover of Charles Dickens and I like to remember his description in “Martin Chuzzlewit” of Mrs. Sarah Gamp's false hair. “It was wrong to call it false,” he tells us, “for in truth it deceived nobody.” There are many Sarah Gamps today in *le monde au feu éternel*.

Dame Fashion has a new world to cater for. The girl who has been brought up to play tennis, hockey and even cricket at school and college, who hunts in

the shires, boats on the Thames and is at home on the *sis* as she is in the saddle, has tasted the intoxication of free action, the joy of unrestricted movement. She has learned that “the blood is the life” and that a little massage in season is worth a mass of doctor's stuff. She will not sacrifice middle age and the years that lie beyond to a few foolish excesses. I want Dame Fashion's parents to understand this, and to realize that, though they are quite within their rights in making their child as exclusive and expensive as they can, she must in future stand for health as well as for attractiveness.

Fashion is as old as clothes, perhaps older; she will be continually reborn as long as the world endures and while she is wise, she will rule it. It is her right; long may she exercise it, for her power if wisely used must add to the sum of the world's beauty. It is only when she goes astray and seeks to create beauty at the expense of health that the result is deplorable and calls for protest. For long years she was a well meaning tyrant and her votaries were called upon to sacrifice themselves. At last the spirit of democracy, rampant throughout the world, has brought about a change, and the surviving worshippers, together with newly admitted ones, are laying down certain rules to bind their ruler. “Leave us our health,” they say, “do nothing to tamper with our natural shapes and proper functions. Leave our livers free to act, our blood free to circulate, our limbs free to move. We wish to be active and vigorous and above all we desire, to remain young and healthy as long as we can.”

Hester's Bazar, January, 1915

Figure 3.2: Warwick and Brinkley. 1915c. “The Call of Fashion.” These young Brinkley Girls are heading the “Call of Fashion.” Courtesy of *HathiTrust* via University of Michigan.

dresses of fur, bows, and pomp, sent her a new sacrifice: a “free, untrammelled [sic] girl” (Warwick and Brinkley 1915c: 17) who is ready to sacrifice herself to a life in fashion’s service. Those worshipping Dame Fashion are subject to her “eccentric” rule and condemned to enduring powdered-nose noblesse, dyed hair, and the pains inflicted by high heels and tiny corsets. Brinkley’s drawing appears like a farce of Giacomo Leopardi’s 1824 satirical “Dialogo della moda e della morte,” in which the Italian Romantic poet and essayist portrays Fashion as a tyrannical ruler who clothes her obedient disciples into too tight shoes and corsets as she has a pact with Death (1999, qtd. in Vinken 2016: 39–45). Despite all better judgment of sanity and reason, Dame Fashion’s followers seem to accept their own pain and lasting physical damage to please their ‘ruler.’

This irrationality – to sacrifice one’s health and wellbeing to fashion’s written or unwritten ‘rules’ – is the object of the Countess of Warwick’s column “The Call of Fashion” that marks the beginning of her one-year crusade for more sanity, reason, and health in female beauty and fashion. Positioning health and fashion’s “eccentric” and unrealistic ‘rules’ against each other, the Countess is a proponent of *mens sana in corpore sano*: She argues that “there is no beauty at the expense of health” and that beauty as well as “charm” can only be “the outcome of sane, healthy living” (Warwick and Brinkley 1915c: 17). In her entertaining text, the Countess metaphorically urges the parents of “Dame Fashion” to teach the latter a “short course in anatomy and physiology.” “Dame Fashion,” so the Countess’s message, should learn to adapt to “a new world” in which athletic girls demand “unrestricted movement” and where fashion must “in future stand for health as well as for attractiveness” (17).

With her warning against the fashion system and its detrimental effects on the young female body, the Countess joins the socioeconomic critique instigated by late-nineteenth-century reformers, and continued in the twentieth century by suffragists, exercise advocates, and fashion designers, who attacked the fashion system for imposing an unequal physical and economic burden on women (Strassel 2012: 40). In Warwick’s modern view of fashion, the new “spirit of democracy, rampant throughout the world” shifts the attention to the ‘new’ consumers of fashion who bind the latter to certain rules mandatory for a healthful female body, and not vice versa (Warwick and Brinkley 1915c: 17). They demand from “Dame Fashion”: “Leave us our health” and “do nothing to tamper with our natural shapes and proper functions. Leave our livers free to act, our blood free to circulate, our limbs free to move. We wish to be active and vigorous and above all we desire to remain young and healthy as long as we can” (17). Dismantling fashion’s elitist, non-democratically legitimized hegemony, Warwick’s article thereby outlines the (new) margins within fashion’s rule, arguing that young women should not follow the rules of fashion blindly (see also Paulicelli 1994: 184).

Clearly, the Countess’s admonition reflects the dichotomy of the bad/oppressive fashion system vs. good/liberating fashion practice of classic fashion theory. Confronted with the fashion system’s rules and its powerful economic impetus, Warwick (but also Colby) seek to allocate fashion a more democratic role for the sake of bodily health and sanity – a juxtaposition that is also present in the dichotomies of the body vs. power, or health vs. the economic (fashion) system, as described by Michel Foucault in his theories on the body (1980: 56; see Entwistle 2000: 18).

In Warwick’s narrative of sanity and her rationalist rebuke of fashion’s “eccentricity” as “ineffective” (Warwick and Brinkley 1915c: 17), the aspect of creative self-fashioning falls short of her attention. It becomes clear that Warwick, as a woman of reason and sanity, whose idea of beauty is one of moderation that has health as its “first condition” (17), reads extravagant dress, make-up, and dyed hair as signs of fashion’s relentless ‘tyranny’ – and not as tools for young women’s creation of self in the early twentieth century.

In “The Call of Fashion,” Warwick calls for a new compromise or middle ground in women’s fashion – where its rules are loosened to adapt and bend to young women’s needs and a multitude of possibilities in the modern age, but where moderation is key. Compared to Brinkley’s visualization of a creative, open, and playful fashion practice, inspired by her “hobnobb[ing] with the rich and famous” and her portraits of actors at the Hollywood Studios (Robbins 2001: 107), Warwick presents fashion as a narrow and rigid *apparatus* for uniformizing the young female body.

This fashion- and looks-focused visualization of femininity reflects and, at the same time, contributes to its surroundings. With her highly decorative, fine-lined depictions of young women, Nell Brinkley perfectly merges her drawings with the overall fashion- and beauty-focused look of their publication medium. Her illustrations must thus be read within a publication context whose pages burst with photo galleries praising the beauty of society belles and royal palaces, as well as Parisian high-fashion plates – sometimes combined in one: The February 1915 issue displays “Society Women Posing as Mannikins [sic]” (“Fashion Fête” 1915: 34). In the present January 1915 issue, Warwick and Brinkley’s column “The Call of Fashion” is surrounded by other fashion-focused illustrated articles: It is preceded by Nita Norris’s illustrated article “Paris – The Dictator” that showcases extravagant, art-nouveau Paul Poiret designs, “shown exclusively in *Harper’s Bazar*” (Norris 1915: 14).¹¹¹ Read the description of one of the Poiret designs depicted here and you imag-

111 Only the (non-illustrated) first part of a serialized short story by William John Hopkins separates Nita Norris’s fashion treaty from Warwick’s.

ine one of Brinkley’s own concoctions: “[T]he Parisienne would revel in this sumptuous ermine wrap, enveloping the figure in a non-chalant [sic] manner and melting into a shower of roses which swing merrily at every step” (Norris 1915: 15).¹¹² Brinkley’s Girls parade their extravagant tulle dresses just as flamboyantly to the fashionable ruler and the addressed magazine reader-viewer (with hands on hip, striking a pose) as the women in Poiret’s fashion drawings – with the only exception that they appear more coquettish in their display of high-fashion than Poiret women whose facial expressions appear more static and serious. On the next page, “The Call of Fashion” is followed by a society column that not only showcases French art (a sculpture by Rodin and a tableau shown at the Ritz-Carlton “for the benefit of the French Fraternité des Artistes”). It also features a society bride, “Mrs. Edmund S. Twining, Junior,” whose photo and description of dress – “over a foundation of cloth of silver was draped a single flounce of old point lace. The court train of the silver cloth held sprays of orange blossoms, and her tulle veil was held in place by a bandeau of pearls” (The Bachelor 1915: 19) – appear as extravagant (though not as revealing) as Brinkley’s dresses two pages before. This highly ostentatious visual context of Parisian fashion drawings and society photos re-emphasizes the focus on fashion and looks in the Brinkley Girls whose decorative, yet impractical dresses mark them as members of the non-working leisure classes.

Warwick’s message of sanity and pragmatism in fashion appears antithetical to the eccentric images and ideas of fashion used by Brinkley and promoted by the *Bazar*. To ‘educate’ the *Bazar*’s ‘*Dame qui sait*’ (or her ‘*Fille qui sait*’) in taste and demeanor, the smart magazine uses a preaching tone when introducing the latest fashions, giving the impression of a peremptory fashion rulebook ‘written’ by some obscure personification of Paris.¹¹³ However, fashion’s rules are arbitrary. In his eponymous book, Barthes describes the ‘fashion system’ as a language system that relies on “(relatively) arbitrary” signs that are “elaborated each year [. . .] by an exclusive authority, i.e the *fashion-group*, or [. . .] the editors of the magazine,” such as the editors of the *Bazar* who define Paris as the center

112 The article does not name the artist who drew these art-nouveau Poiret designs, but only reveals that they “were produced in the establishment of Paul Poiret” (Norris 1915: 14).

113 A May 1915 article in the *Bazar* offers “the answer” to the question “[w]ho [p]ulls the [s]tring-[s]” in fashion (“And Who Pulls the String” 1915: 27). The anonymous author not only acknowledges the existence of “ephemeral,” “revolutionary,” and “forever changing” “waves” of fashion, but also takes a closer look at ‘Dame Fashion’ whose “tyrannical” rule, the author concedes, is actually a “democracy” (27) as the following supply-chain-like explanation details: After a Parisian couturier presents his “crude and often vulgar designs” on stage, actresses in turn introduce the latest fashions to a sophisticated audience, then “the fashions are toned down, and refined by the leaders of society, who, pruning them of everything that is contrary to the laws of elegance and good taste, issue them, thus edited, to the world” (27).

of everything ‘chic’ (1983: 215, 263, italics in orig.). As Barthes continues, “precisely when Fashion constructs a very strict system of signs, it strives to give these signs the appearance of pure reasons” and, as “Fashion is tyrannical and its sign arbitrary,” it “must convert its sign into a natural fact or a rational law” (263). As a result, the “[f]ashion magazine does not always present this sign in a declared manner,” but presents an “illusion of [. . .] transitivity, finality, attribution, causality, etc.” (263). In a similar manner, the *Bazaar* seeks to emphasize the Parisian ruler’s (unquestioned) hegemony: In the article “Paris – The Dictator,” author Nita Norris “explains why Paris was, is, and always will be the Fashion Dictator” (1915: 14–15). The rule of Parisian fashion could not be presented any more irrefutably, whereas of course this “*ratio*” (Barthes 1983: 263, italics in orig.), this causal link of ‘Paris = fashion,’ is entirely made up by the magazine’s editors who claim the authority over fashion. Coincidence or not, only three pages later in the same issue, the Countess of Warwick’s column dares to question this Parisian “Call of Fashion.”

These diverging messages (as exemplified by Warwick’s criticism of excess within a consumerist magazine) are emblematic of the medium of the magazine that always tests out different possibilities: After all, fashion magazines were no streamlined programs. In their heterogeneity, they illustrate that all dichotomies established by (classic) fashion theory collapse at some point – including those of the fashion industry, which makes strict specifications, and the consumers, who undermine or boil down these specifications. This is evident in Brinkley’s own “breathless prose” (Robbins 2001: 13). A special in the advertising trade journal *Printer’s Ink*, attempting to explain the success of the *New York Evening Journal*, reprinted an example of Brinkley’s daily feature in the newspaper, in which her descriptions of dress are just as overflowing with florid language and superlatives, and hence almost as graphic as her art:

I saw her, oh! a day ago, not far from my own knee, scrunched down on the middle of her small back, a kittenish bundle of soft, wavy hair, pinky face, black-satin frock that billowed and puffed and smothered around her so that she looked like a painted dolly rising only ‘head-out’ of a black pompon, silk stockings – I saw them because she had one knee cocked up to hold a toy hat upon it – and buckled shoes. (Brinkley 1917: 75)

Becoming yet another form of visual expression, Brinkley’s idiosyncratic text conjures a highly visual image of fashion before the reader’s eye. Like her visual depictions of fashion, Brinkley’s textual fashion descriptions seem to defy the (punctuation) rules with its spontaneous, stream-of-consciousness-like prose that is anything but the orderly instructive text by Warwick or Colby.

Similar contemporary critical views of fashion’s unquestioned ‘rule’ published in other women’s and fashion’s magazines of the era also invert and com-

plicate the previously discussed text-image dichotomy. In a *Good Housekeeping* article from March 1911, various famous illustrators, among them Rose O’Neill and May Wilson Preston, present their critical, and often funny, views on fashion in asking, “Are the Fashions Ugly?” In the 10-page illustrated article, the artists deride such phenomena as the hobble skirt – “a detriment to decorative beauty in most women’s skirts” (O’Neill et al. 1911: 286) –, oversized hats – “[w]hen it comes to hats most women seem to lose their heads” (288) –, and sigh at how certain fashion trends have been made “[f]or the [s]lender [o]nly” (281). What is interesting here is that the artists do not so much poke fun at fashion in their illustrations, but rather criticize current trends in textual form. In a similar manner, also Dorothy Parker, in her much sought-after texts for *Vanity Fair* and *Vogue*, provided sketchy, humorous, and sometimes poetic little texts for the magazines’ fashion illustrations, in which she fanned open and played with the illustrations’ rather narrow idea of fashion.

Fashion magazines exemplify that the idea of the ‘rigid and normative text’ and the ‘liberating image’ are not stable, just like the classic fashion theory’s ideas of fashion as a rigid system (text) and fashion as a liberating practice (image) are not stable and seem to flow into each other, thus overriding the previously made text-image dichotomy. Fashion magazines feed on such variations, discrepancies, and multiplicities – and, just as true, this structure points beyond the pages of the magazine into social reality.

Perhaps nowhere is this more evident than in the *Bazar*’s contradictory instruction on ‘smart’ fashion. The *Bazar* instructs its readers in what to wear so that they can strive for distinction and taste and thereby turn into ‘women of individuality.’ Following the rules in order to break them – the tensions between system and practice, instruction and individualization on the part of the young woman and her fashioned body were well known to the magazine: In an article published in December 1915, that is, in that same issue that also concludes Warwick’s monthly column on fashion, health, and beauty, an anonymous fashion expert titled “The Buyer” provides the reader with up-to-date information and “authoritative advice” on current developments in women’s wear (1915: 106). “The Buyer” teaches the ‘woman who knows’ in “what is worth while [sic]” in the latest fashion and spots upcoming trends. As “The Buyer” observes, however,

[t]he first thing that strikes a person surveying the field of woman’s dress is the wide discrepancy between the authoritative fashion journals and the authoritative wearers of street dress, for while the former show flaring skirts and a decidedly elaborate effect, the smartest dresses worn in the street are as trim and taut as an English field dress; the skirts, though not as scanty as to show the outline of the figure, are straight and not at all full. (1915: 108)

Apart from acknowledging the magazine’s limitations in ‘instructing’ its female readership, this article presents an interesting observation of fashion practices, that is, of how (prescriptive) instructions on fashion trends were dealt with by the actual consumer. “The Buyer” points out the “wide discrepancy” between the near-haute-couture fashion suggested by a high-class fashion magazine like *Harper’s Bazar* and the styles worn in the street by ‘real’ women (1915: 108). The result was often decidedly in between: Fashion crossed the lines between the magazine (system) and the ‘real’ world (practice). Individual everyday dress presents a compromise, if not even a “practical negotiation” between the fashion system, the “social conditions of everyday life such as class, gender and the like,” and situation-dependent social norms (Entwistle 2000: 37). And yet, a certain basic ‘education’ is necessary to balance the two: Following Barthes, Barbara Vinken writes that the “changing guidelines” (on personality, dieting, relationships, etc.), offered here by a fashion magazine, provide the “language (*langue*) that everyone must master to develop her individual manner of speaking (*parole*)” (2016: 158, my translation; see also Schläffer 2007: 17).¹¹⁴

The same seemingly “wide discrepancy” between fashion’s ‘prescriptive’ *langue* in the magazines (that claim a fuzzy authority in declaring a certain style a trend or a *faux-pas*) and the actual, individual performance and execution of this guidance is mirrored in the columns’ juxtaposition of the authors’ ‘less-is-more’ instructions and Brinkley’s unbolting and widening approach to these narrow discourses of feminine fashion, appearance, and conduct. Here, as well, the actual reader-viewer’s interpretation and practical implementation will lie somewhere in between the Countess’s advice and Brinkley’s visual excess. With their progressively styled dresses that show shoulders, neck, and ankles, and play with fashion styles from different influences, materializing a fashion designer’s reverie, the Brinkley Girls demonstrate to their viewers that fashion is play. The Brinkley Girls’ distinct way of fashioning themselves (and how the artist’s female fandom emulated and turned the Brinkley Girl fantasy into a veritable practice) deserves a closer look.

Nell Brinkley’s role in these processes of young women’s appropriation of fashion as a practice and as a means of ‘self-fashioning’ the female body becomes apparent in her own merchandise. With a plethora of mass-marketed consumer

¹¹⁴ We are familiar with this play of mixed meanings and invocations from today’s women’s magazines: One page’s affirmation of ‘you’re perfect just the way you are’ is challenged by the following page’s prompt to ‘change’ to fit in. And an invitation for guilt-free indulgence through recipes for chocolate cake is kept at bay by a tight regimen of exercising. Similar contradictions and inconsistencies existed in early women’s magazines, when featured articles contradicted the messages promoted by the advertisements (Zuckerman 1998: 65).

ALL CARS TRANSFER TO

Bloomingdale's

LEXINGTON TO 3RD AVE 59TH TO 60TH ST

SEVERAL REPRESENTATIONS OF NELL BRINKLEY ORIGINAL DRAWINGS AND PATTERNS
 REPRODUCED WITH THE SPECIAL PERMISSION OF THE LITTON PRESS

The above sketch is a reproduction of the label that will be found on all the Nell Brinkley Goods.

Nell Brinkley Day at Bloomingdale's

Every reader of The Evening Journal is familiar with the clever, artistic creations of Nell Brinkley's facile pen. We recognize that the type she originated has more of less fashion value. We have, therefore, assembled various lines of women's garments designed after the Nell Brinkley conception—perhaps not quite so exaggerated—and propose to introduce the merchandise to the public to-morrow, Thursday—Nell Brinkley Day at Greater New York's Greatest Dept. Store.

Nell Brinkley Broadcloth Cape

A beautiful, graceful garment in all the popular shades of light blue, canary, peach, gray, white and so on. The cape has a very large sweep and hangs very full over the shoulders, falling in folds.

The kimono sleeves and turnover collar are exquisitely trimmed with contrasting shades of Pique de Crepe, piped with silk soutache and finished with fancy buttons.

The Cape is further beautified by a large facing in contrast with self material and decorative band.

A decidedly useful and effective garment for morning and evening wear—see our size chart for the special Nell Brinkley Day price of **\$10.95**

Nell Brinkley Veils

Very much in keeping with the careless attractiveness of the Nell Brinkley Girl are these dainty chemise spotted veils. They are long flowing veils, very light in weight, put the choice to keep the hair in place, and at the same time and wear on the carriage. They are marked over about half dozen, as the French, from Broderie D'Orleans et al. **19c**

Nell Brinkley Stockings

Finely made 1 1/2 x 4 1/2, with un-usually pretty silk hand em- broidered in green on the instep and blue on the heel and sole. The work- ings are un- broken, just the thing for wear in the shoe. They are in- tended for the day. **35c**

Nell Brinkley Specials

Special bargains in various departments, all particularly adapted to our Nell Brinkley Day by reason of their superior or unique appearance.

NELL BRINKLEY BELT.....	NELL BRINKLEY SHIRT WAIST SETS, consisting of three sets and a pair of ties, one set and a pair of ties.....	45c
NELL BRINKLEY HAT BAGS, very chic and stylish.....	NELL BRINKLEY MAT FINS, with pretty designs, available and more to be had.....	10c
NELL BRINKLEY SILVER-PLATED MESH BAGS.....	NELL BRINKLEY VEIL FIVE, color pink, with green trimmings.....	\$1.49
NELL BRINKLEY YANTRY PURSES.....	NELL BRINKLEY CORRESPONDENCE PAPER, in colors at 3 different rates.....	50c
NELL BRINKLEY COMB SETS, with ivory, glass and comb, per set.....		25c

Nell Brinkley Combination Corset Cover and Drawers

Pretty and dainty as can be. Made of a beautiful quality creosier dentity.

The Drawers part is made in skirt effect, open at the sides and tied with two silk ribbon bows and finished at bottom with Val lace edge.

The Cover part is trimmed with two fine Val lace insertions and edges; wash silk ribbon to draw. Ribbon heading at waist. Special Nell Brinkley Day price is... **\$1.98**

Nell Brinkley Bathing Suits

Just the kind the dainty artist herself would wear.

This pretty bathing suit is to be worn with black tights, not bloomers.

It is made of a fine quality brilliant silk. The front is trimmed with buttons.

The neck, back and bottom of the skirt are trimmed with wide black and white bands. The skirt is finished. Special Nell Brinkley Day price is... **\$6.87**

Nell Brinkley Bathing Cap

Made of iridescent silk, fits closely around the head. Absolutely waterproof. In red and green plaids and checks. Finished with 70 felt, and has an elaborate bow in front. Special Nell Brinkley Day price is... **79c**

Nell Brinkley Shoes

As pleasant as Nell herself, are our "Angel Face" button Calcutta Shoes of fine patent leather and "Dorothy" Garden Ties.

See all the latest fashions in the shoe department. Made of all the popular materials. Special Nell Brinkley Day price is... **\$1.98**

Nell Brinkley Hair Dressing

Our Hair Dressing Patterns are prepared to fix up your hair in the latest fashions of the Nell Brinkley mode.

The department is better equipped than any other in the city and offers the most up-to-date and popular hair dressing plans.

All accessories—the necessary style ideas are here in perfection.

OFFERINGS: LONG HAIR REGULATOR... **\$2.89**
 HEAVY HAIR POMPADOUR, same... **\$1.39**
 FRANKIE POMPADOUR, same... **\$1.98**
 HAIRLESS POWERS, and all the rest... **50c**

Nell Brinkley Bows

The smartest little, airy, neckpieces of the season.

See all the latest fashions in the bow department. Made of all the popular materials. Special Nell Brinkley Day price is... **15c**

All Cars Transfer to BLOOMINGDALE'S; Lexington to 3d Ave. 59th to 60th St.

Figure 3.3: Purdy. 1908. "Notes from New York." Capitalizing on the 'Brinkley craze,' in 1908, the department store Bloomingdale's organized a "Nell Brinkley Day" with offerings from Nell Brinkley shoes to Nell Brinkley hair dressing. Courtesy of *HathiTrust* via University of Iowa.

goods, young women could turn into Brinkley Girls themselves, bottom to top: from buying “‘Nell Brinkley’ [underwear, own addition] combinations” at A. D. Matthews and Sons, Brooklyn (“Muslin Underwear” 1914: 62–63),¹¹⁵ to capes, veils, stockings, shoes, bathing suits, bows, and the corresponding curly “Nell Brinkley mode” created-to-copy by the department store’s hairdresser as advertised on Bloomingdale’s own “Nell Brinkley Day” on August 5, 1908 (“Nell Brinkley Day” 1908; see also Figure 3.3). By wearing Nell Brinkley hats, dresses, and hairdos, her young fans could perform, play, and “try on an imaginary identity” of her favorite celebrity – even if “only for one day” (Paolicelli 1994: 179): One cold winter month in Perth Amboy, New Jersey, people noticed a “wan and scantily dressed sixteen-year-old girl” wandering the streets (Pizzitola 2002: 99). It turned out this girl ‘played’ Brinkley Girl.

Young women experienced early-twentieth-century mass culture to a large degree through imitation and fan culture. Obviously, imitation and consumption lie closely together, or, as Jackie Stacey writes, the emulation of a star’s look “can be seen as a form of cultural production and consumption. It involves the production of a new self-image through the pleasure taken in a star image” (1994: 168). The processes of imitation among Nell Brinkley’s fans and their self-made adolescent identity point to the emergence of a larger girl fandom – perhaps the best manifestation of the ‘democratization’ and confident appropriation of celebrity fashion styles and looks.¹¹⁶ As Diana W. Anselmo writes, young women’s imitation of movie stars’ dress and looks not only had the purpose to mark the wearer as a fan of that specific actress, but also fulfilled an emancipatory purpose whereby dressing and articulating herself like a certain actress bestowed the teenage girl with the “sexual agency and power” otherwise inaccessible in her everyday life

115 The special “‘Nell Brinkley’ [underwear] combinations” were sold in the fall of 1914 at A. D. Matthews & Sons, Brooklyn, according to *The Corset and Underwear Review*, a trade magazine (“Muslin Underwear” 1914: 63). They conjure in front of the reader’s eye the instant visualization of a Nell Brinkley drawing: “[T]he new models were very attractive and were made of fine nainsook, trimmed at the neck with plain eyelet embroidery, wide insertion and ribbon-drawn torchon laces and embroideries” (63). Brinkley’s drawing style (the fine lines, the elaborate details, and the effect of volume and ruffles created thereby) lends itself particularly well to illustrate and accentuate the delicate design of early-twentieth-century women’s underwear. Manufacturers of corsets and women’s underwear recognized the attractiveness and ‘sexiness’ underlying many of Brinkley’s drawings, including her renditions of the famous Ziegfeld Follies who, at her pen, resembled early pin-up girls.

116 Anselmo delineates how girls in the 1910s imitated their favorite movie stars via identificatory practices that “foster[ed] better self-esteem and social performance” (2017: 157), whereas psychologists, on the other hand, downplayed this powerful claiming and trying out of new roles as the typical “propensity for mimicry” and “childish copying” among female teenagers (130–131, 137).

(2017: 131). The latter aspect, of granting young women a niche of creative, self-made articulation via imitation is worth noting in the context of Nell Brinkley’s fans, merchandise, and fashion. Psychologists and theorists on adolescence attributed teenage girls’ imitation of “the mediated personalities of popular debutantes, movie celebrities, or ‘a star upon the stage’” to their “*nebulous* and unformed [nature]” (Hall 1911: 9–11, qtd. in Anselmo 2017: 130–131, my emphasis). This diagnosis of ‘nebulousness’ of teenage girl identity also pervades the report on the Perth Amboy girl, who, allegedly, “[spoke] incoherently except to claim with certainty that she was Nell Brinkley” (Pizzitola 2002: 99).

The Brinkley Girl look, with a “near-anemic image” (Pizzitola 2002: 98), curly hairdos, and eccentric fashion, was in demand – although dressing like a Brinkley Girl was not always practical, and it certainly did not conform to the generally accepted standards for female appearance in public in the mid-1910s. This must have prompted the writer of an article in the advertising industry magazine *Printer’s Ink* to emphasize in his review of the “Nell Brinkley Day” at Bloomingdale’s that the fashion pieces sold there looked like the artist herself imagines them, “only much more conservative” (“What the Big Stores Are Doing” 1908: 41).¹¹⁷ Even the department store’s own advertisement for its “Nell Brinkley Day,” which appeared in Hearst’s *New York Evening Journal*, whose readership was well familiar with Brinkley’s art, hurried to comfort its reader that “[w]e have [. . .] assembled various lines of women’s garments designed after the Nell Brinkley conceptions – perhaps not quite so exaggerated” (“Nell Brinkley Day” 1908; see also Purdy 1908). As the *Printer’s Ink* review makes clear, “her type of woman may be slightly exaggerated, [the fashion pieces, own addition] are, nevertheless, clever, and close enough to the truth to be interesting” (“Big Stores” 1908: 41).

A look at *Harper’s Bazar* itself illustrates the magazine-inherent play and experimentation with fashion as a (normative) system and as a (creative) practice. The clothes worn by the Brinkley Girls seemed exceedingly exaggerated, presenting a circus- or chorus-girl-like visual spectacle on the magazine page: short dresses, pearly, peacock feather hairbands, and cleavage dresses that look like a fast-forward glimpse into the flapper fashion of the next decade. On the other hand, the *Bazar’s* women appear like antebellum dames, uptight and schoolmarmish in their striped shirtwaist blouses and frocks: Even a page that addresses the “despair of mothers” who want to dress their flapper-daughters “becomingly” ends up showing

¹¹⁷ It is not known whether Nell Brinkley played any part in designing or endorsing the designs of these fashion items (as official merchandising articles), or whether Bloomingdale’s itself commissioned the creation of designs in the style of the Brinkley Girls.

only “demure little maiden[s]” whose fashion appears comparatively conservative, if not normative (“Dressing the Flapper” 1915: 88).¹¹⁸

No wonder, then, that the Nell Brinkley combinations had to be toned down into a “more conservative” and “not quite so exaggerated” version to be marketable to a mass market and to be sold ‘off-the-peg’ (“Big Stores” 1908; “Nell Brinkley Day” 1908). Brinkley Girl-inspired fashion practices exist therefore in at least two versions (with an unthinkable infinity of realizations of the ‘Brinkley Girl look’ in between). The anecdote of the young and half-frozen Nell Brinkley-wannabe on the one hand, and the industry magazines’ mollifications on the other, highlight how the Brinkley Girl performance, including dress, hairdo, and make-up, was sold to Brinkley’s fans as an essentially open-ended endeavor that allowed for various individualistic and personalized interpretations of the look.

Fashion’s allowance for (and consumers’ ready acceptance of) these parallel movements and existences of realizations and performances in fashion is enhanced by the magazine itself: Here, fashion plates, columns, editorials, and advertisements all proclaim a potpourri of different fashion ‘rules’ or codes. Fashion’s inherent openness not only emerges in the columns’ inconsistent visual and textual narratives, but also in the re-articulation of Nell Brinkley’s fashion designs for the market. Just as Brinkley’s elaborately designed visuals for the present *Bazar* columns make offers to their readers to be read and viewed in different ways, also the present advertisements for Nell Brinkley fashion demonstrate that the underlying invitations for creative and emancipatory self-fashioning can play out on different levels: either in a young woman’s fantasy (if her environment demanded elegant reserve), in her everyday urban life (by adopting the complete eccentric look, taking the invitations for dressing like a Brinkley Girl to an absurd extreme), or by picking out her own element of the entire ‘Brinkley Girl look’ to upgrade, downgrade, translate, or appropriate Nell Brinkley’s fashion according to her individual taste or social situation. The diluted Brinkley Girl look formed, at most, a socially acceptable niche or compromise – somewhere between the fashion that moral arbiters ‘allowed’ or preferred young women to wear in public and young women’s own fashion dreams, between norm and play, system and practice. When consumers appropriate fashion, they are thus essentially doing what is already

¹¹⁸ According to Westkaemper, this perseverance of a seemingly ‘dated’ imagery of femininity was nothing unusual on the magazine market, accounting for the medium’s heterogeneity in content, but also for viewing female turn-of-the-century gender roles as a continuum, where often “traditional imagery [was used] to illustrate modernity,” rather than as an abrupt replacement: “Periodicals printed idealized historical imagery, often without comment, alongside advice for contemporary living. The trend toward colonial dames and antebellum belles outlasted others, the ubiquity of these types asserting stability in women’s roles” (2017: 20).

happening in the magazine, which fluctuates between textual prescriptions and imaginative visualizations of fashion: They are testing the possibilities – both in terms of pragmatically downgrading magazines’ exaggerations, as “The Buyer” laments, and in the attempts to transform Brinkley’s vivid illustrations into a more wearable version, or in the totalization of an ideal (as the example of the crazy incarnation of the Brinkley Girl shows).

In the end, Brinkley’s fashion points to both: a chance for the wearer’s individualization of the Brinkley Girl look, but also evidence for the look’s overall regulation as part of a larger standardized fashion system to make it salable. An underlying machinery of promotional ads (in industry magazines and widely read yellow-press newspapers like the *New York Evening Journal*) and strategic business considerations (selling the Brinkley Girl look in a version that appeals better to a mass taste) highlight this point.

Apart from translating Brinkley’s ‘frivolous fluff’ into an everyday practical and more wearable look, particularly the turn-of-century advent of ready-to-wear fashion options and increasing wage work allowed larger income groups of female customers to purchase and ‘mix-and-match’ (inexpensive) pieces of fashion (Fields 2007: 54). The industry magazines’ reviews of Nell Brinkley’s fashion sales hint at how the ‘common’ consumer, who did perhaps not have the required waist, taste, or money, did not have to buy the entire set of Brinkleyesque eccentricity, but could always adapt the look.

The conscious partial appropriation or selection of only certain elements of a fashion style was common among women who did not have that much (pin) money at their disposal. In “Putting on Style,” Kathy Peiss explains how working-class women around 1900 “did not imitate *haute couture* directly, but adapted and transformed such fashion in creating their own style” (2011: 51). Just as Peiss attributes working-class women’s knowledge of the latest fashions to reading fashion magazines and observing the dresses of wealthier women in public (2011: 50–51), it is also possible that lower-class women read *Harper’s Bazar* – even though the magazine’s price of 15 cents makes it likely that they read back issues that were passed down to them. And yet we need to carefully distinguish the media and their presumed target audiences here: Bloomingdale’s Brinkley Day of 1908 was marketed to the lower- to middle-class reader of the Hearst corporation’s yellow-press *Evening Journal* (the corporation that also syndicated Brinkley’s art), and precisely not to the ‘smart’ reader “of individuality” of *Harper’s Bazar*, who is instructed in

“the secret” of making a difference (*HB*, January 1915: 40).¹¹⁹ Below, I will explore these observations in relation to the various publication environments and social classes that Brinkley’s art potentially targeted or appealed to.

3.6 Let’s Chat Corsets and Débutante-Slouches: Discussions of Rigidity and Movement

In the fashion magazines that ceaselessly call for the female reader to be ‘designed’ according to a certain aesthetic ideal, the body is also malleable, can be regulated and regimented, and must be designed and shaped like a fashion piece (through diet, exercise, dress, etc.) to conform to the prescribed ideals. Particularly with the advent of self-care regimens, dieting manuals, make-up, and exercise guides at the beginning of the twentieth century, women’s magazines increasingly turned the body into an “unfinished, open to change” project that had to be managed (Entwistle 2000: 19). Chiming into a Progressive-era rhetoric of optimizing the human body as well as Fordist and Taylorist principles for systemic factory management, also Warwick’s and Colby’s columns approach the female body as an enclosed system and command its intricate *maintenance*. The female body thereby provides the essential backdrop against which all the authors’ exhortations to moderation (in fashion, food, or fun) and their reductive discourses of ‘less is more’ eventually play out.

In Colby’s article on “Posture” (1914f: 27, 74), the female body turns into a customizable piece of dress and a performance itself when Colby claims that “there are fashions in postures as there are in other things” (27). Treating poses as if they were the latest ‘fad’ for the ‘modern girl,’ Colby “makes a vigorous protest against the slouching, crouching pose affected by the girl of today” (27). Colby fills the reader in on the ‘latest fashion’ in poses which the modern girl falls prey to all too easily: “Just because some little girl wants to be up-to-date, she carries her head forward, depresses her chest, cramps her lungs, cuts off her oxygen supply, accumulates poison in her blood, weakens her heart action and circulation and lowers her vitality” (74). For Colby, sanity stands against vanity, and fashion and beauty ideals should not deform the healthy natural female body as she envisions it.

¹¹⁹ Bloomingdale’s targeted a price-conscious audience as also becomes apparent from a Bloomingdale’s ad in the *Evening World* that announces a “Coupon Day in the Mill and Factory Sale” (“Coupon Day” 1908: 7).

For advice on how to ‘tailor’ the young female body to fit Colby’s taste, look no further: The continuation of Colby’s article in the rear advertising section is framed by advertisements for “front[-]laced [Modart Corsets]” that grant “the necessary expansion for absolute comfort” and “plenty of room through the diaphragm” (“Modart Corsets” 1914: 74), while also providing the extended (illustrated) narrative for the magazine reader-viewer, in lieu of another Brinkley illustration. The second half of Colby’s column on body posture was thus meant to be read in conjunction with the corset ads that framed the text (see also Kitch 2001: 181; Schlaffer 2007: 30). The corset not only shaped the body and provided better posture, but also emphasized and supported the appearance of certain fashionable clothes. That is why the corset (as a tool to reach a certain bodily ideal) betrays Colby’s plea for the natural female body: In the end, her bodily ideal is just as culturally shaped as that of the women whom she writes against.

Arguing a clear case against the current “style” *faux-pas* in posture (1914f: 74), Colby instructs the female body not only in what it wears (and should not wear), but also in how it should carry itself and should (or should rather not) move and pose. In Colby’s column, posture becomes an outfit, something that the female body can put on and off and that, just like women’s dress, is always subject to discussions of propriety and appearance. Drawing on Joanne Entwistle’s assertion that dress is a (situated) bodily practice and the outcome of ‘dressing,’ and thus an individual bodily activity informed by socially constituted practices and forces (2000: 11, 43), I argue that, just like dress, bodily movement may be susceptible to discourses of instruction and guidance.¹²⁰ At the same time, individual poses become something that the female body can ‘wear’ in a performative act of self-fashioning and individualization.

Whereas Colby attempts to discourage the performative and potentially emancipatory aspect of self-fashioning the female body, Nell Brinkley’s accompanying drawing for Colby’s treatise on posture all the more envisions certain poses as an expression of stylish fashion and daringly indecent behavior. Her rendition shows a young dark-haired, bare-breasted woman who holds a star over another young woman who bends in a sparkling dress, long dangling necklaces, and feathery hair-piece, forming the crescent shape of a moon. Referencing the then current trend for orient-inspired patterns on everything from fashion and furniture to Sergei Diaghilev’s *Ballets Russes*, the bent female body becomes a decorative ornament in this scene, its anatomy being suspended for the sake of sheer embellishment. The caption – “The Smiling Arab: ‘Thy woman is a half-moon in the way of her body –

¹²⁰ Note how Entwistle’s distinction of fashion (as an underlying rule-based system) vs. dress (as an individual performative practice; see Entwistle 2000: 45, 48, 49, 55) resembles the distinction of ‘langue’ vs. ‘parole.’

mine carries a star on her head and spills naught of its powdered light” – sounds itself like a line written by a poet like Rumi (Colby and Brinkley 1914f: 27, quotation marks in orig.). Presented as a crescent moon and a star, these two young women literally ‘bend’ the rules of Colby’s advised “physically correct posture” (27), while being scantily dressed at that.¹²¹

Aspects of movement and stillness played out literally but also symbolically in young women’s fashion, movement, morals, and behavioral codes in the second decade of the twentieth century. Just like Colby’s August 1914 column had discussed the importance of dancing for the modern girl’s health and vigor – implying that dancing at best (should) take place in a guided and supervised manner at a “school, college or institution” and probably not in some shady establishment of the night (1914b: 19), also her September column tells a thing or two about the thin boundary between guiding and misguiding the young female body. Connecting posture and conduct, Colby makes clear that a relaxed posture and relaxed morals go hand in hand: She detects hints of moral demise in the “débutante slouch” (“pernicious, both physically and psychically”) – a pose that was ‘all the rage’ among young women in 1914 and drew the attention of “The Buyer” in his discussion of corsets (1915: 110).¹²² For emphasis, Colby quotes a New York physician who mentions “[t]he relaxed knees and general carriage of the day,” “the weakened moral fiber,” as well as “the immodesty of the clothing of the women of today” in the same breath (Colby and Brinkley 1914f: 27), illustrating how cautionary messages for dress and the body converged in public health discourses of the era.

Fashion can reinforce (or can be used as a tool to reinforce) certain ideas of bodily self-management and (physical, or even sociological) restriction. And still, the columns’ visual and textual narratives highlight fashion’s multifaceted role in either accompanying and reinforcing *or* opening up and extending the discourses around the female body’s ‘management,’ design, and regulation. Just as the *Bazar* confronted its reader with a multiplicity of messages regarding fashion and self-

121 The scene calls up associations with the common turn-of-the-century trope of the ‘Dark’ and the ‘White’ Lady, in which racist stereotypes label the ‘dark’ or dark-haired woman as “the seductive enchantress” (Brinkley’s drawing of a bare-breasted Arabian-looking woman feeds into Orientalist presentations of Arab women as objects of white male desire), whereas the ‘white’ woman (or man) falls prey to such temptations (Goodman 1989: 19; see Eldredge 1979: 58–61, 68–70). See also chapter two on Rose O’Neill.

122 According to a 2016 *Vogue* article, the ‘debutante slouch’ was a “question mark-shaped” pose “affected by gilded youth in the teens and ’20s” (Borrelli-Persson 2016). A personal blog offers more graphic detail, describing the ‘debutante slouch’ as “the languid pose of one who is just too exhausted from being beautiful and sophisticated *all* the time. It’s usually accompanied by blasé expressions, sighs, anemia, or complaints about prohibition and/or women’s suffrage” (Alexandra 2012). In terms of trend, the ‘debutante slouch’ was essentially the ‘resting face’ of the 1910s.

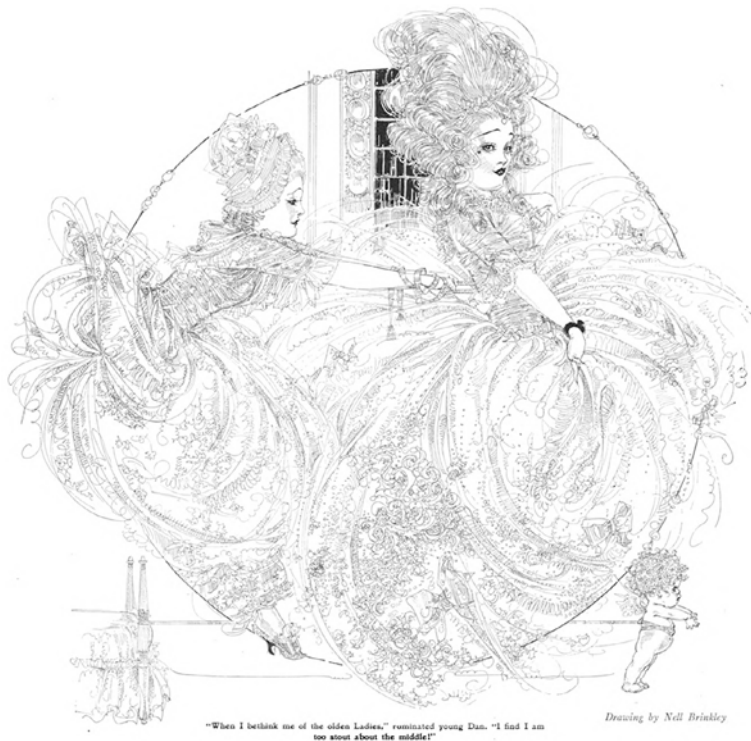
fashioning, also the female body was inevitably placed between normative top-down instructions for bodily self-management and its (defiant) individualization. In a magazine that preached a circumspect physicality just as it celebrated extravagant fashions and the Fuller Dancers' feet (*HB*, May 1915: 26), the attainable bodily 'ideal' could only be ambiguous and confusing. This complex interplay of fashion, gender norms, and female bodily health – where fashion and particularly fashion practices shape, enable, but also (literally) tie down certain bodily ideals – becomes nowhere clearer than in the era's debates surrounding the corset.

It is an amusing scene that Nell Brinkley presents in her illustration for the Countess of Warwick's "A Chat About Corsets" (Warwick and Brinkley 1915d: 31, Figure 3.4). As if through an iris shot (a shot used in early film, often for voyeuristic erotic scenes), the viewer catches a glimpse at a curious scene unfolding in the bedroom: In a full, historical ensemble of lady and maid, both in baroque wigs and attire, the Brinkleyesque lady keeps her posture and countenance as her maid pulls on the straps of her corset. Mimicking the scene, little Dan Cupid – strap pulled around a bedpost, attempting in vain to slim his round belly – visibly puffs and pants from this fashion ordeal.

In her September column, the Countess of Warwick advises her readers on the proper choice and fit of corsets, dismissing ill-fitting corsets as "an unpardonable crime against woman" (31). Counter to the forceful tight-lacing practices presented in Nell Brinkley's drawing, the Countess calls for sanity when fitting a corset: "Let it tend to correct the faults of a figure by persuasion rather than by force" (31). Her cautionary stance on corsets and their rigidity presents a logical continuation of her earlier call to impose controls upon Dame Fashion's undisputed 'rule:' fashion and style, yes; but not at any price for the female body's health. As in "The Call of Fashion," Warwick seems to allow for greater freedom of movement and an element of choice when it comes to corset-wearing. Rather than having the wearer succumb and adapt to the corset, the corset has to bend to its wearer: If you have "prominent hip bones [. . .] it is a simple matter to have the bones of steels removed from a part of the corset that is otherwise seemly and comfortable," or, as "[a]nother piece of sound advice" from the Countess, you should "keep your corsets open about two inches at the back, so as to leave the spine with the measure of freedom it calls for" (31).

Warwick's critical stance on the physical effects of corset-wearing stands in a long tradition of dress reform movements¹²³ and corset debates that took hold in

¹²³ On the dress reform movement in the second half of the nineteenth century and its idea of the 'rational dress,' see Warner (1978). Entwistle delineates the evolution of the dress reform movement and emphasizes its activists' conservative, rather than progressive, background (2000: 109–110).



A Chat About Corsets

By THE COUNTESS OF WARWICK

I HAVE been thinking that if we could all be as “daughters of the Gods, divinely tall and most divinely fair,” and, still more important, if we could remain so for the term of our lives, the *corsette’s* art, now so vital to our well-being, would find no place in our midst. Unfortunately, most of us must go to art in order to reinforce nature, and the necessity for corsets was lately acknowledged officially by some highly trained scientists, who issued a report to the general press. You must always remember that Nature is a prodigal and a spendthrift. Not only “of a thousand seeds she oftentimes brings but one to bear,” but she cares nothing for the individual, her concern is ever for the type. This may seem a long way from corsets; it is really closely connected with them, for Nature brings woman to maturity merely in order that she may produce children, and, that sacred function duly fulfilled, cares no more for the mother than the snowflake of January cares for the rose petal of June. We have done our work, and Nature is busy preparing the next generation to carry it on. I would start by saying the modern low-cut corset should fit lightly round the upper edge. Pressure upon the diaphragm by the steel top is a frequent

Harper’s Bazar, September, 1915

source of indigestion. The digestive organs have much to complain of in ill-fitted corsets, and the change from the pair that does not fulfil its proper purpose to a pair that does, has been seen on many occasions, within my own knowledge, to put a period to a long course of medical treatment. Since women took to medicine as a profession they have been quick to find the cause of digestive troubles, and when the woman doctor’s work is better appreciated, the old bad pressure upon the organs of digestion will be far more stringently controlled, and we shall not see so many sufferers appealing to their powder puffs in vain endeavour to remove the outward and visible signs of trouble following even a moderate and well-cooked meal.

Another piece of sound advice is to keep your corsets open about two inches at the back, so as to leave the spine with the measure of freedom it calls for. Prominent hip bones demand a boneless hip corset; it is a simple matter to have the bones or steels removed from a part of the corset that is otherwise seemly and comfortable. The thighs and abdomen must have no pressure. In the first case free circulation is arrested and painful or unseemly swelling may result; in the latter some of

the most important organs lose the adaptability to movement that is one of the secrets of their proper action.

The question whether life is worth living has been wittily answered by the statement that “it depends upon the liver,” and it is to be noted that deforming corsets and a misplaced liver are an ever-present example of cause and effect. The corset should be moulded lightly but easily to the form that requires it, and fit as perfectly as a glove. Let it tend to correct the faults of a figure by persuasion rather than by force; do not suffer it to dictate to any organ of the body. There is a help that Nature will not disdain and will not resent, and the corset maker who is an artist will see to it that every client is so aided.

Every one of us ought to have a few lessons to teach us the uses and distribution of our vital organs if we would live wisely and well. These lessons would be invaluable for many purposes. For the proper choice of corsets they are indispensable, unless we have the good luck to meet the *corsetiere* who takes the work of fitting a *grand sieux* and regards the harmful corset as an unparadiseable crime against woman.

Figure 3.4: Warwick and Brinkley. 1915d. “A Chat about Corsets.” The debate about the pros and cons of corset-wearing did not stop at the Brinkley Girls, much to the chagrin of Dan Cupid. Courtesy of *HathiTrust* via University of Michigan.

the mid-nineteenth century and were led by “physicians, ministers, couturiers, feminist dress reformers, health and hygiene activists, and advocates of tight-lacing” (Fields 1999: 355). Feeding into the dichotomy prevalent in classic fashion theory, which assigned fashion a gender-specific function, particularly early feminists condemned the corset as a patriarchal instrument to condition and discipline the female body. As these ‘corset debates’ gained momentum in popular media, causing young women to increasingly dismiss rigid dresses, corset manufacturers feared to lose customers, but also control over women’s way of dressing (Fields 1999: 355), and attempted to adapt their products to their wearers’ increasingly active lifestyles. Strategies ranged from innovations in corset-design (and, concomitantly, corset-marketing) by inserting elastic parts (*HB*, May 1915: 93) to introducing the “really practical corset,” which is not only “comfort[able],” but also “comes either front or back lace, in any material, and in all sizes and lengths” – the size-inclusive corset of its era (*HB*, March 1915: 96). Also, the greater variety of corsets soon allowed for a greater individualization of corset-wearing, as the “well-dressed woman of to-day must have one corset for street-wear, one for sports, and yet a third for evening” (*HB*, Feb. 1915: 65; see also Fields 1999: 360, 377).

Tapping into the era’s discourse of scientific management – the most pervasive strategy of keeping women laced in corsets –, the Countess argues that “the necessity for corsets was lately acknowledged officially by some highly trained scientists, who issued a report to the general press” (Warwick and Brinkley 1915d: 31). Given its increasing public visibility, the female body had to be carefully ‘monitored’ and managed – with the help of numerous advertisements in women’s magazines for ‘scientifically’ tested or proven consumer products and so-called service articles, including Colby’s instructions for the female ‘well-built’ body – to not run ‘out of control.’ Colby’s underlying premise that the female body must be approached in a systematic manner is mirrored in corset manufacturers’ quasi-scientific approaches and marketing tactics to regulate and keep the female body corseted and restricted. As Jill Fields adds, “women’s bodies were literally the vehicle for the successful shifting of scientific management ideologies from the workplace to the marketplace and the home” (1999: 370).

Next to near-mechanic approaches to the female body, another, ‘softer’ side of advice literature and carefully trained corsetiere-customer relationships accompanied women’s corsets. As manufacturers and magazine authors agreed that the female reader must be instructed in corset-fitting, such female-coded spaces as ‘her’ magazine, but also department store fitting rooms provided spaces for intimate ‘chats about corsets’ as seen here. After all, “magazine articles prepared women for their shopping experience by familiarizing them with terminology, fitting methods, and ways of understanding their bodies” (Fields 2007: 68),

with article series advising women on “How to Choose the Right Corset” (*Good Housekeeping* Sept. 1921: 52; see Fields 2007: 67–68). Apart from offering the space for such instructive messages, magazines, in some respects, also replaced or at least loosened the discourses surrounding the corset by showcasing alternatives to corset fashion or presenting possibilities for differentiating degrees of corset rigidity in their pages. For example, articles like Warwick’s could emphasize that not all corsets had to be worn tightly, whereas fashion plates illustrated how corsets adapt to new fashions.

The form of dress, including its spatial restriction and expansion, plays a pivotal role in these (morally led, and commercially incited) corset debates. In a magazine context that turns movement and posture themselves into forms of dress and into (women’s) tools for expression and potential emancipation through self-fashioning, as mentioned above, the spatial dimension of (more flexible) dress, at least at first, appears to be closely linked to its sociological dimension. This dichotomy of stasis vs. movement has always played a role in Nell Brinkley’s depiction of the modern ‘girl of to-day,’ for whom movement visualizes a certain emancipatory agency. The Brinkley Girl, who is “in constant motion” as she plays hockey or is depicted as a busy office clerk, thereby poses a counter-example to the era’s other prevalent illustrated idealization of femininity, the Gibson Girl, whom Brinkley-scholar Trina Robbins calls a rather “static creature” (Robbins 2004: 179, 181; see also Köhler 2004: 162).

By the same token, the textual and visual narratives in Warwick’s “Chat about Corsets” contrast (static) tightness with movement and expansion. Contrary to Warwick’s text that admonishes the rigidity of the corset, but still guides the reader through a proper fitting, Brinkley’s drawing speaks a visual language of shapes and sizing, where liveliness, expansion, and volume play a role. Whereas the Countess approaches corsets and their modifications from a functional motivation for which she talks the reader through all the intricate parts, fits, and functions in a concrete and detailed manner, including a listing of bodily organs and medicinal implications, Brinkley’s fine line art is anything but trim and tidy, layering circles over circles in these two voluminous roundish dresses within a tondo format. Also, her drawing takes up space: Instead of directing the gaze, it invites the viewer to let her gaze wander freely over the more than half-page scene in amazement. The tondo format presents itself to the viewer like a round box that reveals its secret upon lifting the lid: Like squeezed-in ruffles or an enormous flower bouquet, the women’s dresses with their fluff and frills spill outwards, metaphorically ‘exploding’ into the viewer’s face. Everything seems extra-large and exuberant: Not only the massive dresses, but also the lady’s oversized baroque wig has outgrown the circular shape. Only the lady’s waist is kept from spreading outwards, as it is forced into some idealistic form as the maid pulls the

corset tighter; it is the only, yet barely noticeable, indication of tightness and rigidity in Brinkley's rendition of Warwick's text.

To reflect the absurdity of the scene, Brinkley adds her typical Dan Cupid figure who mimics the scene in all abstraction. The caption reads: "When I bethink me of the olden Ladies,' ruminated young Dan, 'I find I am too stout about the middle'" (1915d: 31, quotation marks in orig.). This humorous visual element 'expands' and plays with an instructive, 'closed' text on the proper shape and fit of corsets. Also, in presenting the historicity and underlying 'silliness' of corset-wearing, with a smirk, Brinkley's drawing criticizes the old ordeal at a time when young women increasingly released their bodies from this procedure.

As if peering through a looking glass at a moment long past, the viewer witnesses an "olden" aristocratic constellation of lady and maid (31). The visual return to seemingly outdated fashion practices is mirrored in the column's surrounding magazine articles that showcase fashion trends inspired by the 1830s and Louis XV fashions: An article explains that the "Woman Who Knows" wears the "1830 frock" with matching corset for the "coming 1830 modes" ("Above and Below" 1915: 31), while a report on the Paris autumn openings, the official presentation of the season's new designs to a select audience, declares that "the general verdict is that the Louis XV epoch will dominate" ("Autumn Fashions" 1915: 48–49). As also "The Buyer" concedes, the mid-1910s fashions were full of contradictions, with both the 1830s *and* the long, slim princess-style being in fashion (1915: 108). Elizabeth Wilson explains this odd trend for medieval, Pre-Raphaelite, or eighteenth-century style evening dresses in the early 1900s with the heightened "self-consciousness" in modern life, which made it "difficult for men and women ever to feel fully at ease in their social roles" so that "'dressing up' [in Victorian-style dress, own addition] offered a playful way to exorcize some of this unease" (2003: 210). Looking at their extravagant dress, it therefore seems as if the modern-day Brinkley Girls themselves are still up in grandmother's attic, immersed in a "Victorian love of dressing up" (210).¹²⁴ And yet, Wilson's hint at turn-of-the-century feelings of social unease casts at least a hint of doubt to this superficially playful image of dress-up.

Brinkley's elaborate drawing style that creates 'volume' and movement, next to her insertion of an affective humorous dimension and a historical perspective, help to expand an otherwise 'narrow' textual description of a rather restrictive piece of female dress on the levels of style, affect, and perspective. What these

¹²⁴ Creating the impression of historical continuity and the 'timelessness' of dress presented a clever marketing trick for corset manufacturers at a time of constant fashion change: As Westkaemper writes: "[M]anufacturers of these products [corsets and high-heeled shoes, own addition] used historical imagery to promise that their brands' mix of comfort and innovation made them compatible with timeless ideals of beauty and with the latest 1920s styles" (2017: 21).

spatial, temporal, and affective dimensions at work in Brinkley’s illustration also demonstrate, however, is that female dress is always flexible and full of fuzzy transitions that allow for playful borrowings and inspiration throughout history. The fluctuations and comebacks in fashion during the mid-1910s, presented across the pages of this early compendium of fashion history, echoed the same ambiguities that also characterized the lives of young women in this era.

The corset itself – its sociological implications, controversies, and playful leaps along the timeline – calls for a more nuanced, less streamlined, perspective on fashion history and women’s emancipation. It would be a mistake to read the degree and loosening of corsets’ rigidity strictly parallel with women’s ‘loosening’ social restrictions, thus juxtaposing the spatial dimension of dress with its sociological dimension (see Thieme 1988: 27): When the notorious couturier Poiret lowered and “loosened the constricted waist” (Presley 1998: 311), he did so only to introduce the equally constricting ‘hobble skirt’ (312). In another example, Ann Beth Presley explains how the era’s contradictions in dress forms were symptomatic of the inconsistencies and pluralism within the history of women’s emancipation and social change: By 1910, women could wear light and airy lingerie dresses that granted them new freedom and mobility, while underneath, the same rigid S-shaped corset ensured that shapes (and perhaps behaviors) did not become too loose (1998: 308–310, 312). Even ‘going corsetless’ was, initially, a mere “look,” introduced with Poiret’s 1908 dresses, and it would take until the 1920s for this marginal and situational phenomenon to “cause outright alarm” (Fields 1999: 359–360, 362).

Also, the corset was never emblematic of young women’s restricted social movement, where going ‘corsetless’ would signify women’s social liberation (see E. Wilson 2003: 47). As part of a larger scholarly “corset controversy” (Entwistle 2000: 195), dress historians have viewed the corset either as an “instrument of physical oppression and sexual objectification” or “as a garment asserting sexual power” (195; see also Roberts 1977; Veblen 2007: 114; Kunzle 1982). What Warwick’s column does not even mention: As early as the Victorian era, women used corsets for their sexual emancipation. Moreover, for women who did not conform to the ‘prescribed’ bodily ideal, the corset, coming in a variety of shapes and sizes, was a liberating and enabling tool precisely because it allowed them to wear dresses with almost any body shape (Entwistle 2000: 20–21). As Warwick writes, the “*corsetière’s* art” would die out if “we could all be as ‘daughters of the Gods, divinely tall and most divinely fair’” – for her, corsets are simply a means to “reinforce nature” (Warwick and Brinkley 1915d: 31, quotation marks and italics in orig.).

Accentuating fashion’s openness to interpretation, polyvalence, heterogeneity, and, particularly, its facilitating role, the corset allowed women to embody and to fashion themselves in new roles, new looks, and new shapes. Brinkley’s fashionable

illustrations thus do not necessarily pinpoint an outright alternative to the guidelines for feminine behavior, movement, and looks as drafted (and instructed) by Colby and Warwick. Rather, she draws up a large canvas that stretches across the entire field of possibilities as she makes offers to her reader-viewers, by inviting and triggering fantasies, or she reveals and taps into new female role dimensions that lie beyond those written onto the pages of these magazine columns.

3.7 Girl Business: The Syndication of Nell Brinkley's Art, or: How the Omaha Girl Came to See the World

Unlike the other illustrators featured in this book, Nell Brinkley represents a rather rare example of a cartoonist who worked primarily for the newspaper medium. Soon, however, Brinkley became so successful that her images were being used in the major print media of her time to strategically appeal to and retain female readerships in a wide variety of formats, publication media, and even demographic groups.¹²⁵ A veritable 'Brinkley-craze' that spanned three decades and provided Brinkley-branded merchandising further built upon and manifested these industrial mechanisms and the artist's remarkable financial success.¹²⁶ Beyond attesting to the artist's immense popularity with a young female reader- and viewership, the wide use of her art perhaps says even more about the mediality of newspapers and magazines, their underlying industrial and financially driven publishing mechanisms, as well as their commercial and communicative affordances for an artist like Brinkley. This final subsection will explore how Brinkley's art was employed to target demographically different audiences in different media formats and, more importantly, how different notions or expectations of femininity came into play in the process.

The Brinkley Girls were as much a product of the media as was their representation or, better, their *remediation* of femininity in the newspapers and magazines. Just as Brinkley's Girls were 'sold' to the female readership via a variety of serialized, industrialized (rather than manufactured), off-the-peg Brinkley-branded fash-

¹²⁵ The trade press confirmed that also Bloomingdale's "Nell Brinkley Day" "[took] advantage of a popular fad" by using "posters" and "original Nell Brinkley drawings, furnished by the *New York Evening Journal*" to promote the event – and "made a distinct hit" despite the "dullness of August" (Purdy 1908: 37).

¹²⁶ Brinkley's merchandise included everything from Brinkley hats, hair wavers, bathing caps ("Riker Drug Stores" 1911: 8), and bows ("Bloomingdale's" 1908: 7), to tailored costumes, petticoats, and suits ("Kelly" 1908: 8), as well as patterns for quilting ("Quilting" 1934: 18) or stitching on "Baby's Things" ("Charming Nell Brinkley Baby Heads" 1933: 8).

ion and beauty items that obeyed specific temporal and seasonal cycles, so too did Brinkley’s editorial art itself follow cyclical temporal structures and industrial mechanisms for its media- and nationwide serial dissemination through the various publications of the entire Hearst Corporation, to which Brinkley delivered most of her work. After all, the most cost-efficient way for media mogul William Randolph Hearst to profit from the Brinkley-mania was to syndicate Brinkley’s art across the various media, formats, and genres of his publications¹²⁷ – from magazines, like *Harper’s Bazar*, *Cosmopolitan*, or *Good Housekeeping*, to newspapers, like the *New York Evening Journal*, the *San Francisco Call*, or the *American Weekly*, Hearst’s Sunday newspaper supplement.

This widespread syndication of her art was common for a sought-after cartoon artist like Brinkley. According to Robbins, the mid-1910s were extremely successful, but also demanding for Brinkley as she churned out “a page a day for the Hearst newspapers,” all while providing occasional advertising art, sheet music covers, and the monthly drawings for *Harper’s Bazar* (2001: 51). Brinkley was apparently so busy creating artworks for this industrialized and highly commercialized perpetuation mechanism, that, occasionally (and this was not uncommon, either) single artworks were repurposed, as the example below demonstrates. I argue that the following example of Brinkley’s repurposed artwork is a case in point for how the same image, printed in different publications, with their own distinct media formats and implied readerships, could express and harness differing messages and ideas of femininity, appealing to diverse readership demographics.

In the *Bazar’s* column on “The Art of Staying at Home,” the Countess despises “nomadic tendencies” and applies her idea of ‘less is more’ to convince the “fashionable woman of to-day” to entertain her guests at her private home rather than in the hotel garden (Warwick and Brinkley 1915a: 2, 27, 80, Figure 3.5). She claims that excessive dining and entertaining in public places harms the “tranquility” and beauty of the hostess (27). For the Countess, not only bodily poses can be in and out of fashion, but also places: “Now of late, homes have gone out of fashion,” she laments and continues that, as “[g]reat houses are more often closed than open, great hostesses are to be seen entertaining in the restaurant of the hour, though their town house is not half a mile away” (27). While reminiscing about her own past on English country estates, she calls for a return to simplicity and orders the hectic “fashionable woman of to-day” out of the city and back into the home.

¹²⁷ According to Martha H. Kennedy, “[s]yndicates sold writing and artwork, such as comics, to newspapers and other media, and by spreading the cost of expensive features among as many corporate subscribers as possible, numerous publications nationwide could afford to carry a wide selection of strips” (2018: 28).



From the world to the "little world within a world."

Drawing by Nell Brinkley

The Art of Staying at Home

By THE COUNTESS OF WARWICK

At first sight there is little association between beauty culture and staying at home, but I hope I shall be able to prove a case within the limits of a single paper. My earliest recollections cling round Easton Lodge, near Dunmow in Essex, from which beautiful example of an old English home this article is written. As my recollections grow they rest awhile in London and then turn with keen pleasure to Warwick Castle, and then to town again, but they never stay for long away from Easton. In Warwick, as in town, one must be *en videtur* all the time, but at Easton where one knows every yard of the gardens, every corner of the Park and every old cottage in every village on the estate, there is the real sense of home, and no human being can have more homes than one. You may have half a dozen residences, but you can have only one home.

Now of late, homes have gone out of fashion. Great houses are more often closed than open, great hostesses are to be seen entertaining in the restaurant of the hour, though their town house is not half a mile away. In the country a very similar condition obtains, a week end is regarded as the

Harper's Bazar, April, 1915

The nomadic life of the fashionable woman of to-day and the custom of entertaining in public restaurants spell the doom of "Home." The author gives charming glimpses of a saner, healthier mode of living and entertaining.

limit of a stay. The motor car has intensified life, trebled the pace and doubled the accomplishment, but incidentally, it has robbed women of what they could not afford to give up, the peace, the tranquillity, and the dignity of home life. The spirit of restlessness has invaded our home life with such success that the hostess, as the late Victorian and the Edwardian eras knew her, will shortly be as extinct as the dodo. Some of my friends blame Lloyd George and say they can no longer afford to keep up the old-time establishments, but I don't think their expenditure is really much less than it used to be. They spend their money in a different fashion, that is all.

22

But how does the question of the mode of life affect beauty, you may ask, and the answer is simple enough if you remember that tranquillity is one of the conditions that is essential if we are to look at our best. I will go even farther than this, I will say that every hostess borrows from her surroundings and reflects them. If you are dispensing hospitality in your own home with your own people around you, you will, if you have the essential qualities of a hostess, reflect the beauty and tradition of that home, the whole character of the place. The service is a reflection of your knowledge and forethought, and the comfort of your guests is a tribute to your grasp of the vital problems of entertainment. My own experience, whether at Easton, or Warwick, or St. James's Square, has always been that when I have been receiving friends at home, both they and I have given of our best. It has been my good fortune to entertain all sorts and conditions of men and women from Emperors and Kings through all grades of society, and the greatest of them have resolved themselves into men and women of parts, who are moving or directing the world, and are not in any way reluctant to lay aside for the time all the

(Continued on page 80)

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Figure 3.5: Warwick and Brinkley, 1915a. "The Art of Staying at Home." Given the countless new possibilities for the "fashionable woman of to-day" to spend her time in the city, the Countess of Warwick celebrates the "art of staying at home." Courtesy of *HathiTrust* via University of Michigan.

Brinkley’s drawing, on the other hand, showcases a young woman who could not embody the word ‘consumption’ any better: Dressed and accessorized to the nines (with an evening gown that seems to anticipate the upcoming flapper era), and standing at a grand house’s gate, she seems ready to bring the glamor “from the world to the ‘little world within a world’” as the caption reads. This is not quite the decelerated lifestyle, the moderation, and tranquility to cultivate beauty that the Countess had called for, but the typical Brinkleyesque expression of beauty as wasteful excess.

The identical drawing also appeared in the same month under the title “A World Within a World” in the *Omaha (Daily) Bee* on April 13, 1915, on “The Bee’s Home Magazine Page,” a page in the daily newspaper that, judging from its articles, was reserved for a female audience, though not quite the same type of woman targeted by the *Bazar*, as we shall see (Figure 3.6). “Republished by [s]pecial [a]rrangement with Harper’s Bazar” (and the Hearst syndicate), her drawing is surrounded by the texts of several columns: an agony-aunt column, where Beatrice Fairfax gives “Advice to Lovelorn”; another column written by Hearst’s famous journalist Dorothy Dix, who, quite progressively, asks why there are no ‘finishing schools’ for boys; as well as two critical columns that reprimand “[t]he [s]moking [w]oman” or ask “Who Pays Mother?” – addressing mothers’ financial hardships and suggesting ways out. Unless the reader of the Home Magazine Page tries to link Brinkley’s drawing of the decadent partygoer to a letter in the left-hand corner, sent to Miss Fairfax by a certain “H. S.,” who laments her strict parents who won’t allow her to go to parties, the purpose of Brinkley’s drawing in this context is not clear and appears contrived.

The publication formats, their agendas, and respective implied audiences, as well as their demographics of class, are decisive here: The *Omaha (Daily) Bee* was a popular regional Nebraska newspaper that, regardless of its Republican leaning, “frequently took anti-corporation and pro-labor positions” (Walter n.d.). It published mostly local and state-wide, but also national news before Hearst acquired it in 1928. Based on its topics (the war in Europe, the local wheat crop, and news of rail strikes), it can be surmised that the target readership of the “Home Magazine Page” was comprised of the wives and daughters of the main subscribers (most likely local farmers or other Nebraskan workers) – and thus represented a remarkably different readership than the *Bazar*’s elitist ‘*Dame qui sait*.’ And yet, the newspaper seemed to recognize what also women in the rural Midwest (want) to know: next to movie synopses and health advice, the “Home Magazine Page” frequently “republished by special arrangement” contents of *Harper’s Bazar* and thereby brought *le dernier cri* from the “Paris Spring Openings” to Nebraska (“Paris Spring Openings” 1915: 9).

THE BEE, OMAHA, TUESDAY, APRIL 14, 1915

The Bee's Home Magazine Page

Who Pays Mother?

By ELLA WHEELER WILSON

Mothers work in their own homes. They do not expect that their children will be able to do for them what they do for them. They do not expect that their children will be able to do for them what they do for them. They do not expect that their children will be able to do for them what they do for them.



A World Within a World :: By Nell Brinkley



The Smoking Woman

By ELLA WHEELER WILSON

The woman who smokes is a woman who is not a woman. She is a woman who is not a woman. She is a woman who is not a woman. She is a woman who is not a woman. She is a woman who is not a woman.

Read It Here—See It at the Movies.

Runaway June
by George H. Brown and John S. Brown

For a complete description of this picture... Runaway June... George H. Brown and John S. Brown.

Manners Should Be Taught

By ELLA WHEELER WILSON

Manners should be taught. Manners should be taught. Manners should be taught. Manners should be taught. Manners should be taught.



It is not only manners that should be taught... Manners should be taught. Manners should be taught. Manners should be taught.

FOR BENEVOLENT AFFECTION
In the City of Poverty

CHAPTER I
In the City of Poverty... For benevolent affection... In the City of Poverty.

Advice to Lovelorn

By ELLA WHEELER WILSON

Advice to Lovelorn. Advice to Lovelorn. Advice to Lovelorn. Advice to Lovelorn. Advice to Lovelorn.

Not Sold By Weight

When you buy Shredded Wheat you are paying something for the patented process by which the whole wheat is made digestible in the human stomach. We are not selling raw wheat. It is what you digest, not what you eat, that builds muscle, bone and brain.

Shredded Wheat

is the whole wheat made digestible by steam-cooking, shredding and baking. The filmy, porous shreds are quickly permeated by the digestive juices, enabling the body to take up every particle of nutriment stored in the whole wheat grain. Don't be misled by net weight regulations or comparisons of raw, indigestible foods with Shredded Wheat.

Two Shredded Wheat biscuits heated in the oven to restore crispness, served with hot milk or cream, make a complete, nourishing meal at a total cost of five or six cents. Also delicious with fruit. **FRUIT IT IS!** The Shredded Wheat makes extra as a treat with butter or soft cheese, or as a substitute for white flour bread or crackers.

Made only by The Shredded Wheat Company, Niagara Falls, N. Y.



Figure 3.6: Brinkley, 1915. "A World Within a World." The same illustration was reprinted on the "Home Magazine Page" of the Omaha Bee. Courtesy of the Nebraska Digital Newspaper Project.

Brinkley’s drawing was repurposed here for a different publication format and context that spoke to an entirely different socioeconomic readership – one that looked for “a great sale of a special purchase” (“Brandeis Stores” 1915: 8), “most moderately priced” shirtwaists (“Thompson, Belden & Co.” 1915: 2), and other dress bargains, instead of the personal shopping services offered by the *Bazar* (“Bouquets!” 1915: 89). Further noteworthy, Warwick’s and Colby’s reductive discourses of moderation and ‘less (consumption) is more’ are obviously etiquette messages that can only speak to an upper-middle or upper-class audience who would, theoretically, have the means for a ‘more’ in the first place. Brinkley’s drawings of excess remind us of who the Countess is advising here: the daughters and young women of an upper-middle to upper-class elite who had the means to dine out regularly. The drawings’ respective titles reflect this difference in the implied target readership’s class: In the *Bazar*, “Staying at Home” is presented as a fashion (or, for that matter, as something that has “gone out of fashion”), let alone as an intricate “art” (my emphasis) that appears to be difficult to master for the “fashionable woman of to-day” (Warwick and Brinkley 1915a: 27).¹²⁸ Surrounded by the serialized novel “Eltham House” and an illustrated report on “Blenheim Palace,” ‘home’ certainly refers to a grand place. The female target audience of the *Omaha (Daily) Bee*’s “Home Magazine Page,” on the other hand, is confronted with imagined ‘worlds’ (including the concomitant dresses, parties, and environs) that she can only dream herself into – maybe with the help of films she sees in the movie theater (Brinkley 1915: 9). Obviously, the joys of ‘staying at home’ would have sounded like farce to the lower- or lower-middle-class rural reader, when ‘staying at home’ was either an everyday given or meant tedious farm work for a Nebraska girl at the time.¹²⁹

The repurposing of Brinkley’s drawing is consequently a case in point for how an image, printed without an accompanying text, in a different publication context that follows a different agenda and speaks to another readership, suddenly obtains an entirely different connotation and contextual meaning, as well as function. Without Warwick’s plea for hosting at home, the drawing appears to

¹²⁸ The observation that ‘staying at home’ is suddenly *à la mode* or ‘fashionable’ could also be made during the Covid-19 lockdown in the spring of 2020. Fashion brands all over social media encouraged their followers to use hashtags like #stayathome (often extended by the brand name) when they upload photos of how they wear the respective brands’ fashion at home. Again, staying at home appeared to be an intricately ‘luxurious’ endeavor that depended not only on socioeconomic class and employment sector, but also, in the case of online shopping and almost Veblenesque ‘conspicuous consumption,’ on the financial means.

¹²⁹ See Peiss (2011) on how, for many working girls in the big cities, who lived in windowless one-room tenement apartments, public places, like fairs or the big urban amusement parks, provided the only rare treat when they had time off from work.

have a mere decorative function, added to a local Nebraska newspaper's magazine page that young women (and their mothers) can read on a Sunday afternoon after church and that emulated the style and aura of the big fashion magazines. After all, *nomen est omen*, and as the page's headline intimates, the "Home Magazine Page" placed its target reader in the homely confines of the Midwest (rural) domestic sphere.

Even more, although the *Omaha Daily Bee* would not be acquired by Hearst until 1928, the fact that Brinkley's image was syndicated through the Hearst Corporation to appear in the *Omaha Daily Bee's* Magazine Page provides a curious glimpse at how the Hearst Corporation and the syndicate's various subscribers presented different ideas of femininity to their diverse implied readerships across different publication formats. The following analysis of visual devices in one of Nell Brinkley's newspaper cartoons will illustrate this point.

Published throughout the International News Service¹³⁰ on September 20, 1913, in the "Magazine and Fiction Pages" of the *San Francisco Call* (acquired by Hearst in the same year), the cartoon "A Business Girl" appeared at a time when the notion of young working women was in transition and women increasingly took on jobs in the public sphere, such as administrative positions in offices (Figure 3.7). In "A Business Girl," Brinkley uses visual stylistic devices of substitution, comparison, and juxtaposition to convey a complex meaning of business girls alongside the continuum of class, while she also encourages the reader-viewer's critical contemplation on women's (changing) roles¹³¹ as employees and participants in the public sphere.

The title itself is provoking and ironic. The reference to a single persona ("a," "girl") flouts the visual representation of three girls in the panels and leaves the reader-viewer with questions of allocation: Who does the title refer to? What is the business here: serving in a private household or working in an office?

As the accompanying text reveals, Brinkley addresses this cartoon to two fan mails she received: one "rapped out on the typewriter at 8:30 a. m." by a "brainy girl," the other "scrawled in bed on a silken knee at 10:30 a. m., with her chocolate

130 The International News Service (INS) was Hearst's own news agency that wired news articles, but also Brinkley's artwork, across his own network and to various other subscribing magazines and newspapers. Founded in 1909, the INS was merged with its competitor United Press (UP) in 1958 to form United Press International (UPI) that is still active today (Liebenson 2003).

131 On readers' contemplation of Brinkley's visual art, see also the study by Heather Brook Adams. Adams states that "visually complex rhetorical techniques (strategic juxtaposition, visual chiasmus, inversion, and motif)" in Brinkley's art provide a space, and, as I would add, time, "for audience contemplation" instead of "didacticism" (2014: 90, 92) by "deliver[ing] balance and elegance" which visually "appeal[ed] to audiences' sense of fairness and beauty" (91). This moment of contemplation, Adams argues further, helps in "challenging fixed notions of womanhood and femininity" (102).



Figure 3.7: Brinkley, 1913. “A Business Girl.” The early twentieth century created new job opportunities for young women. Nell Brinkley made it clear that ‘business girls’ can be found anywhere. Courtesy of the California Digital Newspaper Collection, Center for Bibliographic Studies and Research, University of California, Riverside.

tray just finished beside her,” written by an “easeful, lazy, charming, luxury lapped girl” (Brinkley 1913: 18). Brinkley employs the word field of warfare and masculine traits to describe the working girl’s daily routine and obviously reads the city as a public-sphere battlefield on which young women must compete “shoulder to shoulder with the men” to prove themselves as part of a growing *workforce* out in the public (“clean air”), where a “valiant army of girls” fights a “battle.” Whereas the business girl’s letter is “severe, businesslike,” the leisure girl’s letter indicates an atmosphere of lightness and ease, manifested in words like “odorously,” “delicate,” “thin,” “tulle,” “breathing,” and, as Brinkley aptly remarks, appears thus “awfully feminine.”

The textual narrative’s juxtaposition of impracticality with practicality, evident in comparisons of “awfully feminine [. . .] tulle” with the working girl’s “trim, black and white, sane and cleanly” appearance, is also reflected in the visual narrative and stylistic devices of substitution and contrastive juxtaposition. In a split frame divided by a central panel border, Brinkley presents two scenes that picture her thoughts on the fan mail above. The left scene shows an ostensibly rich girl who leans back comfortably while a maid serves her chocolate. The clothes mark the class positions quite clearly: The servant girl’s plain and conservative black dress with apron recedes into the background to make space for the expansive, lavishly layered, and frilled dress of the rich girl. The scene on the right presents only one girl: Both the furniture as well as the fact that she seems to busy herself with a phone call suggest an office context. She wears business attire, yet with Brinkley’s typical focus on beauty, fashion, and a visually appealing body shape beneath the plain long black skirt – or are they trousers?

Not only the girls’ clothing, but also their surroundings contrast decorous femininity with clean and (masculine-connoted) simplicity: Brinkley substitutes the left panel’s dominant flower basket and round or organic shapes, which could also stem from a nineteenth-century pastoral scene, with clean and modern shapes, focusing on rectangular lines of drawers and cabinets in the right panel. The only round shape here is the girl’s body as well as the fan that, as an electric device, again suggests modern technological progress. Like Brinkley’s illustration of the corset article above, on the left split-panel, voluminous shapes are overflowing, running over the panel boundary, whereas on the right, shapes are neat, trim, streamlined, and kept within the box. Further, the rich girl’s body posture and up-and-backwards glance calls to mind a classical statuesque pose, focusing on both beauty and elegant passivity, whereas the right-hand-side girl’s inclined body posture denotes activity and attentiveness – note how she eagerly listens to the directions she receives on the phone.

All contrasts in imaginations of mid-1910s feminine roles aside, Brinkley’s textual description of both girls and their daily routines, however, hints at a compar-

ison of two equals: in her typical exclamatory style, she writes: “The busy feet in the pumps and the lazy ones in the mules are just alike – the busy ones just as pink and white and kissable as ever the others are!” As her panel concludes, even across class differences, modern girls desire the same: a job. In their fan mail, they solicit Brinkley to depict both the “plain business girl” who already has a job and the “fussy creature who finds life a thing of rosy down” and thus secretly yearns for “A JOB” too. The capitalization implies the element of surprise within the narrative: Even girls who do not need to work to make ends meet want to do so to escape the private-sphere boredom associated with dated, Victorian-era role concepts.

The textual narrative then also triggers a provocative mode of text and image consumption that was only possible in the text-image combination panels that Nell Brinkley created for newspapers: Instead of reading both panels as a juxtaposition of two scenes that occur simultaneously in different places of the city, the fan mail suggests a chronological or even consequential reading. Consumed in chronological order, the left and the right panel could represent the emancipation of a girl of leisure who took up employment to escape her private-sphere boundaries and who now works at an office.¹³² Without the narrative, one could also assume that the servant girl emancipated herself and opted for a new occupation in the public-sphere office – a place that was increasingly deemed appropriate for young, middle-class women as it offered them “the chance to earn income without violating the domestic code” (Kessler-Harris 1981: 96).¹³³ Indeed, the servant girl and the business girl look quite alike. I also suggest a third reading: Read as a temporal development, the panels could compare a nineteenth-century ‘business’ girl to a modern-day business girl. The implied suggestion that girls have always worked does away with the idea of the working girl as a novel phenomenon and, at the same time, elevates the ‘lowly’ servant girl’s ‘business’ to the same level of respectful appreciation as the clerk’s business. As she does not directly allocate the caption to either of the two panels, Brinkley encourages the reader-viewer to recognize both kinds of work as ‘business’ and as potentially emancipatory positions for young women. The visual-textual arrangement of Brinkley’s

132 Women’s advancement into office jobs was a double-edged sword: Female workers were sought after, but mainly because “they could be hired for less” (Kessler-Harris 1981: 140) or because of their alleged feminine personality or good looks. Also, while women’s percentage of the professional workforce “grew quickly [from 35 percent in 1900 to 45 percent in 1930], their range of occupations did not” (Scanlon 2000: 202), focusing mainly on “nursing, teaching, and social work” (211).

133 Note that Brinkley portrayed safe and clean white-collar office jobs and not women’s drudging factory work.

split-panel cartoon thereby not only recognizes that girls have always worked, even before they seemingly ‘rushed’ with warlike fanfares into offices. Her juxtaposition and visual language, as well as accompanying narrative, in a strongly feminist move, also help to establish the phenomenon of the wage-working girl as common.

Brinkley’s depiction of women’s advancement into offices as a natural transition and consequence¹³⁴ then downplays negative media representations of women’s public-sphere participation as a dangerous ‘threat.’ This becomes evident in Brinkley’s respectful tone, which instead demands recognition of working girls’ daily struggles, as well as in the textual emphasis on harmless visual appeal – after all, both girls’ beautiful feet still “are just as pink and white and kissable,” whether they have rested passively in the private-sphere home or have moved steadily across public-sphere office floors. This reassurance that both girls are strikingly similar in their shared desire to work and similarly attractive and “kissable” underlines how Brinkley employed a pleasing visual language to balance out her careful (textual) political appeals. Further, her cartoon implies that female emancipation cannot work if it neglects the appreciation of the “plain business girl” who, in fact, appears in *both* panels.

As such, “A Business Girl,” with its visual language of juxtaposition and (reflective) comparison, encapsulates a larger observation in a single image. The juxtaposition of a ‘girl of leisure’ with a hard-working ‘business girl’ reflects on a smaller scale what Brinkley’s oeuvre, across different publication formats and target readerships, represents at large: Nell Brinkley’s fondness for the experience of working girls is reflected in her drawings for Hearst’s newspapers, in which she let “rich girls usually come out as losers” (Robbins 2001: 3). Narrating and visualizing stories that were close to the working girl’s experience, Brinkley established herself as a household name among the middle- and working-class readerships of Hearst’s yellow-press newspapers. For her contributions to Hearst’s fashion and society-focused *Harper’s Bazar*, on the other hand, Brinkley brought to bear her entire repertoire of frilled dresses, flowing chiffon, feather boas, and tiaras – ostensibly inspired by historical imagination or fairytales and too impractical to wear for work.¹³⁵ Spelling the words ‘excess’ and ‘consumption’ with a meticulous attention to beauty and detail, Brinkley’s tableau-like drawings for *Harper’s Bazar* were meant to provide the daughters of the more moneyed classes with a lavish

134 The idea that women’s advancement into public-sphere workplaces “had already redefined [their] sphere” so that “the ballot would not alter social divisions” of public and private sphere was a popular strategy used by suffrage cartoonists to assuage critics (Sheppard 1994: 151).

135 See Veblen, for whom women’s dress is also a signifier of class, “demonstrating the wearer’s abstinence from productive employment” (2007: 113).

‘lure’ to grasp their attention as they leaf through the pages of their (mother’s) magazine, while perhaps idly reclining in their town house’s garden, just as the “easeful, lazy, charming, luxury lapped girl” in the cartoon.

The implied viewership’s class, realities, and lifestyle (and, potentially, also life interests) were then curiously reflected and replicated by the girls that these reader-viewers encountered in Brinkley’s drawings. Just like the *Bazar’s* female upper- or upper-middle-class target readership, Brinkley’s Girls in her *Bazar* drawings do not need narrow, streamlined, practical clothes, since the magazine – according to the columns’ topics – imagines its audience to engage mostly in leisurely activities (dancing, drinking, tanning under the sun), dwell in outdoor settings of scale (ostentatious houses, grand staircases, decorous balconies), and overall enjoy a lifestyle of excessive consumption (of fashion, jewelry, make-up) – behavior that was simultaneously reprimanded by Warwick and Colby in the columns’ textual narratives.

What also becomes apparent, Brinkley’s drawings for “the inventor of yellow journalism” (Robbins 2001: 3) and his sensationalist, yellow-journalism newspapers, targeting a middle- and working-class audience, allowed for a more daringly political openness in female role imaginations than her work, produced during the same years, for Hearst’s elitist society magazine *Harper’s Bazar*: On the tabloid newspapers’ special ‘Magazine Pages’ or, later, colorful covers of Sunday supplements, which were read on the only off-day for a working (female) reader, Brinkley embraced topoi of (working) women’s modern life experiences: Her tableaux or paneled serials in the newspapers that celebrated office girls,¹³⁶ physically active girls who splash in the waves, or heroic girls who go to war and rescue their loved one, always explicitly linked physical activity to young women’s emancipation and stretched the era’s acceptable gender boundaries by often placing girls into traditionally male roles and spaces.¹³⁷

Not to be deceived by her lush visual narrative, Brinkley’s own textual prose was, indeed, very political: Contrasted with Warwick’s and Colby’s instructions for

136 See Brinkley’s cartoon “Worship and Treachery” (1914: 8) for another example of her supportive renditions of office girls.

137 In her fully fledged color serial for Hearst’s newspapers during World War I, Brinkley illustrates *and* narrates the adventures of a brave female character, Golden Eyes, who follows the love of her life, Bill, to the Great War in Europe. As early as 1910, she drew an “[a]eroplane [g]irl” who “discards her frilly skirts” and is overall “very businesslike and prefers the humming music of her motors” (Brinkley 1910: 9). In several panels titled “The Day of the Girl” that appeared between 1915 and 1921, Brinkley presented hockey-playing girls who wear trousers and bobbed hair, or a so-called ‘campfire girl’ who “tramps the pine woods and the hill in knickerbockers and middy-shirt; her waist free of corseting and her limbs of skirts; her pack on her shoulder; and never missing a man!” (Brinkley 1916: 2).

young women's behaviors and looks, Brinkley's (self-authored) textual narratives to some of her serials and cartoons adopted a far more open-minded and political outlook. Once she had left behind her initial textually expressed exclamations of "Ah, di mi" in her captions (Robbins 2001: 10) and superlative-sprinkled, cutesy fashion prose, her texts voiced (proto-)feminist appeals, which she, in an almost strategic manner, attenuated with her typically lush and attractive visual 'feminine appeal.'

Why Brinkley's drawings for newspaper 'Magazine Pages' and similar sites that visually addressed politically important issues such as women's wage labor or housing problems during World War I differed from her less political depictions of womanhood in *Harper's Bazar* – even though they were drawn by the same artist and distributed on the same network – is, of course, a matter of speculation. And yet, this difference in topoi owes to more than just different readership demographics. While certainly the magazine agenda and its implied readership matter here, I argue that particularly the media format (newspaper vs. magazine), the *Bazar's* marketing, and its commercial publishing considerations play into these different visual presentations of femininity in Nell Brinkley's art across her various publication platforms.

First, just like their publication format, Brinkley's newspaper drawings were strikingly more news-focused and addressed current (proto-)feminist issues. In her 1918 cartoon "Uncle Sam's Girl Shower," she appeals to the representative of the U.S.-American government to provide decent housing for young, unmarried women who flocked into Washington, D.C. to aid the war effort and fill the positions left by enlistees (Robbins 2001: 71). Brinkley must have known what she was talking about: She personally conducted interviews with "young ladies who had left their homes to become defense workers" in Washington, D.C. ("Nell Brinkley" 2017).

Second, the present case study is a case in point for how Brinkley's fashion-conscious and free-spirited illustrations helped to stylize and thereby differentiate the *Bazar* as smart and aesthetic. Brinkley's delicately drawn women not only seemed to blend with the surrounding elegantly illustrated fashion plates in *Harper's Bazar*, but also provided an easily recognizable visual anchor in the 100 or so pages, thereby visually enhancing a (still) black-and-white publication that, priding itself on its outstanding aesthetics, promised its readership "all the infinite resources of brush, pencil and camera [that] make the *Bazar* a veritable magazine de luxe [sic]" ("For the Woman of Individuality" 1913: 194). Also, within a magazine that depended on steady advertising revenue to cover its high production costs, Brinkley's beautiful and expressive young women primarily served as a visual 'lure' strategically deployed by the Hearst Corporation to secure a reliably returning readership and income via subscription rates. Once the reader

was absorbed by the image and began to read the attached article, she was subsequently compelled to read the article’s continuation in the magazine’s rear section and thereby directed her attention to the surrounding advertisements as well. Brinkley’s commercial, fashion-focused presentation of femininity finds its equal in the *Bazar* – or, in other words: Any overtly political presentations of femininity would have been misplaced in this magazine.

This comparison of Brinkley’s imaginations of femininity across various publication formats and target readerships reveals that her drawings of young fashionable women for the *Bazar* fulfill a decorative, and yet strikingly commercial, function to Warwick and Colby’s instructive columns, while simultaneously expanding the latter’s narrow textual narrative. In the newspapers’ magazine pages and Sunday supplements, Brinkley’s drawings appear equally aesthetic and attractive, while using this appealing visual narrative of feminine appeal to veil political topics and thereby address and represent the needs of working girls – the presumed target group of her newspaper cartoons.

3.8 Conclusion: Looks, Types, and “Frightful Looking Things”

The complex text-image interplay in the present *Harper’s Bazar* columns demonstrates that historical imaginations of young femininity in the fashion magazine were anything but fixed, but could be guided and misguided, explored, redefined, or discarded altogether. In drawing the lines of young women’s lives *beyond* the boundaries that the Countess of Warwick and Gertrude K. Colby delimit so clearly, Nell Brinkley’s visual narratives of self-fashioning and individualization test the strikingly emancipatory middle-ground in these two columns.

The far-reaching impact of the artist’s imaginations of young women becomes apparent in young women’s real-life and creative self-definitions – sometimes to the point that Brinkley’s young female audience adopted (in part or in whole) the Brinkley Girls’ distinctive look. As they take place in the commercial realm of a fashion magazine, the ideas of self-fashioning and role-performing through looks and accessories, however, always suggest the adoption and adherence to the magazine’s commercial messages for turn-of-the-century womanhood, rather than a radical break with the latter. What cautions or taints Brinkley’s visual message of progressive and liberated ideas of young womanhood is that her imaginations of white female bodies, albeit emphasizing beauty all over, referred to a rather narrow idea of beauty: There is no fat Brinkley Girl. Also, while she occasionally drew women of other races or cultures, by singling out (and exoticizing) certain facial features, dress, or skin color, she always did so under the common denominator of heteronormative beauty (Robbins 2001: 42–43).

What made it easy for young women to recognize and adopt ‘the Brinkley Girl look’ was that Brinkley’s imaginations of women were this similar in appearance – so much that the artist established a ‘type’ that was subsumed under her name. The Golden Age of Illustration and the age of mass magazines was also the time of the ‘Girl’ – a young and pretty female type named after her creator (Gibson-, Fisher-, Christy-, Brinkley-, or Allender Girl) and who immediately evoked certain familiar qualities. The Brinkley Girl, then, was just one of many commercialized and easily recognizable iconographies or ‘types’ of women in the mainstream press (Kitch 2001: 3, 191). With her fixed and recurring set of visual and behavioral features (fashionable dress, curly bob, long eyelashes, caught in some romance or adventure plot, or both), the Brinkley Girl presented an easily marketable (and, hence, copyable) ‘type’ that could be exploited – creatively (as seen in the Perth Amboy incident), commercially (via merchandise articles or advertising), and serially (as evident in Brinkley’s later serials that built upon predictable plot structures), but also politically: In an era that established an impressive number of suffragist print media and that would end with women’s enfranchisement, cartoonists began to rely on their own popular ‘girl types’ to promote women’s suffrage (Kitch 2001: 76).¹³⁸ In addition to the Allender Girl (drawn by Nina E. Allender for the weekly *The Suffragist*), or other female types (e.g. more maternal or sisterly types, as in May Wilson Preston’s character Portia, see the following ch. 4), the Brinkley Girl also called for young women’s political emancipation, albeit always very subtly and by veiling political appeals in layers of curls and alluring looks – which seems almost surprising given Nell Brinkley’s initial disparaging comment on suffragists in a 1912 interview with the *Los Angeles Examiner*: “‘They say some of them are very pretty out here in the West,’ she exclaimed. [. . .]. ‘The same can’t be said of suffragettes back east. There they are tall and some of them are frightful looking things. I can’t say I like suffragettes. Suffrage is all right, but oh, the products’” (“Interview with Nell Brinkley” 1912, qtd. in Robbins 2001: 57–58).¹³⁹

While Nell Brinkley employed arguments for the emancipation and political participation of the working(-class) girl to reward her commitment during World War I (as in “Uncle Sam’s Girl Shower”), media that aimed at an (upper-) middle-class audience used visual and behavioral types that more closely resembled the latter in order to call for women’s suffrage. The following chapter offers a glance at

138 The Brinkley Girl was also copyable in two additional dimensions: Not only was Nell Brinkley’s drawing style imitated by numerous (female and even male) copycat artists (Robbins 2001: 47, 49). Also, her drawings were multiplied and spread transnationally across the borders to Canada, but also as far as Europe and Australia. I thank Christina Meyer for these helpful additions.

139 California women had been granted suffrage only one year earlier, in 1911.

the strategic use of female types in the U.S.-American suffrage movement, focusing on May Wilson Preston’s political cartoons, which, like the present *Harper’s Bazar* columns, targeted an (upper-) middle-class audience, while using visual and textual arguments of a supposedly altruistic, cross-class sisterhood to politically activate this readership demographic.

4 Visualizing Political Womanhood: May Wilson Preston's Drawings for "Portia Politics" in the *Woman Voter*, 1911–12

4.1 The 'Girl of To-Day'

At the very beginning of the twentieth century, the periodical press strived to make sense of, and reproduce in halftone color on paper, the appearance, the attitude, and the aspirations of what it dubbed the 'Girl of To-Day' – a term as modern and intangible as the phenomenon itself. To render phenomena of modern femininity less elusive and make them more accessible and manageable, the contributors to mass magazines and newspapers established certain types. These social types were blatantly generalized visual and textual explanations for young women and their behaviors, purchasing- and life decisions, as well as personal, professional, or political dreams in an era of dissolving social boundaries for women.

Various illustrators, of whom Charles Dana Gibson was arguably the most prolific, sought to capture the experience, or rather the popular imagination, of young womanhood through a handful of distinctive visual types that encapsulated certain character traits and memorable looks, in manageable, neat lines of black ink on paper. Being able to sketch a certain type was part of turn-of-the-century illustrators' skill set. As Lisa Tickner confirms:

Types were evoked in a kind of iconographic shorthand that was indispensable to the comic draughtsman, and in the process their visual symptomatology was developed and confirmed. Individuals were subjected to a more or less affectionate or abusive manipulation of their features in the service of social or political comment. (1988: 169)

One nowadays lesser known but at her time no less popular illustrator was May Wilson Preston (1873–1949).¹⁴⁰

Preston was held in high acclaim by advertisers (Crane's Linen Lawn and Eaton's Highland Linen writing paper), magazine editors, and authors like F. Scott Fitzgerald or Mary Roberts Rinehart, whose stories Preston illustrated for mag-

140 May (Mary) Wilson (Watkins) Preston studied at the Art Students League, Ohio's Oberlin Art School, the New York School of Art, and in Paris (Rubinstein 1982: 166). She was also an impressionist painter who exhibited widely, including at the 1913 Armory Show. She was further associated with the realist style of the Ashcan School, exhibiting her works along with her second husband and Ashcan School painter James Moore Preston and fellow artists of the informal Ashcan School around 1910 or 1911 (McHenry 1983: 335–336; "James Moore Preston" n.d.), although she was no Ashcan artist herself.

azines like the *Saturday Evening Post*, *Harper's Baz(a)ar*, *Scribner's*, *McClure's*, and *Good Housekeeping* (Reed and Reed 1984: 140; see, e.g., Fitzgerald and Preston 1920). What may surprise today's readers is that writers like Fitzgerald, whom we would nowadays call a celebrity, played only a secondary role in these illustrated magazine stories. In the Golden Age of Illustration, illustrators like Preston were the "rock stars" of their day (Eisenstat 1984: 28; Nolan 2017: 58). Benjamin Eisenstat explains this fame and the public's interest in individual artists with the fact that "there was no other mass access to visual communication" apart from illustration (1984: 28). Given illustration's meaning and status in the decades around the turn of the century, featuring the illustrations of certain popular artists was generally considered a hallmark of prestige on the magazine market. This is reflected in how magazines boasted the illustrious names of their illustrators for promotional purposes, either by printing the 'big names' in illustration on their covers or by announcing the contributions of a particular celebrated illustrator in ads for upcoming issues. As even Max Eastman, editor of the socialist *The Masses* that was known for its visuals by famous artists, reveals slightly disillusioned: "[A]ll that the author cares about is that he should have a popular artist's name attached to his story" (1915: 15).

In a market dominated by male illustrators, Preston's star ranked unusually high: She was among the first female associate members and exhibitors in the Society of Illustrators.¹⁴¹ She was also the only woman included by *Vanity Fair* in a list of "the [m]ost [d]istinguished [i]llustrators in the [w]orld" ("Dozen" 1915: 28–29). The concomitant 1915 *Vanity Fair* article praises Preston's professionalism and reputation for faithfulness to the illustrated text: "She studies her MSS. [manuscripts, my addition] carefully and never takes the slightest liberty with it. In consequence she is held in high esteem by a large body of grateful writers" (29). This is not surprising, considering that her dedication "to achieve honesty and authenticity in her work" went so far that she "masqueraded" in her characters' outfits for a day just "in order to experience how it would really feel [like to be in their body, my addition]" (Rubinstein 1982: 166). A 1932 article in the *Saturday Evening Post*, to which Preston was a popular contributor, explains the artist's meticulous work process: "Once she has digested the story and made her careful notes, Mrs. Preston thinks of herself as a stage director coaching a cast of actors. She must cast and act as well as direct" (Stout 1932: 9, qtd. in Nolan 2017: 71).

¹⁴¹ May Wilson Preston was elected associate member on March 29, 1904, according to the Society's official Membership List (see Society of Illustrators 2011; see also J. Grant 1971: 99; Kennedy 2018: 210).

Given her reputation for such exactness and expertise in depicting *the* female character, the *New York Times* approached Preston for an interview in October 1913 – at the height of her career – in hope for some insight and help with deciphering “that delightful feminine person” of the “Girl of To-day [sic]” (“‘Girl of To-Day’” 1913: 18). As Preston asserts, “[t]here is no doubt that a new type of girl has come into being,” and, in the interview, the famous artist allows some insight into how she views and knows her: She describes her mind (“she has brains”), her education and political stance (a college graduate “influence[d]” by “the woman’s suffrage idea”), but also her attitudes to marriage (assuring the reader that “[s]he makes a better wife than her mother”), and, of course, her looks (“better groomed than yesterday’s girls”). Ultimately, just as reassuring to the *New York Times*, Preston confirms that the “Girl of To-day” is undoubtedly a “produc[t]” of New York. Most telling, though, Preston labels the ‘Girl of To-Day’ a *busy* girl, someone who “wants to do something useful in the world.” On the page, she may only exist in singular form, but the idea of *the* ‘Girl of To-Day’ is clearly a type constructed by the periodical press and its illustrators to generalize and encompass a whole variety of various ‘girls of a 1913-present.’ And yet Preston’s description shall serve us here as a template onto which other popular feminine ‘types’ of the era can be projected.

The same *Vanity Fair* article on American illustrators declared that the “Gibson social types” with their upper-middle-class leisurely activities and demeanor “were the prototypes, or rather predecessors, of quite a number of other social types” (“Dozen” 1915: 28). Preston’s description of the ‘Girl of To-Day,’ however, differs significantly from Gibson’s template. The young, upper-middle-class Gibson Girl – with her elegant up-do, uptilted tiny nose, question-mark-shaped, slender figure (Kitch 2001: 78) and Henry-Jamesian friends – relaxes at the beach, plays golf, or cunningly inspects a beau at a Hamptons-style resort. Preston’s ‘Girl of To-Day,’ in contrast, “wants to do something to be a self-supporting woman” (“‘Girl of To-Day’” 1913: 18): “It may be that she goes in for philanthropic work, or suffrage, or the arts; at any rate,” Preston sums up her insight, “the majority of women that are intelligent work in some way. If nowadays a girl is idle it is an indication that she has not much brain.”¹⁴² This does not imply that every ‘Girl of To-Day’ in the early twentieth century joined the labor force or picketed the White House in the fight for suffrage. While the ‘Girl of To-Day’ “doesn’t necessarily have to work for a living,” she still seeks to be busy – and, in fact, “[s]he may find in her own household enough to do to occupy all her time,” which is only

142 A similarly simplistic opposition of busy vs. lazy can be found in Nell Brinkley’s cartoons that juxtapose the ‘busy’ working-class with the ‘lazy’ upper-class girl, where being ‘busy’ always emerges as the better option (Robbins 2001: 3). See also chapter three on Nell Brinkley.

another example for how the image of the leisure-oriented, socialite Gibson Girl conflicted with that of the ‘Girl of To-Day.’ This way, it also becomes apparent that the present descriptions of the ‘Girl of To-Day’ and similar commercialized and easily recognizable young-woman types, whether drawn by Gibson, Preston, or any other illustrator, are part of a white middle-class discourse on young womanhood that excludes any imagination of a more ethnically diverse or immigrant, working-class identity for the ‘Girl of To-Day.’

Emanating from the role and impact of illustrators in devising these feminine types, I am interested in Preston’s specific contribution to the texts she illustrated: How did her illustrations use, but also shape, visual-textual types of young femininity that were circulated in periodical media? This chapter, then, further explores how female illustrators visualized transitions in female roles and performances. After a glance at magazine covers, back covers, and the text-image interplay in instructive middlebrow magazine columns in the previous chapters, this chapter addresses the text-image relations in illustrated, serialized magazine stories.

As Preston’s interview with the *New York Times* hints at, the 1910s were undoubtedly the decade of women’s suffrage, culminating the activist efforts of the preceding years and ultimately leading to the ratification of the 19th Amendment in 1920. This decade coincided not only with the height of the Golden Age of Illustration, but also with a burgeoning periodical market with its unprecedented possibilities for printing and distribution and a market-wide proliferation of feminine types.

The visual and textual engagement of commercialized and easily recognizable types was a common strategy for both pro- and anti-suffrage artists and activists in the 1910s (Kitch 2001: 3, 191). Whereas the anti-suffragist press relied on strikingly unimaginative, blatantly caricature-like imagery that worked from examples of “[deviant] stereotypes,” artists working for the suffragist cause strategically combined “normative” (white and middle-class) social types with variants of these social types (Tickner 1988: 173).¹⁴³ The vivid and ingenious multi-dimensionality of pro-suffrage imagery showing suffragist women and girls from all strands of life outshone the uninspired, one-dimensional images of women in the anti-suffragist press. Suffrage cartoonists’, but also novelists’, or dramatists’ productive use of certain visual-textual types called forth new imaginations of emancipated womanhood in the periodical press. To veil what were once considered politically radical femi-

143 Unlike types, stereotypes present for Tickner a “particularly fixed and regulatory form” of types, similar to ideological belief: “Stereotypes are deceptively simple, easily communicated and apparently consensual” (1988: 172). Teresa E. Perkins similarly defines stereotypes as “simpl[e],” “recogni[zable],” and based on “consensus” (1979: 141, qtd. in Kitch 2001: 5). Often, these visual stereotypes operate as “evaluative concepts held by groups about other groups, most frequently and effectively by dominant groups about marginal groups” (Tickner 1988: 172).

nist appeals under the mantle of visual feminine appeal, combining familiar visualizations of traditional and established female roles (familiar feminine types) with new conceptions of femininity (e.g., suffragist action) looked like a promising visual tactic. That is why images of suffragists resembled young, white middle-class feminine visual types that were familiar from the large commercial magazines of the time, such as the famous Gibson Girl or Rose O'Neill's Kewpies and girl-babies, or used fashionable visual icons, as seen in Nell Brinkley's cartoons in the previous chapter, to assuage critics. The parallels between suffragist journals and larger, commercial women's fashion, or society magazines became apparent in the way suffragist journals were decorated with the same familiar visual types and popular icons that usually covered all life stages deemed central in (upper-) middle-class life: Whether babies or small children, eye-catching 'Girl' types, or maternal characters – in the end, “[a]rtists working for women's rights periodicals did not invent new imagery,” but “used familiar and comforting notions of womanhood to make suffrage seem right and natural” (Kitch 2001: 76).

Preston's favorable description of young women as educated, industrious, ambitious, and self-supporting social beings is therefore hardly surprising. The artist was personally involved in and professionally promoted women's suffrage. She not only illustrated the story and book *How It Feels to be the Husband of a Suffragette* (1914/15)¹⁴⁴ and worked as a suffrage-postcard artist, but she was also a judge in a 1915 suffrage poster competition (along with John Sloan and Luis Mora) (“Suffrage Posters” 1915: 10; see also Florey 2013: 119, 148), and she hosted at least one suffrage bridge party in her studio and home in Bellport, Long Island (“Suffragists Give Parties” 1916: 7).

Even the *New York Times* had only recently joined other middle-of-the-road media in their favorable coverage of women's political demands (Nolan 2017: 59; Borda 2009: 41), and the 1913 interview signaled that it had ultimately overcome its own critical stance. No wonder then that the *New York Times* sought help in deciphering the modern girl type from a popular artist and devout suffragist who was dubbed an artist “who sees life very clearly” and is “a student of life,” but who yet expresses “sensitive humor, the power of seeing things enveloped in a mantle of friendly sympathy” (“Foremost American Illustrators” 1909: 277, 278).

The favorable attributions to her art and, with it, her ability to convey (proto-) feminist political messages in her likeable, feminine visual art, was also the reason

¹⁴⁴ *How It Feels to be the Husband of a Suffragette* was written under the pen name ‘One’ (or ‘Him’) by Arthur Raymond Brown (1914 and 1915, respectively), husband of Woman Suffrage Party member Gertrude Foster Brown. First published in *Everybody's Magazine* (Jan. 1914: 55–63) and republished as a book in 1915, it provides an excellent example for how influential New York men supported their wives' suffrage campaigns both in public parades and in written form (Neuman 2017: 129).

why the New York suffragist publication *Woman Voter* sought out the famous Preston to illustrate one of its serialized stories on the life of a young, upper-middle-class girl-turned-suffragist. The traits of the energetic, college-educated, and likewise pretty and marriageable ‘Girl of To-Day,’ who strives for self-support and for “do[ing] something that is worth while [sic],” seeking to contribute to society (“‘Girl of To-Day’” 1913: 18), are all condensed in the composite-type devised in the figure of Portia Primrose, the protagonist of the serialized lyric poem “Portia Politics,” illustrated by Preston and written by Edith Bailey (1869?–1912?).¹⁴⁵ In this chapter, I argue that Portia combines certain familiar and popular visual-textual types¹⁴⁶ that saturated various periodical media, among them successful women’s and general interest magazines or newspapers, as well as various suffragist parties’ journals, at the time of the story’s publication. At the same time, this composite-type’s visual centrality *invisibilizes* the reformist-political undertone used as a strong suffrage argument in Bailey’s textual narrative. Engaging with the meaning and the role of literary illustration, I thus aim to critically reflect on Preston’s reputation for faithfulness to the literary text. Considering the remarkable success attributed to the artist in depicting young femininity, how was Preston able to create or even alter meaning in a visual-textual narrative published in a suffragist, political context – that is, did the artist ‘just’ illustrate the text, or did she add dimensions that go beyond the actual text itself?

4.2 Types and Tactics: Portia’s Composite-Type as Political Strategy

Over the city that night the air was tense with suffrage thought. All along Broadway crowds gathered about the huge, yellow-trimmed automobiles to hear suffrage sentiments. All up and down Broadway, under the flaring, rippling lights, women hawked their suffrage paper – “The Woman Voter.” On one corner stood a tall, young woman dressed in black. A yellow news bag was slung at her side; in her extended hand she offered a yellow-covered magazine to each passer-by. Her voice stamped her a Virginian: “Buy a ‘Vot-ah’? ‘Woman vot-ah’? Five cents.”

Mary Alden Hopkins, “Women March,” *Collier’s: The National Weekly*, vol. 49, no. 9, May 18, 1912: 13, 30–31; rpr. in Chapman and Mills 2012: 193–199.

¹⁴⁵ Edith Black Bailey (also Edith Pearce Bailey) was a committed New York socialite suffragist. Like the protagonist of the present story, Bailey was of upper-crust descent: Her husband’s family, the Pearce Bailey family, “had given its name to the most exclusive beach in Newport” (Neuman 2017: 24, 81).

¹⁴⁶ I refer to Portia as a visual-textual type, as both the story’s visual and textual narratives characterize her.

Father Primrose's life is not easy: His ten-year-old daughter Portia just pestered him about the Constitution, and now she wonders aloud why the “ballot-booth [is] a naughty place [for little girls and women] to go” (Bailey and Preston 1911: 7). Disturbed by so much inquisition from his irrepressible daughter, he sighs and chastises the girl to “keep within [her] sphere” – which, in place of the ballot-booth, is “[t]he circus-booth [. . .] and front seats at the show” (7, Figure 4.1).

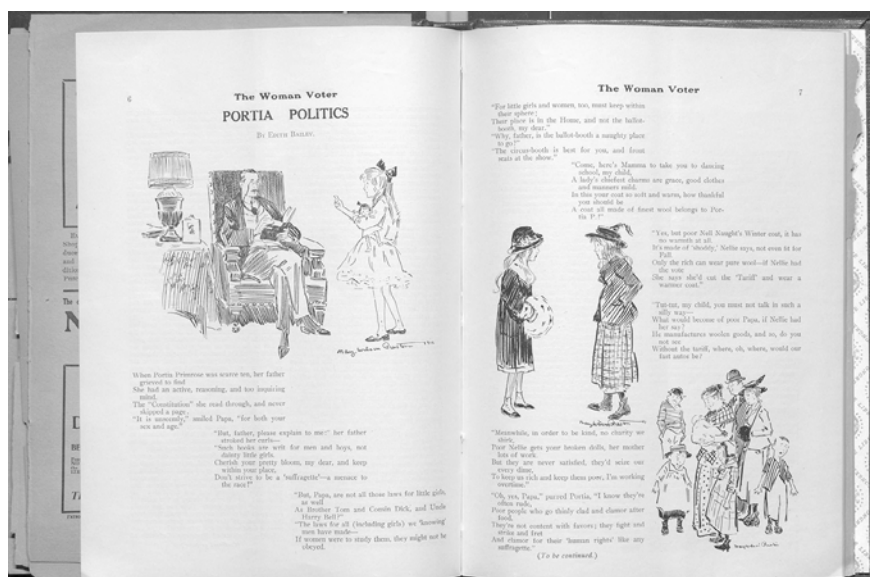


Figure 4.1: Bailey and Preston. 1911. “Portia Politics [episode I.]” Ten-year-old Portia is a suffragist in-the-making, much to her father’s dismay. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, General Collections. Photo by the author.

Written by Edith Bailey in the form of a serialized lyric poem and illustrated with black-ink line drawings by May Wilson Preston, “Portia Politics” presents the story of Portia Primrose’s personal growth and emancipation via her interest in social justice and activism for women’s suffrage. The series and its white upper-middle-class protagonist – whose name is not coincidentally inspired by the New York society suffragist and “prettiest suffragette in New York State” Portia Willis (“Portia Willis Fitzgerald Papers” n.d.)¹⁴⁷ – embody the personal and political decisions, including the struggles and new opportunities for obtaining the

¹⁴⁷ See also the almost eponymous three-act suffrage drama by Alexander B. Ebin, “Portia in Politics” (c. 1912), which is set in the White House and New York around 1903, respectively 1910.

vote open to girls in the second decade of the twentieth century as they grew into women.

“Portia Politics” was published in six monthly instalments, between December 1911 and May 1912, in the *Woman Voter* (New York: 1910–1917), the organ of the New York City Woman Suffrage Party (WSP).¹⁴⁸ The story walks the reader-viewer through Portia’s life, following the stereotypical life stages of white upper-middle-class women: childhood (episode I), college (episode II), married life (episode III), and motherhood (episode IV). From a young age, the daughter of a rich wool manufacturer holds bonds of cross-class friendship with her less-well-off friend Nelly. As a mother and society woman, Portia seeks farm life as a (socially acceptable) outlet for her zeal to employ her hands and mind (episode V) and, ultimately, concentrates her desire for justice in her public support of women’s suffrage (episode VI).

In what follows, I lay the groundwork for locating “Portia Politics” within a visual-textual suffrage discourse and for placing its composite-character Portia within a larger framework of feminine types. Subsequently, I introduce the specific image-text relations in this illustrated story and demonstrate what they reveal about suffragist parties’ tactics, focusing on the WSP and its *Woman Voter*. In this context, I also critically reflect upon the politicity of Bailey’s textual vis-à-vis Preston’s visual narratives, asking whether they deal with Portia’s ‘politics’ at all.

In its heyday one of the few suffrage publications sold at New York City newsstands (Endres 1996b: xv), the *Woman Voter* targeted urban women (Endres 1996a: 86). It appeared monthly in a handy format for a price of 5 cents per issue and 50 cents per year and was at first only available to subscribers. As stated in several of its first issues in 1910, the *Voter* aimed at “the enrollment of 100,000 members [in 1910] and the attainment of woman suffrage in the state of New York within five years” (“Its Aim” 1910: 1). Between 1911 and 1912, under its just recently appointed editor, the historian Mary Ritter Beard, the publication grew from its initial eight pages to up to forty pages. It turned from a small bulletin focusing on party news to a full-scale organ, with rich editorial, advertising,¹⁴⁹ and (black-and-white)

148 The New York City Woman Suffrage Party (WSP, also: the Woman Suffrage Party of Greater New York, 1909–1919) was founded by Carrie Chapman Catt as a “kind of political machine – a woman suffrage version of Tammany Hall” (Schaffer 1962: 270). Its goals were socially reformist, focusing on fair wages and food safety, but also the eradication of child labor and prostitution (273–274). As a union of various local pro-suffrage groups in New York State, the WSP counted 804 delegates and 200 alternates on its founding day, as well as many individual members – up to 500,000 in 1917 – who organized in 63 assembly district units and 2,127 election districts (“New York City Campaign,” rpr. in Buhle and Buhle 2005: 401; Schaffer 1962: 270; Endres 1996d: 454).

149 Resembling the ads of middle-of-the-road women’s magazines, the *Woman Voter* carried ads for cakes, corsets, canned food, creams, or vacuum cleaners that were meant to catch the assumed suffragist reader’s attention with captions like “Women! Don’t be slaves of the broom and

graphic content, such as cartoons, and a new bright suffrage-yellow cover (Endres 1996c: 429; Endres 1996d: 455). Its “sunshine yellow” cover (Sterling 1917: 8) shone from New York City newsstands and the hands of so-called ‘newsies’ as the “tall, young woman dressed in black” in the introductory example (Chapman and Mills 2012: 198; Chapman 2014: 41). In June 1917, five years after Beard again left the *Woman Voter* following her brief two-year stint, and Florence Woolston replaced her as editor, the *Woman Voter*, together with the *Woman's Journal* and the *National Suffrage News*, folded into the *Woman Citizen* and became the official organ of the more conservative National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) (Endres 1996c: 429). Among a growing number of suffrage journals, the *Woman Voter* takes a special position, since it “hovered between a public journal and a members-only newsletter,” which becomes apparent by the inclusion of “a membership blank on its back pages to increase enrollment” (Ward 2012).

The decision to enlist the by then famous May Wilson Preston to illustrate a six-episode poem written by the far-less known Bailey was part of Beard's crusade to visually enhance the party's journal (Endres 1996d: 455, 456). Recognizing the power of visual tactics, the editor commissioned a renowned artist's drawings of familiar, and thus pleasing, feminine types to promote the journal's suffragist call. Whether in the form of photos, cartoons, paraphernalia, tableaux, or colorful costumed parades, visuals were central to the new strategies carried out by suffragist activists, as the large number of scholarly books and articles analyzing these images demonstrates (see Adams, Keene and Koella 2012; Chapman 2014; Kitch 2001; Lange 2020; Sheppard 1985; Sheppard 1992; Sheppard 1994; Tickner 1988). As Tickner explains, suffrage imagery worked as a “mirror that invited identification and offered reassurance, both to conventional converts and to suffragists themselves” – even more, visuals “carried an impact that written description could never convey” (1988: 151). Particularly cartoons, including some that Preston drew for the covers of the *Woman Voter*, were “the most popular form of suffrage art” (Prieto 2001: 173). A “core group of eleven to fifteen” female cartoonists regularly contributed to suffragist and other political magazines – some of them as old as the *Woman's Journal* (founded in 1870 by Lucy Stone and Henry Blackwell and the NAWSA's official organ since 1890) or as radical as *The Suffragist* (1913–1921), which was the newspaper of the militant National Woman's Party (NWP) (Prieto 2001: 172–173, 267n98). Effectively harnessing the “media and pub-

the dustcloth” (*WV*, Oct. 1911: 22). Ads also sought to appeal to “little girls – FUTURE VOTERS!” with a designated Suffrage Doll (*WV*, Oct. 1911: 26, capitalization in orig.). Ads for millinery, stationery, and fine tailoring, however, reveal the *Woman Voter's* elect addressee, particularly when these ads appeared next to listings of campaign donors (*WV*, Oct. 1911: 23, 27). In 1915, the *Woman Voter* would even carry full-page fashion plates like those of fashionable women's magazines.

licity” (172), a burgeoning suffragist press made use of new technologies, new formats,¹⁵⁰ and established a whole new suffrage print infrastructure including the founding of its own publishing companies. Publicity stunts were part of this tactical system: the *Woman Voter* ‘newsies’ were “carefully dressed, confident, and white,” thus adhering to a turn-of-the-century, middle-class norm in appearance to deter any ‘harmful impression’ as they sold the magazine on the streets of New York (Chapman 2014: 44).

The combination of visually appealing images of femininity with feminist matter created tension but also public support for women’s issues.¹⁵¹ According to Katherine H. Adams, Michael L. Keene, and Jennifer C. Koella, “suffrage created an Amalgamated Political Woman” as a new image of womanhood that was imbued with feminist ideas, but simultaneously also “called upon [an] array of imagery” that was familiar with a magazine-reading public, resulting in a veritable “patchwork of appealing icons,” among them the graceful Gibson-inspired Girl, the cute little girl, or the spirited stunt girl (2012: 183, 187). As the authors assert, “ma[king] suffrage controversial and visual [. . .] secured the public notice and ultimately the right to vote” (2012: 205).

This ‘controversial visibility’ could take different shapes: As I was conducting research at the Library of Congress to gain a first-hand overview of periodical suffrage art, I noticed that suffragist artists employed different inflections of femininity in their illustrations. Political strategies and arguments found their expression in suffragist artists’ vast productivity and resulted in a highly diverse field of suffragist imagery. This larger field can be separated into several strategic mainstays that, depending on audience and argument, demonstrated obvious parallels to commercial household or society magazines.

First, visual pro-suffrage argumentation from a socialist standpoint, as in the case of Alice Beach Winter’s¹⁵² gloomy drawings of laboring children or Cornelia Baxter Barns’s chunky, graphite-black etchings of working-class mothers’ plight, found a ready audience in the little magazine *The Masses* or in such radical publications as the *Birth Control Review*. These publications often employed sentimental

150 Note how “Portia Politics” connects the old and rather recent formats of the lyric poem and cartoon-like drawings (see also Chapman and Mills 2012: 173–174).

151 As the examples of Alice Beach Winter, Rose O’Neill, Lou Rogers, and May Wilson Preston show, suffrage artists also illustrated for general interest or large women’s magazines. Even if the boundaries were far from being as clear-cut as we imagine them today, this dual experience certainly enabled them to ‘blend’ or ‘cross’ what were considered radical (proto-feminist or socialist) political demands with the visually appealing, feminine, and politically more moderate imagery of the era.

152 See chapter five on Alice Beach Winter’s illustrations.

imagery to enhance their arguments of social welfare. They drew women's emancipation not as one linear, hopeful, and straightforward path to victory, but painted the dark corners, the dead ends, and the desperation that, in truth, characterized the movement at least as much as (if not even more than) the optimistic moments.

More conservative publications, like the NAWSA's *Woman's Journal*, on the other hand, featured imagery of endearing children or highlighted domestic topics (e.g., by Blanche Ames Ames), and resembled thereby women's household magazines in their appeal to mothers. They relied on arguments of middle-class respectability and traditional family and domestic values. The maternal character (who could also be found in household magazines), however, was a popular visual icon in both the more conservative suffragist press and in socialist little magazines, where artists employed her to advertise the benefit of the vote for mothers and children as I show in chapter five of this book (see also Kitch 2001: 80).

Next, using the appeal of 'cute' children or other 'adorable' subjects, Rose O'Neill¹⁵³ drew suffragist cartoons for the national humor magazine *Puck's* special 1915 suffrage issue and for postcards. O'Neill, who was by then widely known for her Kewpies, depicted babies marching for their mothers' right to vote, or a crying "girl baby" who is "going to be taxed without representation" (O'Neill 1915: 8).

A more energetic, youthful, and creative side of suffragist femininity was evoked by such artists as Nell Brinkley, whose emancipated working girls were "beautiful, stylish, and feminine" (Prieto 2001: 173) and resembled the popular 'Girl' types of the era. The weekly *Suffragist*, for example, adorned its covers with its own Gibson-Girl-inspired and no-less eye-catching Allender Girl, drawn by Nina E. Allender, the official cartoonist of Alice Paul's Congressional Union for Woman Suffrage, later National Woman's Party.¹⁵⁴ Allender also drew more drastic and sensation-stirring imagery of young, beautiful women marching, picketing, or smiling carefree at the viewer while they line up for six months in jail on the cover of the more daring *Suffragist* (Allender 1917). The *Suffragist* thus operated with visually sensationalist and attractive means to garner an audience that believed in the effect of more radical tactics.

As can be expected, these strategies and targeted audiences overlap and have ill-defined boundaries. May Wilson Preston is perhaps the best example here: With her art for "Portia Politics," the artist contributed to the conservative WSP's *Woman Voter* and helped the party organize weekly suffrage dances as late as

¹⁵³ See chapter two on Rose O'Neill's illustrations.

¹⁵⁴ Until 1917, the National Woman's Party (NWP) was called Congressional Union – itself a National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) spin-off founded in 1913 by American suffragists Alice Paul and Lucy Burns after they were dissatisfied with NAWSA's (then-president) Carrie Chapman Catt's more moderate, non-militant approaches (Flexner and Fitzpatrick 1996: 259).

1917 (“Chelsea Suffrage Dances” 1917: 10). The *Woman Voter* also printed her illustrated suffrage postcards on the occasional cover. At the same time, Preston was also an activist in the comparably more radical NWP (Rubinstein 1982: 166; Kennedy 2018: 210).

What becomes apparent from this first overview: Some of this suffragist art was so commercially pleasing that it conveyed its political ideas in a more guised manner, similar to the tradition of American middlebrow authors – that is, using a commercial mode of storytelling (cover girls, agreeable topics and imagery, illustrated magazine stories such as the present one), while avoiding “formal experimentation” for the sake of “persuad[ing] their audience of left-leaning political positions” and seeking out a mass readership and “‘mainstream’ audience” (Harker 2007: 3, quotation marks in orig.). An artist like Barns, on the other hand, did not mince words as she visually addressed the need for birth control with her rough charcoal-black drawings of suffering working-class mothers and children. In contemplating these strategic differences, and Preston’s ‘dual activism’ across two suffrage parties and strategies of appeal, I realized that it would be more revelatory and enriching to the study of suffragist art and its image-text relations to draw attention to artists who presented suffragist ideas under a guise of (feminine) visual appeal. That is, how exactly did female illustrators package new (read: potentially ‘radical’) messages in an innocuous, since familiar, layer? This ‘layer’ could take the shape of young women who styled themselves as Gibson Girls to march in suffrage parades, a suffragist story written for little girls (like Bailey’s “The Adventures of Fife” in the *Woman Voter*), or even a precocious girl quizzing her father about women’s lack of voting rights.

Still, delivering a political message through (iconic) types and their visual appeal also had its drawbacks: As Adams, Keene, and Koella concede, a pretty suffragist, even if she was an amalgam of various familiar female types, would generate public “attention,” but not always “respect” (2012: 183). Furthermore, as is the case with often bluntly exaggerated and simplified visual types, this orientation towards a highly aesthetic and commercially viable iconography of womanhood was on the verge of “endorsing an amalgam of limited, often one-dimensional visual portrayals (the one attractive trait, the gimmick)” (206), thus falling short of asserting women’s multi-faceted character and looks.¹⁵⁵

Despite giving the impression that the “amalgamated political woman” was *one* figuration of a suffragist woman (as the term ‘amalgam’ would suggest),

¹⁵⁵ Frances Maule, head of the publication department at NAWSA and a later copywriter at the advertising agency J. Walter Thompson, noted that “[i]t is just impossible to pick out a single feminine type and call it ‘woman,’ as it is to pick out a single masculine type and call it ‘man’” (1924: 2, qtd. in Peiss 1998b: 136).

Adams, Keene, and Koella clearly distinguish various one-dimensional (mostly visual) figurations of the suffragist: the “Suffragist as Child” (2012: 187, 194), the “Gibson Girl Suffragist,” who “combin[ed] imagery that was culturally approved [. . .] with behavior that was not,” or the “Adventurous Stunt Girl” modeled on Nelly Bly and other female stunt actors (189, 194). Among further suffragist types, the “Victim of Violence” was used in press releases to evoke sympathy for the “small and physically weak” imprisoned activist Alice Paul (199, 200), whereas the type of the “Exotic or Foreign Woman” (racially) exploited images of African American picketers in parades (202, 204, 205).¹⁵⁶ Similarly, illustrators like Nina Allender, Nell Brinkley, Rose O’Neill, or suffragist stunt films and sensationalist press releases all foreground only a limited selection of visual-textual ‘arguments,’ ranging from feminine attractiveness, education, motherhood, victimhood, to heroism and employing their own individual, that is, singular, static, and essentially different figures.

On the other hand, in the series “Portia Politics,” Preston and Bailey concentrate these arguments in *one* figure, *one* narrative, and *one* ‘lifeline.’ They thereby demonstrate how the figure of the suffragist becomes a unit suitable for the masses – precisely as a *composite* structure rather than singularity. At the same time, this compounding of roles illustrates how a suffragist journal bears testimony to the inherent complexity underlying textual and visual conceptions of female roles in turn-of-the-century political media. I argue that Portia’s composite character combines certain familiar and popular (white, middle-class, gender-normative) visual and textual types that already saturated successful women’s and general interest magazines or newspapers, but also various suffragist parties’ journals, at the time of the story’s publication: first, the adorable girl-child from the covers or illustrated stories that spurred the sales of women’s and children’s magazines; second, the omnipresent and popular ‘Girl’ who saturated the era’s print publications and who tended to be named after her originator (Gibson-, Fisher-, Christy-, Brinkley-, or Allender Girl); and, third, the respectable (upper-) middle-class, virtuous mother who smiled contentedly from advertisements for jelly and household appliances – all of which could be recruited for the suffragist cause. In bringing together the different facets of a positively connoted ‘new womanhood’ in her dynamic figuration as composite and as a real figure of womanhood in transition, the visual-textual

¹⁵⁶ A similar categorization takes place in the table of contents of Kitch’s book on magazine cover girls: She juxtaposes the “True Woman” with the “New Woman,” and lists the “American Girl,” the “Dangerous Wom[a]n,” “The Flapper,” and the “Patriotic” Girl (2001). Only in a chapter on “Alternative Visions,” does Kitch look at how (cover) images of “suffragists, immigrants, prostitutes, and African American women [. . .] challenged and reinforced the stereotypes in mainstream media” (15), without, however, mentioning a figure who combines all these types in *one*.

characterization of Portia Primrose evades the “compromise” (2012: 206) of one-dimensionality and stasis that Adams, Keene, and Koella caution against.

The looks and actions of Portia Primrose’s complex visual-textual type bridge different suffragist parties’ imageries, ideological values, and argumentative strategies. She traverses different (white and middle-class) female roles and generations, including such dichotomies as private vs. public spheres, (leisurely) passivity vs. (occupational) activity, and dependence vs. independence. By recombining and re-fashioning the standard elements of the contemporary pro-suffrage discourse throughout her political emancipation story, Portia points out these roles’ compatibility within her own liminal persona, as well as their interdependence in the fight for the vote – which also visualizes the interdependence of different suffragist parties and tactics for the vote: The endearing ‘daddy’s girl,’ who curiously questions the gendered status quo for her sex, turns into the charming ‘sweet-girl graduate’ portrayed on numerous postcards, who would later be mobilized for the NWP’s sensationalist suffrage parades. Finally, the ‘public mother,’ who cares about social reform for the urban poor, was also used as a compelling pro-suffrage argument by the conservative NAWSA. At the same time, all throughout the story, Portia holds up a ‘cross-class sisterhood’ with her poorer friend, reflecting the WSP’s socialist-leaning vision that suffrage would alleviate social injustice. That this vision has its limits becomes particularly evident considering that Portia’s composite-type is a markedly upper-middle-class, white type, which excludes people of color, queer, or working-class persons. Part of this chapter therefore questions how far “Portia Politics” paints the fight for the vote as an intersectional fight across class and racialized boundaries.

How exactly did Preston’s young feminine type then contribute to the WSP’s and the *Woman Voter*’s strategy to convey political messages in a visually attractive, self-assured, and certainly non-radical manner? Availing herself of techniques of visual appeal and reassurance, Preston depicts the female figures in her illustrations for various magazine stories, including “Portia Politics,” in an “acceptable and familiar” light to “navigat[e] the landmines of young womanhood” and “build empathy for young women in the face of social consternation” as Jennifer Nolan summarizes (2017: 60, 72, 75). Preston’s visual characterization of a suffragist wife for the humorous novel *How It Feels to be the Husband of a Suffragette* (1914/1915) written by ‘Him’/Arthur Raymond Brown is a case in point: Dressed in the latest fashion of a slender-cut suit consisting of a coat worn over a long skirt, complete with a feathered hat and an elegant purse, this suffragist woman is the exact personification of the fashionable, Francophile type described by Preston in March 1911 in a humorous piece for *Good Housekeeping* (1911a: 282). In the first publication of the story “How it Feels to be the Husband of a Suffragette” in *Everybody’s Magazine*, her version of the ‘suffragette’ is even tinted in a

vibrant orange-red, with her hair, her “Votes for Women” sash, her leaflet, and even her blouse, purse, and hat-feather matching in tone (Figure 4.2). One white-gloved hand put confidently on her hip, the other handing out political leaflets, she lifts her chin and looks her counterpart in the eye to convey the clear message: Suffrage is alright. As Nolan adds, reminiscent of Gibson Girls, “Preston’s

How it Feels to be the Husband of a Suffragette

57

DEALERS' ASSOCIATION DOESN'T HAPPEN TO LIKE MALE SUFFRAGE.

mile-stone to observe on the road to being a suffragette's husband, that a reasonable amount of frankness—just an ordinary quantity of common or garden truth-telling—is a healthful and exhilarating occupation, and will conduce, as the Good Book says, to “make your days long in the land,” although it may possibly shorten up your “nights out” a trifle at times.

Getting a suffragette for a wife is no different from obtaining any other kind of a wife. The formula is the same in both cases. There's a certain excitement, though, in the fact that you don't always know she is going to be a suffragette until after you have got her. But that, happily, is getting rarer and rarer. The new crop is finding out that advertising pays, and it is pretty hard nowadays to pick out a discreet and docile suffragette who will absolutely refrain from confiding the fact to you, if you sit up with her long enough.

Personally, we—I and mine—fell into suffrage together and practically made only one splash; but it was long after we were married. You notice that I said *mine*. I meant it. Sharing some common things in common doesn't necessarily prevent the lady from being all yours.

We had been at a nice little dinner-party in a smart suburban town. The dinner was all it should be, with one exception: the star guest refused to perform for the benefit of the company. He was a very clever Irish lawyer, with a name for wit. He came accompanied by a rarely beautiful wife, and her efforts during the evening to have husband jump through the hoop and lie down and roll over and play dead were pathetic. Something had gone wrong business-wise during the day, and melancholia had claimed him for her own. He would do nothing but grunt and grump.

After dinner, when all were comfortable in the smoking-room library, the hostess made a last stab to draw him out. The papers at that moment were full of the first despatches telling of the astounding performances of the English militants, and the hostess said in her sweetest coo:

“Oh, Mr. Blak, do you think women should vote?”



And in a voice that carried more grout than any previous grunt during the evening, he answered: “Of course I do, course I do; and if they hadn't been such damn fools, they would have been doing it long ago.”

On the way to the station the lady who controls my destinies repeated the hostess's question:

“Do you believe women should vote?”

It was an awful question to have put to one in the darkness and mystery of a station hack. It was so sudden that, I am ashamed to confess, I dived in the hope of avoiding it.

I went down like a mud-hen, deep enough, as I trusted, to let an ocean liner go over my head.

When I came up there was the same old question with both barrels trained full on me.

Did I believe that women should vote?

What did I know about it?

Had I ever given it a single second's thought?

Figure 4.2: One [Arthur Raymond Brown] and Preston. 1914. “How it Feels to Be the Husband of a Suffragette.” May Wilson Preston illustrated the story “How it Feels to be the Husband of a Suffragette,” written under the pen name ‘Him’ (or ‘One’) by Arthur Raymond Brown, husband of Woman Suffrage Party member Gertrude Foster Brown. Courtesy of *HathiTrust* via University of Michigan.

suffragettes are simultaneously reassuring and subversive in that they reframe a familiar form of femininity as consistent with, rather than antithetical to, participation in the public sphere” (2017: 60; see also Kitch 2001: 78).

While her comforting illustrations of good-looking and confident women, just like her favorable description of the ‘Girl of To-Day’ in the *New York Times*, obviously confront fears and negative stereotypes (of ‘defeminized,’ militant suffragists) circulated by the U.S.-American anti-suffragist press with a sense of reassurance that reconciles critics of suffrage with new female roles, Preston manages to introduce or even *create* the context for social change by way of her illustrations (Nolan 2017: 60). Even more, I argue that, by portraying the headstrong Portia’s actions with reassuring and effortless images of young womanhood, the visual appeal in Preston’s drawings for “Portia Politics” significantly *adds* to the textual narrative: Compared to Bailey’s text, which is motivated by its protagonist’s (internal and external) struggles and scenes of conflict that this young, upper-middle-class woman must navigate as she emancipates herself from ‘old-century’ feminine role expectations, Preston’s illustrations of the same protagonist convey an attitude of self-control and optimism.

While it explains my choice of primary material for the current chapter, this initial assumption about a ‘nice’ visual narrative that accompanies a more ‘political’ textual narrative is open for discussion in this chapter, in which I critically engage with established ideas of visual and textual congruity and periodicity. “She must cast and act as well as direct” (Stout 1932: 9, qtd. in Nolan 2017: 71): Judging by such high praise, Preston’s illustrations come across as the perfect, that is, true-to-text accompaniment to literary magazine texts – an assumption well worth critical reflection. Nolan writes that, in illustrated magazine stories, text and image form a “symbiotic relationship” (2017: 72): However, rather than a charming pictorial frame, illustrations, as those by Preston, were “a parallel or intertext that [an] audience received along with the tales and essays” (Tucker 2010: 22) and that it had to ‘read’ and decipher just as well. Questioning the general assumption that magazine story illustrations are in perfect sync with the text, I argue that Preston’s vibrant and likeable illustrations deviate from Bailey’s remarkably simplistic and conventional textual narrative.

Jaleen Grove elucidates that “[a]n examination of [magazine, my addition] illustration tells us much about publishers’ and audiences’ values – and about the power of the visual, material object to define identity and to act rhetorically” (2019a). If the *Woman Voter’s* editor Beard hired Preston to illustrate Bailey’s text, she did so intentionally to add prestige to her magazine and to draw attention to the suffragist cause. A reader-viewer, flipping through the magazine, would always first look at the pictures, and this was the editor’s intention. In the end, the editorial decision to have Preston illustrate this suffragist story, and thus shed an

attractive light on suffrage, can be traced back to periodical mechanisms and conventions, where magazines sought to heighten their visual appeal to increase their circulation numbers and, hence, their advertising revenue. Most importantly, however, the *Woman Voter* had to advertise and *sell* a political message. Focusing on how Preston's illustrations mediate the story's protagonist and her emancipatory development, the next subchapter will therefore shed more light on the specifically *political* potential of Preston's illustrations for a suffrage journal's story.

4.3 Portia's 'Politics,' Or: The Looks of Emancipated Womanhood

"Portia Politics" is driven by the protagonist's struggles to overcome the thresholds traditionally imposed by upper-middle-class role expectations in order to push for the life she envisions: From episode I, Portia questions the role assigned to "both her sex and age" (Bailey and Preston 1911: 6). She fights to go to college ("for to college she would go – / In spite of Mamma's frettings, in spite of Papa's 'no!'" ; Bailey and Preston 1912a: 8), and she strives for a career, even though "[a] millionairess can have no career to seek" (9). Ignoring her parents' and husband's words on the way, Portia seeks "[a] home, a farm, some work, some time my family to give" (Bailey and Preston 1912c: 6).

As clearly as these conflicts propel and guide the story's textual narrative, they are not reflected in the visual narrative. This is due not least to Portia's characterization as a composite-type rather than a singularity. Throughout the story, Portia combines and bridges different visual types that individually would have polarized with their one-dimensionality and rigidity due to their distinct interests, political desires, and personalities. Portia's visualization as a *dynamic* composite-type, however, befits her portrayal as a figure of womanhood in transition (Nolan 2017: 63), who finds herself in states of conflict but overcomes them to communicate her political messages to the masses.

In this subsection, I demonstrate how May Wilson Preston's visual narrative helps to balance Bailey's text about a strong-willed college-graduate-turned-suffragist. The illustrator thus offers reassurance at a time of changing gender roles and relative uncertainty about women's political emancipation in a white, male-dominated U.S.-American urban society at the beginning of the twentieth century. Using two key scenes in episodes I and II, I demonstrate how Preston's illustrations are crucial in mitigating the protagonist's conflict-ridden role transitions. By adding her own pleasing visual language of familiar feminine icons, Preston visually turns these transitions into stable and fixed points in the protag-

onist's life. Drawing on this strong visual presentation of Portia's emancipation story, I will also question the story's purported politicity.

In the first episode of "Portia Politics," to establish the character of Portia Primrose and visually underscore her early interest in suffrage, Preston employs the image of the feisty child – a visual-textual type familiar from advertisements, such as Grace G. Drayton's Campbell Soup Kids or her funny "(Dolly) Dimples" cartoons. Pouty-lipped, stubborn little girls also appeared on the numerous covers of women's magazines illustrated by Jessie Willcox Smith and similar female illustrators (Kennedy 2018: 29–34). At suffrage meetings, parades, or in cartoons, the feisty but adorable girl-child "made suffragists appear as mischievous but unintimidating girls" (Adams, Keene, and Koella 2012: 187, 188).¹⁵⁷ This particular visual type is used here to emphasize the charm of this barely ten-year-old, who compassionately stands up for her less fortunate friend Nelly, whose mother works for a low wage in Father Primrose's factory.

In the direct visual confrontation between the determined Portia and her father (Figure 4.1), Preston sets the tone for the entire story by using an optical trick that makes Portia and her father appear the same size thanks to a clever visual juxtaposition of the standing ten-year-old daughter and her sitting father (note that both characters' feet and heads are at the same level). Whenever she confronts other characters in subsequent episodes, regardless of her age (and position in the respective scene), Portia always reaches the height of her adversary. The effect of this height ratio is clear: Despite addressing and consulting her father as the 'head of the family' in episodes I and II (in the textual narrative), Portia is *visually* presented as his equal. Preston's visual equation in this first episode thus enhances what Portia tries to argue in Bailey's textual narrative: Her demands for political participation are equal to those of (adult) men – as also underlined by her lifted finger, alert and demanding eyes. The fact that she visually appears as 'daddy's girl,' complete with bow and doll, ensures that her demands do not come across as too precocious or odd for a girl of "scarce ten" (Bailey and Preston 1911: 6). Portia uses the appeal of the young, feisty girl while she questions the exact image and roles of "dainty little girls" that her father expects of her (6).

While Portia continues to (textually) challenge her parents' expectations as she grows into a young woman, Preston's familiar imagery again softens the protagonist's conflictive states. Fast-forward a few years: In episode II, the young girl has grown into a fashionable young, upper-middle-class woman who has traded

¹⁵⁷ Clever-looking little girls or girls who come across as (precociously) smart and informed by reading or pretending to read the newspaper or wearing (too big) glasses were a popular visual type in magazines during the 1910s to convey suffragist messages (see Grove 2019a and her analysis of the Nov. 1915 cover of the Canadian *Western Home Monthly*).

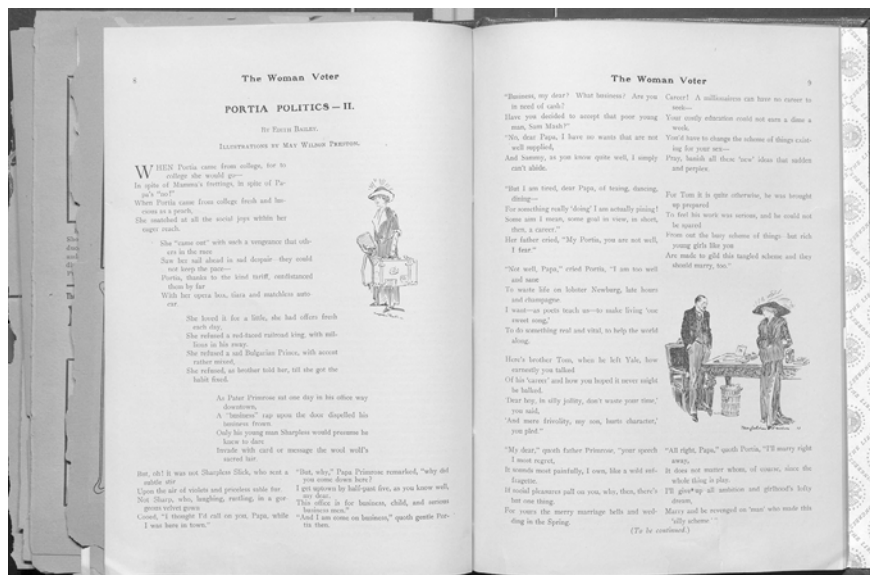


Figure 4.3: Bailey and Preston. 1912a. “Portia Politics—II.” Embodying the ubiquitous type of the ‘sweet-girl graduate,’ Portia returns from college with an education and new assertiveness. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, General Collections. Photo by the author.

in her ribboned pigtail, Mary Janes, and doll for a flamboyantly feathered cart-wheel hat (covering what looks like modishly bobbed hair) and an equally up-to-the-minute golf bag (Figure 4.3). Her sleeves rolled up in a dynamic fashion, Portia smiles expectantly as she returns from college. With her look (“fresh and luscious as a peach,” Bailey and Preston 1912a: 8), Portia resembles the ubiquitous visual type of the ‘sweet-girl graduate’ that also decorated various greeting cards for female college graduates as well as magazines, like Harrison Fisher’s cover of dainty female graduates in cap-and-gown attire for the June 1913 “Girls’ Number” of the *Ladies’ Home Journal* or Rose O’Neill’s back cover “She Graduates” (O’Neill and Sabin 1898) – even the cover of the NAACP magazine *The Crisis* regularly sported photographs of its so-called ‘Crisis maids’ as college-girls on its covers (see “Photograph” 1922, for example).

The well-stickered suitcase in her other hand symbolizes her college-years that for a young, privileged woman like Portia implied a timed outing into the public sphere with its generous possibilities before that era’s societal middle-class norms would require her to get married. Edith Bailey’s rhymes leave no doubt that Portia certainly did not miss out on college life, “snatch[ing] at all the social joys within her eager reach” (Bailey and Preston 1912a: 8). At the early turn of the century, girl-

hood, or better, the life stage of a young woman's single life and the relative freedom it entailed, came with an expiration date, that is, her wedding day.¹⁵⁸ As a college graduate, Portia finds herself at a generational in-between step between 'daddy's girl' and 'husband's wife.' She is part of the cohort of young women who already dipped into a sense of independence in their college years away from parental supervision, but who were unable to fully unfold that independence (due to political as well as social restrictions) and thus remained in a state of limbo between the old and new female roles that were developing at the turn of the twentieth century.

To Portia's intermediate stage, the textual narrative in this suffragist journal now adds another typified identity: the emancipating woman whose decisions and life goals conflict with those of her parents' generation and her future husband, as episodes II and IV show. Yet, as in any good narrative, dramatic conflict propels plot, and it is these inevitable conflicts and frictions with her environment that motivate Portia's development into a suffragist and reinforce her desire to "go in for politics" (Bailey and Preston 1912c: 7).

The text of episode II describes the conflicts between Portia and the adult men in her life (her suitors and her father). The caricatured type of the attractive, 'marriageable' debutante lingers only briefly over this second episode of "Portia Politics." Despite her promising prospects of a privileged married life, Portia turns down all her suitors' offers: Neither the industrial railroad magnate nor the "Bulgarian Prince" can make it up to her (Bailey and Preston 1912a: 8). Portia's refusal of money and royal reputation to become a fashionable society lady of the upper circles is also reflected in Preston's cover cartoon for that month's *Woman Voter*. It shows a woman in an evening dress, with pearl necklace and fashionable hairdo, who rejects two men's money and golden crown (Preston 1912, Figure 4.4). This woman on the cover, who could be Portia, cannot be 'bought' with men's wealth and power to become another 'trophy' added to their monetary assets.¹⁵⁹

Instead, Portia seeks to be the busy and politically interested 'Girl of To-Day' type that May Wilson Preston would describe one and a half years later in her *New York Times* interview (see also Nolan 2017: 59–60). Portia may have changed her looks from the adorable pigtailed girl to a fashionable debutante, but she has not changed her determination. In a scene that parallels Portia's consultation with her father in episode I, Portia makes a dramatic entrance into her fa-

158 See chapter two on Rose O'Neill's visualizations of young womanhood for *Puck*.

159 Cf. Sheppard's suggestion that this cover highlights women's moral purity vis-à-vis political corruption and tainted money (1994: 134). Suffragists frequently highlighted women's alleged moral purity and incorruptible character, arguing that women's political enfranchisement would henceforth call out, if not even end, corruption in the political sphere.

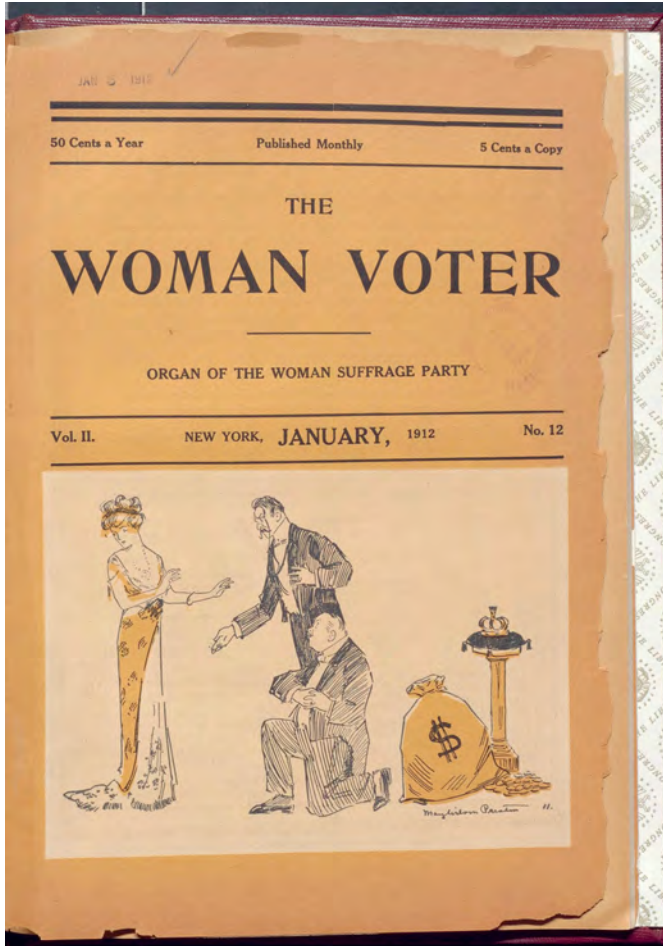


Figure 4.4: Preston. 1912. “No title (woman refusing money and crown).” Suffragists made it clear that neither they nor their cause could be bought with money. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, General Collections. Photo by the author.

ther’s office, with an “air of violets and priceless sable fur,” and declares to the startled man that she is “tired [. . .] of teasing, dancing, dining,” and is “[pinning] [f]or something really ‘doing’” like her brother Tom (Bailey and Preston 1912a: 9). Striving to be a working ‘Girl of To-Day,’ the rich, upper-middle-class Portia defies contemporary societal expectations – resulting in a conflict with her father that plays out on the textual level. To Portia’s father, her role is clear: “[R]ich young girls like [Portia] / Are made to gild this tangled scheme and they should marry, too” (9). To stress his point (and ridicule his daughter’s plans), he adds that her

“costly education could not earn a dime a week” (9). Trying to end this heated discussion with his daughter, Portia’s father implores her to “banish all these ‘new’ ideas that sadden and perplex” (9) – a reference to the influence of college education on young women’s outlook on life as also intimated in Preston’s *New York Times* interview.

The tone Portia’s father strikes in the textual narrative is harsh, direct, and hurtful: “It sounds most painfully, I own, like a wild suffragette” (Bailey and Preston 1912a: 9). Likewise, Portia, fed up with the limited ‘role’ she is supposed to play in this “tangled scheme,” agrees to get married more out of spite rather than conviction. Soberly, she adds that “[i]t does not matter whom [. . .] since the whole thing is play” (9) and angrily announces to “be revenged on ‘man’ who made this ‘silly scheme’” (9, quotation marks in orig.). In words that betray her own ideals, she declares to “give up all ambition and girlhood’s lofty dream” (9). While the story and its immediate context in the *Woman Voter* thus shaped young women’s political minds with each monthly publication, “Portia Politics” here presents its reader-viewers with a practical example of how to navigate or, in this case, defer conflict – strategies to keep the conversation about suffrage factual and composed to not feed into clichés of the ‘hysteric suffragist.’

At the textual level, this conflict is evident through formal markers such as punctuation or specific dramatic phrasing. Portia’s exasperated reactions to the expectations of her father, mother, or later husband are underscored by hyphens or exclamation marks, often to emphasize Portia’s urgent need for action (“Some work!” in Bailey and Preston 1912b: 11; “There’s so much work to do!” in Bailey and Preston 1912d: 16). The text also uses exclamation marks when Portia repeats the phrasing of her interlocutors to question and ridicule it: “My sphere! My sphere! What is it?” (Bailey and Preston 1912b: 11). Also, everyone seems to be ‘crying’ – in the sense of ‘exclaiming’ or ‘shouting:’ “Dan cried,” “‘Heavens,’ he cried,” “Portia coldly cried” (11), “Portia [cried], angry quite,” or, in a more subtle sense of ‘crying:’ “her mother whimpered” (Bailey and Preston 1912c: 7).

Bailey’s textual narrative further situates Portia in her own role compromises, that is, in between different roles and life stages. Portia’s unclear role allocations have the potential to provoke her environment. At the end of her brief in-between life stage of the ‘sweet-girl graduate,’ Portia is already searching for her new individual niche – somewhere between an (upper-) middle-class wife and mother in the domestic private sphere and a politically active woman in the urban public sphere – which she will have found by the final episode.

Until then, the reader gets the impression that Portia ends each episode with a major affront against the people closest to her. In episode IV, Portia “kick[s]” over an expensive piece of furniture – a symbol of her not wanting to sit idly on a “throne,” and shocks her mother and the nurse, who “turn[s] shuddering aside”

(Bailey and Preston 1912c: 7). This (episodic, almost serial) conflict, used as a cliff-hanger, is essential as it drives forward the plot and Portia's self-emancipating decisions. In episode III, Portia's wish to take up employment ends in bitter conflict with her husband Dan, who "turn[s] upon her in sad and angry fret" and exclaims that he is "wed to a wild suffragette" (Bailey and Preston 1912b: 11). The reader begins to wonder whether the couple will be divorced by the next episode, but Portia, giving in to "[her] woman's role" (Bailey and Preston 1912b: 11), manages her role conflicts all by herself, while the textually very dominant conflict with her husband is not depicted at all. In episode IV she alienates herself from her mother by declaring to leave the comfortable hotel behind, to breastfeed and raise her children all by herself, and to work on a farm (Bailey and Preston 1912c: 6, 7).

The argument between Portia and her father, vividly described in the textual narrative, is not evident in the visual narrative: When she argues with her father, Portia reaches her limits – so much that she finally gives in, if only for the time being. Preston's visual narrative, however, portrays Portia as self-possessed and self-assured, resting at ease with herself and her demands. Both upon her return from college (where she looks exactly as "fresh" as the text describes her, in her up-to-the-minute fashion and sports gear), and in her direct confrontation with her father in his office, this young woman looks as if she knows what she wants. Her father may look stern through his monocle, hands in pockets and face slightly tilted to frown upon his daughter, but Portia's gaze is direct and open. Nothing in Portia's finely drawn face lets her appear distressed or nervous. She does not even turn fully towards her father – she did not come here to beg him for approval from a subordinate position. Instead, Portia's torso faces the reader-viewer, allowing the latter to admire the protagonist's elongated posture, clad in a fashionable long coat with large fur collar, fur muff, and feathered hat that create an elegant and composed vision of the young college-graduate. Although the father suggests so, Portia does not look at all like a woman who has 'lost her mind.' Using the same visual trick as in the previous episode, Preston draws Portia as an equal to her father: Her large hat provides her with the necessary inches to optically level her father's height. While he is half hiding behind his heavy wooden furniture, half leaning on it for support, Portia is rendered more present and stable in full view in the foreground. Visually, Portia seems to be the more stable, in-control, and central party of the two. This is a contrast to the text, where her father's arguments clearly upset Portia and it takes time for her to thwart her father's advice and rules in subsequent episodes.

Further, both the episodic structure and Preston's illustrations mark Portia's transitions as stable and fixed points rather than in-betweenness. While Bailey's text conveys the full complexity and the dizzying changes of gender roles at the turn of the twentieth century, the college-girl Portia is, visually, a fixed point, and

decisively not an unstable, intermediate stage. With the popular, formulaic ‘sweet-girl graduate’ type, Preston portrays Portia decisively at the *end* of her college years, deliberately leaving Portia’s college years as undefined as her future. Whereas, on the textual level, Portia finds herself in between the roles, struggling and ultimately finding ways to reconcile or overcome role conflicts, on the visual level, Portia is always painted as a self-possessed, determined young woman, who seems to be at ease with herself. Portia’s visual characterization is about compatibility and flexibility. But it is also about reassurance and stabilization – at least visually everything is in balance. These impressions of Preston’s illustrations on the viewer are important, since they help her paint a reassuring image of young (political) womanhood in transition, while the story drives, and thereby facilitates, social change and modernization. In this way, Portia articulates a role model of a non-radical, upper-middle-class suffragist so that, in “Portia Politics,” suffrage’s conservative-oriented textual argumentation finds its counterpart in modern imagery.

Suffragist artists recognized what was needed most in the early 1910s: Wrapping political messages in an innocuous package of visually appealing feminine types was one aspect – and an equally innovative and subversive one at that. Reaching out with these political messages to a variety of target audiences to ensure a support as broad and as unanimous as possible for a later referendum was another. The combination and compression of various visual types and concomitant ideals into the composite-character of Portia Primrose make her a more recognizable, likeable, and, particularly, marketable character for a suffrage press that fed on visual tactics and innovative formats to present its arguments. Through her illustrations in this suffragist journal, Preston thereby manages to pave the ground and *create* the context for the social change underway. Just like a general magazine-reading audience found placation and “reassurance in an age of rapid social change” by reading the new popular magazines (Jacobson 1983: 139), Preston’s vibrant, elegant illustrations for “Portia Politics” also provide comfort for the readers of Bailey’s suffragist, political text. Preston drafts Portia as a friendly, attractive counterfigure to confront fears and negative stereotypes of the “embittered spinster” and the egoistic, “domineering and nagging wife,” which were both familiar to a magazine audience since the nineteenth century (Tickner 1988: 163–164), reconciling critics of suffrage with new female roles. We thus find such positive attributes as feminine attractiveness, but also stability, education, and maternal acts of caregiving foregrounded in Portia.

The protagonist’s innocuous characterization is reflected in the story’s entire visual narrative. In the textual narrative, Portia voices radical ideas for her time: from women’s political participation via suffrage and a “two-sexed government,” to being “revenged on ‘man,’” “going in for politics,” and “win[ning] the rural vote.” However, from just looking at the visual narrative, Portia does none of

these things. Instead, the story's illustrations provide snapshots showing the socially perfectly acceptable milestones in an (upper-) middle-class woman's life: as a well-off daughter playing with dolls; as a young woman getting married, having children, or gardening – a traditionally feminine activity. Young women's college attendance, in 1912, was no longer deemed out-of-the-ordinary. Only the final episode depicts a more 'radical' scene, when Portia gives a public speech on a box labelled "Votes for Women."

In this final scene, Portia's firm, upright posture on a 'Votes for Women' soap-box and her overall respectable, yet practical appearance underscore both her attractiveness (Figure 4.5; see also Sheppard 1994: 182–183) and devotion to the suffragist cause. To make her demands heard, she uses a sizeable megaphone – a common visual prop in suffragist cartoons or magazine covers of the era. Portia's smart appearance in a modishly striped shirtwaist day dress, jacket, and hat with plumes at the back quotes the look of the Gibson or Allender Girl (Adams, Keene, and Koella 2012: 189–190). Her bold and visibly determined posture on the soap-box is also mirrored in the straight, tall stance (but with one hand on her hip) of the suffragist wife Preston depicted for *How it Feels to be the Husband of a Suffragette* (Figure 4.2).¹⁶⁰

Next to promoting suffrage as a rational, innate demand, the story also stresses the inherent compatibility and interdependence of traditional and new concepts of womanhood that facilitated (and were simultaneously facilitated by) women's political emancipation. With Portia's textually often idiosyncratic, but visually always sympathetically portrayed decisions, "Portia Politics" offers an entertaining story of a woman who defies the idea of contradictions. By negotiating her roles – between college graduate, upper-class debutante, respectable wife, society woman, working woman, mother, aspiring voter, and future politician – and recognizing their interdependence as she navigates the inevitable conflicts (in the textual narrative), Portia is presented as a credible arbiter for women's political participation.

This visual prominence of Preston's drawings reveals a hierarchical dissonance between the story's visual and textual narratives. "[I]mages work with and against physical printed text-objects," writes Jaleen Grove (2019a). Countering magazine articles that praise Preston's reputation as an author's 'best friend,' as she meticu-

160 Preston always portrays her suffragists wearing hats. She used this accessory of respectable, middle-class femininity in numerous magazine story or book illustrations – several short magazine texts on the art of millinery in *Good Housekeeping* between 1907 and 1909 benefit from Preston's humorous takes on ridiculous hat fashions. Nina E. Allender's suffragist, on the other hand, defiantly removes her hat in a resolute pro-suffrage gesture which signals to the skeptical men in the background that her "hat is in the ring" (Allender 1916).



Figure 4.5: Bailey and Preston. 1912e. “Portia Politics–VI: Portia at the Fair.” Standing on a soapbox labelled “Votes for Women,” Portia gives a speech at the state fair. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, General Collections. Photo by the author.

lously studies the text and provides it with faithful illustrations (“Dozen” 1915: 29; Stout 1932: 9), I argue that Preston does exactly *not* disappear behind or come second to the text, quite the contrary: In an era, in which “the rise of the pictorial challenged the primacy of the written text” (Tucker 2010: xv) and in which illustrators were regarded the “greatest heroes” (Eisenstat 1984: 28), not the authors behind the (magazine) stories they illustrated, Preston’s visual narrative ranks higher in the hierarchy of a magazine reader’s attention (and the provision of meaning). Edith Bailey’s text sounds less elegant, and her comparably simplistic textual narrative almost pales behind Preston’s confident, vibrant portrayal of Portia’s emancipation story. Where the text appears unnecessarily stilted and unreaderly, Preston’s illustrations remain ‘readable,’ comfortably comprehensible, and appealing. “Portia Politics” and other stories reveal that the *Woman Voter* was by far not a literary little magazine: The serialized poem by Edith Bailey is anything but high art. Aside from being fraught with paternalistic language toward the working classes, the rhymes

sound awkward and stiff. The text-image relationship also feels anachronistic: Bailey's text appears conventional, spelling the gritty naturalism of the old century, with its vivid, albeit romanticized, assumptions about the living conditions of the less fortunate that could stem from a nineteenth-century Dickens novel. Not so Preston's illustrations, which are reminiscent of fine-line fashion illustrations and seem vibrant and modern. Indeed, particularly Preston's depictions of Portia are approachable and sympathetic, confirming Reed and Reed's impression of her illustrations as "airy and witty, reflecting her own energy and good humor" (1984: 140).

Throughout "Portia Politics," Preston's illustrations thus add an agreeable, visually pleasing dimension to Bailey's text that presents its protagonist Portia's political ideas, but otherwise, it turns out, has little to do with politics, let alone suffrage, at all. Only upon a closer look, the irony of this text, titled "Portia's Politics" and published in a suffragist party's journal, becomes apparent: Although it is presented in the text as motivating all of Portia's actions and decisions, suffrage is only mentioned about a handful of times in the entire story. Also, the way the term is employed in the text is striking: Each time the terms 'suffrage,' 'suffragette,' or 'suffragist' appear, they are used by men and in a pejorative way. On two separate occasions alone, both her father and her husband call Portia a "wild suffragette" (Bailey and Preston 1912a: 9; 1912b: 11). Portia, on the other hand, never mentions the term, instead placing the struggle for suffrage on other argumentative pillars (childcare, better infrastructure, food safety, and progressivist reform agendas) – a strategy well-used by suffragists: "There's so much work to do!" exclaims Portia in episode V (16). At least the *textual* emphasis is on changing laws and reform needs, not on individual benefits from the vote. Highlighting how women can practically contribute to the park commission, the school board, or other public agencies, Portia mentions what she is really about in her own words only in the penultimate episode: "[I]f we women had the vote, we would try to do more" (Bailey and Preston 1912d: 16).¹⁶¹

Also, in the entire six episodes, "politics" is only mentioned marginally or indirectly in episodes I (the workers' tariff), IV (when Portia announces to "go in for politics"), episode V (in Portia's discussion with her neighboring farmer John Corncob), and episode VI (Portia's soapbox speech). Mostly, these discussions are related to labor-rights or other socialist topics, but, before the final episode, women's suffrage itself is never a direct topic. Only in the very last episode do we see the protagonist on a soapbox, with "Votes for Women" literally spelled out as part

¹⁶¹ Even Preston's *Woman Voter* cover illustration "Linked Together by the Law" that criticizes the law's equal treatment of women, children, and criminals when it comes to voting (1911b, also available as a suffrage postcard), or her untitled cover of a woman refusing a crown and money (1912, see Figure 4.4), are more political in their symbolism than her illustrations for Bailey's story.

of the visual *mise-en-scène*, almost like a caption, without which Portia could have demonstrated for an arbitrary cause.

Portia's visual composite-type expresses stability and reassurance, but this over-emphasis on looks and big words trumps the actual plot and the protagonist's action. The story places more emphasis on Portia's personal emancipation, and particularly on what it *looks* like, than on her actual political achievements or concrete plans, which, while at least partly hinted at in the textual narrative, are completely omitted in the visual narrative. While it is the nature of illustration to depict only a select portion of the text, Preston's drawings inevitably gloss over important aspects of the textual narrative's politics (including the protagonist's conflict-evoking decisions) and its socialist reasoning for the working-class community's greater good.

Although the textual narrative is motivated by Portia's political *intentions*, the protagonist's 'politics' remain on the level of obscure plans and announcements. In fact, neither text nor image show how Portia puts her words of sympathy and her invocations of cross-class sisterhood into *action* by tending to the poor or attending a (suffragist) women's gathering to discuss action plans. Apart from the final illustration showing her soapbox speech in the very last episode, none of Preston's illustrations show how Portia fulfils her announcement to "go in for politics, and win the rural vote" (Bailey and Preston 1912c: 7), and neither does Bailey's text. Just as the realization of suffrage was a vague prospect in 1912, the realization of Portia's plans is held in abeyance without the reader ever witnessing the protagonist carry out her plans. Thus, despite its context of articles advocating for women's enfranchisement and political participation, Bailey's text is not really about Portia's 'politics' as a suffragist and activist. We only *see* her as such in the final episode, but, textually, Portia never refers to herself as an activist, let alone a suffragist.

Defying the story's title, "Portia Politics" is therefore more about the appearance and emancipated life of an upper-middle-class woman than about realizing the text's calls for cross-class action. The hierarchy of Preston's illustrations over Bailey's simplistic text is reflected in the visual emphasis on appearance, but also in the textual preference of everything that is supposed to 'appear attractive' (that is, Portia's grand textual announcements) over actual political content and action. Just as the words on the soapbox provide a denominative label or caption to let the reader-viewer know about Portia's action in the final episode, also "Portia Politics" depends on the textual narrative and its contextual pages in this political journal to be read as a political story at all.

Instead of Portia's political activism, the text describes her struggles to emancipate herself from her father, her husband, and her (societally intended) role as a New York society woman. Her 'activism' plays out in decisions that only affect

her personally (by attending college, deciding who to marry, reforming traditional gender roles in marriage, working, or having the vote), but do not affect, let alone benefit, working women's situation – a point I will delineate further below. Portia's 'politics' are thus not public and collective, but personal and individual; if at all, it is her imagination of and striving for her own version of modern womanhood that is political. Preston's illustrations thus convey a reassuring image of 'new womanhood' but, as I continue to show below, fail to visualize the text's underlying sociopolitical message. Instead, Preston's illustrations paint suffrage activism and the textually highlighted community-directed approaches as the highly individual endeavor of a singular upper-middle-class woman. This is not least due to the party politics and the membership structure of the WSP.

The way "Portia Politics" introduces women's political emancipation by focusing on role compromises, socially acceptable middle-class behavioral standards, and domesticity, owes to the WSP and its leader Carrie Chapman Catt. The WSP was a reform-oriented, slightly socialist-leaning party with an elite, upper-middle-class membership structure – Bailey herself was one of the New York socialite suffragists who supported the party (Neuman 2017: 81).¹⁶²

The *Woman Voter's* 1911–1912 editor Mary Ritter Beard was particularly keen on wage-working women's enfranchisement (Van Voris 1987: 244n4) – an agenda reflected in the WSP's larger outreach to New York's working-class and immigrant communities (Catt and Shuler 2020: 284–289). Between 1911 and 1912, the *Woman Voter* carried columns called "Why the Working Woman Should Vote" (O'Reilly and Seager 1911: 6–8; cf. similarly titled articles in Nov. 1911 and March 1912) or "The Cry of the Workers" (Hale 1912: 25), and regular pieces discussed problems of "labourers and wage earners" ("The Woman Voter" 2006: liii). Emanating from the idea that the vote would help wage-earning women, the WSP wanted to improve their situation via government regulations of big businesses, especially for the benefit of the weakest in society who could not defend themselves against the influence of "predatory trusts" (Schaffer 1962: 273).¹⁶³ The WSP's publications dealt with

¹⁶² Bailey supported the New York suffragist cause with "vigorous public organizing" ("Edith Lawrence Black Bailey" n.d.), including showcasing her own children for the cause, "contribut[ing] her automobile to a soapbox speech during the 1894 parlor campaign" (Neuman 2017: 81), or lending her red family car to the WSP "as a rostrum for soapbox campaigning" in 1909 (23–24). She further spoke at a Colony Club suffrage meeting (25), expounded "Some Ideals of the Suffrage" in the *New York Evening Post* (see "Discussion of Woman's Suffrage" 1910: 17), and criticized the police's handling of a 1912 suffrage parade in a letter to the editor of the *New York Times* (Bailey 1912: 8).

¹⁶³ The WSP was by far not the only organization that sought to mobilize working-class women. In 1907 Harriet Stanton Blatch, daughter of the pioneering women's rights activist and Seneca-Falls Convention organizer Elizabeth Cady Stanton, had founded the Equality League of Self-Supporting Women (renamed, in 1910, the Women's Political Union), a radical suffrage group

changes on state level (such as the importance of education, social reform, and legislative change) for the benefit of the home, children, and, as particularly stressed by the *Woman Voter*, the working woman. Some of the party's reform ideas that should be realized with the vote consisted in better food inspection, raising female factory workers' wages to the same level as men's, and in abolishing child labor and prostitution (273).

How is this agenda targeted at the working class taken up in a story that focuses on a white upper-middle-class woman's personal quest for emancipation? In the following two subsections, I demonstrate how the WSP's and its journal's aim of social reform and working women's political enfranchisement, including this agenda's congruence with often somewhat condescending Progressive-era reformist ideas and attitudes towards the working classes, are all reflected in "Portia Politics": The story tells about an upper-middle-class protagonist's (not always credible) gender and cross-class solidarity, all while offering a simplistic, classist presentation of one-dimensional working-class narrative figures who carry (alliterative) telling names like "Nelly Naught," "Peter Poor," or "John Corncob" (Bailey and Preston 1912b: 10; 1912d: 16). Focusing on Bailey's and Preston's characterization of Nelly, Portia's working-class friend and alter ego, I first analyze the story's specific image-text relations to demonstrate how particularly the visual narrative discloses the WSP's estrangement from the urban working poor. I will then further underscore this point by interrogating the story's and the party's proposed call for community action for women's suffrage by drawing in on the *Woman Voter's* and its party's complex entanglement.

4.4 "In order to be kind, no charity we shirk": The Woman Suffrage Party's (Pseudo-) Socialist Reasoning for Suffrage

We have seen how Portia's construction as a dynamic composite-type conveys a flexible, reassuring image of womanhood in a suffragist publication. However, unlike the different feminine roles that her hybrid character encompasses throughout the story, Portia's white upper-middle-class affiliation remains stagnant. Representations of class, apparently, cannot be bridged as easily within this type's life. Also, Portia's composite type presents a very exclusive image of turn-of-the-century womanhood, where her hybrid function clearly conceives of whiteness and mid-

that consisted mostly of New York working-class women. The group that also organized militant street protests merged in 1915 with Alice Paul's Congressional Union.

dle-classness as a portmanteau that encompasses and holds within it all other categories of difference. As Laura R. Prieto concedes, "the icon of the New Woman had its limits" (2001: 147). Given her "class and racial boundaries," she was after all a "homogeneous" figure – and particularly so in the popular press who painted the 'new woman' as a "middle-class white woman, a figure that reinscribed the barriers of race and class" (147).

Consequently, Portia cannot perform *all* dimensions of suffragist 'new womanhood.' While the plot easily bundles the discourse around the 'new woman' as girl, graduate, or mother into one figure, it seems that the 'new woman' as a working woman is more difficult to get a handle on as becomes evident in the fifth episode that unconvincingly depicts Portia as a farm worker. Her upper-middle-class, non-working background hence poses certain limitations for the composite-character – as well as for the WSP's activist argumentation. To reflect the facet of the suffragist 'new woman' as a working woman (and convey her reasons for the vote), "Portia Politics" introduces an additional figure in the form of Portia's childhood friend Nelly. Nelly, however, never becomes a type herself, let alone a part of Portia's type. Instead, acting as Portia's counterpart, she motivates Portia's own emancipatory journey.

Next to the textual introduction of the girls' cross-class friendship, the first episode familiarizes the reader with the two girls' differences and parallels by using a visual constellation along class lines. The opened double page in the *Woman Voter* shows three images that form a stair-like arrangement (Figure 4.1): in the upper left-hand image, Portia confronts her father. The opposing image, positioned in the lower right-hand corner, introduces the reader to Nelly's family. A third, more centrally positioned image, again shows Portia, this time turning towards the right, to face her friend Nelly. The two girls' almost symmetric confrontation hints at an invisible class boundary between them – its invisibility demonstrating that the girls' class differences are a sheer matter of luck as they are born into different families in a capitalistic world: The two girls are equal in size (and presumably age), but, visually, Preston presents Nelly as the disheveled alter ego of the prim-and-proper Portia. Whereas Portia is dressed in a warm, fur-lined winter coat and muff, Nelly hides her hands in her too short coat, which, as Portia reports to her father in this episode, "has no warmth at all" (Bailey and Preston 1911: 7). Portia looks awake, Nelly plain exhausted. As the story progresses and the girls grow into women, both will have children (though Nelly will have them earlier), but only one of them goes to college and benefits from the new-found opportunities that the early twentieth century held for (upper-) middle-class women.

Centrally positioned on the first episode's double page, Portia acts as the literal *and* visual nexus between the two class-backgrounds and their different stories. It

is also the only time that Preston depicted the protagonist twice in an episode: On the right-hand page, Portia listens to Nelly lament about her bad clothes, whereas, on the opposing page, Portia turns towards her father in her function as ‘messenger,’ confronting him about the lack of women’s voting and labor rights that would ultimately allow Nelly to “wear a warmer coat” (Bailey and Preston 1911: 7). Depicted as the only sitting person in the entire story, surrounded by symbols of comfort and bourgeois domesticity (books, massive wooden furniture, an embroidered tablecloth with a picture frame and an electric table lamp on top), however, Father Primrose could not appear more detached and indifferent towards the “Tariff” that determines the wages paid to his garment factory workers – so long as he can afford his “fast autos” (Bailey and Preston 1911: 7). Given the employment of Nelly’s mother in the factory and, later, Nelly herself in Portia’s and her husband’s household, the two families’ relationship is one of dependence and exploitation. The tariff and the resulting social injustice drive the story and Portia’s decision to go into politics. On the other hand, Nelly and her family remain surprisingly silent – or, rather, they are silenced by Bailey’s textual narrative.

Bailey describes Nelly as Portia’s opposite in every aspect from her looks (clothes made of “shoddy,” that is, made from reclaimed instead of “pure wool” as Portia’s clothes; Bailey and Preston 1911: 7) and her work (toiling in the Primrose’s household), to her financial situation (her telling name is Nelly Naught and she marries Peter Poor, whereas Portia is a “millionairess”; 1912: 9). Further, not insignificant at a time when working women lacked access to birth control, Nelly is born into a family with many children (compared to Portia who only has one brother) and later has triplets of her own. Although the textual narrative never explicitly mentions it, reading between the lines of Bailey’s textual narrative allows the reader to reflect on Nelly’s hardships as a working mother.

Preston also visually contrasts Portia with Nelly in the story’s illustrations (Figure 4.1): Her drawing technique presents the protagonist in a clearer light than Nelly and her family. Portia is drawn with less linear hatches and more roundish shapes, befitting her flowing, long dresses and her elongated body shape that resemble the drawings in magazines’ fashion plates. Whereas Portia’s dress and winter coat are drawn with elegant and loving detail (note the doll on Portia’s arm or the dotted pattern on her fur), the lives of Nelly and her family are mere sketches, quickly banned on paper with fast parallel hatch lines to create shading – a technique reminiscent of the Ashcan School’s studies of urban social injustice in their likewise spontaneous and realist sketches of street scenes and the urban poor. This is no coincidence as Preston regularly mingled with the artists of the Ashcan School, her husband James Moore Preston being an Ashcan artist himself. As a student of Ashcan-founder Robert Henri (1865–1929), May Wilson Preston even exhibited together with her husband and the fellow Ashcan-

student George Bellows (“James Moore Preston” n.d.; Prieto 2001: 159–160; Rubinstein 1982: 166). Whereas Portia’s visual characterization thus recalls Preston’s (humorous) fashion illustrations that she, for example, furnished for *Good Housekeeping* between 1907 and 1909, the same artist’s portrayal of a working-class girl draws from her personal connection to Ashcan School artists, whose gritty portraits of New York’s poorest regularly contained street children.

With the descriptions of her altruistic motives, Portia’s positive textual characterization compares to May Wilson Preston’s sympathetic depiction of young women’s changing roles and aspirations in the early twentieth century that Nolan (2017: 72) emphasizes and which was part of female artists’ ability to re-imagine and thereby positively impact public opinion about suffrage in the media (Sheppard 1994: 196–204). Reflected in her sympathetic drawings of new (political) womanhood in the 1910s, the “accomplished and established artistic social chronicler,” as Nolan calls her, was also “well known for her ability to depict accurately and deftly the social realities of her time” (2017: 72). An article in *The Craftsman* even points out her “intimate sympathy with the *tragedies* of life” (“Foremost American Illustrators” 1909: 277, my emphasis): In keeping with the WSP’s charitable agenda and the story, Preston’s gloomy portrayal of Nelly’s family in the first episode was meant to elicit empathy from the reader. And yet, the sketch-like drawing results in a patronizing and generalizing glance at a rather large family in roughly drawn rags and with a perplexed gaze in their eyes, looking at a loss.

Fitting with Preston’s almost sociological external gaze on Nelly’s family, Bailey’s text only indirectly hints at the encounter between Nelly and Portia. Quite tellingly, in the entire story, Portia and her family merely talk *about* the financial hardship of Nelly’s family, but never do they talk *with* them. Despite other dialogue passages in the text, there is no dialogue between Portia and Nelly. In the first episode, Portia (textually) announces her charitable wish to administer to the needs of her poorer, working-class friend, but we (neither textually, nor visually) ever witness how she addresses Nelly’s needs, let alone directly talks to her, after a first (visual-textual) encounter in the first episode, which is also only reported indirectly by Portia. Further, and just as ironic given the story’s altruistic background, in the entire story, we never *see* Portia helping Nelly out, let alone asking her about her needs, feelings, or experiences as a working mother. This form of ‘charity’ is only mentioned in episode I – and only *textually* when Mother Primrose placates her daughter’s kindling anger at social injustice by pointing out that Nelly receives Portia’s “broken dolls, her mother lots of work” (Bailey and Preston 1911: 7). Of all possible charitable acts, the Primroses hand Nelly broken toys and burden her mother with even more work under a tariff that even the ten-year-old Portia recognizes as detrimental.

Preston's visual narrative presents a clear hierarchy between the two girls and their classes, not least by invisibilizing the adult Nelly with her own life and wishes: It is telling that there is only one image of Nelly – as a child, at that, where she is helpless and patronized by the gaze and the conversations of Portia and her parents, underlined by her worn-out clothes. In analogy with her one-dimensional characterization by her telling name of Nelly Poor, née Naught, Nelly's life is overall painted as a caricatured view of working-class child- and motherhood. This pity-eliciting visual impression, as well as the textual negligence to inform of the Naughts' situation, not only bespeaks an ignorance of working-class people's needs, but also feeds into the patronizing language that the story and, as we will see below, the WSP in general use towards the working classes.

While Bailey's text draws attention to the social plight of Nelly and her family in the first episode, their life does not play a part in the ensuing story, which revolves around Portia. Bailey's textual narrative only draws on Nelly's adult life for dramatic purposes of comparison: In Portia's repetitive textual references to her, Portia projects emancipated ideas on Nelly and thereby idealizes her working-class survival strategies. Just married and introduced to her assigned 'role' as upper-middle-class wife, Portia exclaims: "I envy Nellie [sic] Naught who makes our windows shine, / [. . .] / While I am moping through the day, a useless idle sinner – Nell works and sings, and then goes home to cook her [husband's] dinner" (Bailey and Preston 1912b: 11). It is not only Portia's own perceived inactivity that makes her miserable. Also, she envies (and idealizes) what she perceives as Nelly's independence, which is, of course, only an independence from Portia's upper-class social constructs. These constructs require that Portia's son must be fed "on schedule" by a nurse, whereas Nelly nurses her children herself (Bailey and Preston 1912c: 7): "I do declare that Nelly Poor, whose baby is her own, / Is happier far than Portia P., who sits here on a throne" (7). Again, Nelly's happiness is only a romanticized image of working-class life in Portia's head, and it is telling how this repeated idealization of Nelly's work and 'emancipation' in the textual narrative contradicts the two girls' visual opposition (prim-and-proper vs. disheveled).

"Portia Politics" relies on Nelly to act as Portia's Other, but Nelly's own story, let alone her struggles and needs, never take the main role. Bailey's burdening telling name for her, Nelly Naught, paints her as a helpless and dependent creature, a sense of 'nothing' in this story. Even before she marries Peter Poor and adopts his surname, Nelly is belittled by the story: When Portia marries, it is "[p]oor Nellie Naught" (Bailey and Preston 1912b: 10; my emphasis) who watches as Portia's grand wedding takes place. Deviating from the middle-class norm, Nelly's role is plainly to add dimensions of lower-class, working womanhood to the story – in a way that can only be superficially sketched, clichéd, and often plain wrong, as

the story portrays Nelly as the simplified exemplary representative of 'her' entire class. Whereas Portia's character develops and takes the shape of various configurations of girl- and womanhood, Nelly's characterization remains one-dimensional. This affirms Nelly in her secondary role, and yet, Nelly is decisive for the story's motivation and course.

Textually, Nelly's (alleged) actions, of which we only learn through Portia's reports, have the function to drive Portia's own character development. Even more: Portia's development only functions *through* Nelly. By filling in as the working woman, the quintessential socially weak 'victim' that Portia's emancipation depends on, Nelly's role is that of a (textual) prop that motivates Portia's altruistic story and, hence, the socialist message of Bailey's text. The story only calls upon Nelly as an initial reason for Portia's fledgling political interest and, in almost every subsequent episode, for comparison: It is worth noting that these comparisons benefit first and foremost Portia's quest for emancipation rather than her friend's social situation.

This becomes apparent when Portia feels inspired by her friend's hard work and decides to exchange her luxurious life in the enclosed environs of a hotel for life and "[hard] labor" on an open farm (Bailey and Preston 1912c: 7). In experiencing farm life, Portia probes the life realities of wage-earning women – with two important differences: As a woman of means, she can financially rely on her husband and on the support of a housekeeper (1912e: 16). Most importantly, though, Portia can *choose* to work, as her survival does not depend on it.

As the visual narrative discloses, Portia's farm life is a mere cop-out. Her farm resembles more a large garden than a full-fledged farm, as also the episode's headline indicates: Portia is "in her garden," where she is "training up her roses" (1912d: 16), but she is certainly not feeding pigs, gathering hay, or raking dung. Thus, with what appears like a leisurely activity for an upper-middle-class woman in her own farmhouse's garden, she cannot 'bridge' the roles of the wage-working woman and the woman of leisure but creates her own acceptable middle role and sphere between the domestic house and the outside world.

Portia's impractical, extensive, flowing long dress, which impedes the working lifestyle that she longs for, is symbolic for her status as a Veblenesque leisure-class woman who does not have to perform 'real' labor. Portia's composite-character is limited in its representation of all facets of positive 'new womanhood,' as the aspect of employment and work demonstrates: As a rich upper-middle-class woman, she simply does not work for a living. Her farm life is hardly real work, and her dress is only a reminder of this irony. Instead, the story tries to fit in the working woman's interests by presenting a dangerously romanticized and idealized example of a low-income, working woman's plain survival strategies: Nelly "works and sings" (Bailey and Preston 1912b: 11), but Nelly's care work is invisible, while Portia's

pleasant version of ‘work’ is in focus – a classic example of how more precarious forms of (care) work are absent from public visibility and discourse.

It is particularly Preston’s non-visualization of working women’s lives and motivation for enfranchisement – next to their striking textual idealization – that speaks of an utter ignorance regarding the needs and interests of working-class women, who were, after all, the group targeted by the WSP’s reformist agenda. A comparison of discrepant visual and textual narratives thus has the potential to tell us more about the conception of Portia’s composite-character. Hiring Preston for this story’s illustrations was a strategic move to bring out the political party’s charitable agenda. And yet, incidences of the upper-middle-class character’s prominence, and her visual Other’s absence or inferiority, question and undermine the story’s underlying social politics, and hint at a political party’s between-the-lines agenda, as well as clientele.

The illustrations provide a one-sided, white, elitist portrayal of suffragist activism, which does not take place in loud street protests, but in a young woman’s decision to attend college and go into politics. This is consistent with the textual narrative in which, as illustrated above, the title’s purported ‘politics’ are barely discernible at all. In this subsection it became clear that “Portia Politics” and the WSP grasp the white (upper-) middle-class woman as the prototype of a suffragist, with the working class forming a mere secondary category that feeds into white (upper-) middle-classness as a primary category. It is no secret that the U.S.-American suffrage movement was fraught with classist and racist tendencies.¹⁶⁴ Female activists and artists frequently articulated calls for change and emancipation in the same texts and images that were fraught with racist and classist tendencies so that their seemingly progressive and liberal messages appear tainted to modern-day reader-viewers and must be taken with a grain of salt.

164 Judging from standard accounts of U.S.-American suffrage history, the suffrage activism during the 1910s might seem like an entirely white (upper-) middle-class endeavor. It took until 1998 that Rosalyn Terborg-Penn’s seminal book *African American Women in the Struggle for the Vote, 1850–1920* would contribute a “counterweight” to the narrative told by white suffrage activists Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Matilda Joslyn Gage, and Ida Husted Harper in the six-volume *History of Woman Suffrage* (Seelye 2019). For a more recent account, cf. Martha S. Jones (2020). Particularly African American women “viewed suffrage less in terms of individual enfranchisement and more in terms of a collective project enabling racial uplift,” whereby suffrage was only one point on a larger reform agenda (Chapman 2014: 175). When New York’s white, elitist WSP offered to admit African American suffragists into their organization in 1917 – provided they adopt the party rules – the latter feared that adherence to those rules would “reduce[] their power to a minority vote” and quench their “distinct interests” as women whose appeal to vote stood “at the crossroads of racism and sexism” (M. S. Jones 2020: 182; see also “Suffragists Drew no Line” 1917: 1).

And yet, “Portia Politics” needs the working classes and their alleged needs (as expressed through the character of Nelly) as a mere projection surface for its white (upper-) middle-class protagonist’s class-centered activism and for the WSP’s (pseudo-) socialist calling. “Portia Politics” thus illustrates how the suffrage movement was dominated by a discourse of college-educated, white upper-middle-class women, but also how the movement’s leaders were, simultaneously, very aware of the need to reach out to working-class women to secure a wider approval. The highly limited visibility of working-class women in almost the entire story’s visual narrative, particularly in Portia’s final soapbox speech that, purportedly, addresses working women and praises women’s cross-class bonding for the suffragist cause, is then at least striking, but, most of all, telling given the WSP’s own difficulties with reaching out to and mobilizing working-class and immigrant women. In particular, the story’s juxtaposition of singular and collective suffrage activism in the visual and textual narratives reveals much about the underlying politics and agenda of the WSP.

4.5 “You, Together with a lot of other Yous?” Portia’s and the Woman Suffrage Party’s Activism between Personal Emancipation and Collective Action

In its November 1911 issue, the *Woman Voter* provoked its readers with the question: “Does the Woman Suffrage Party Appreciate You? Does it appreciate the money you have given, the time you have spent, and the service you have rendered?” (Howe 1911: 28). The answer to this rhetorical question came promptly: “No, it does not.” As the article’s author, Heterodoxy-founder,¹⁶⁵ NAWSA member, and feminist organizer Marie Jenney Howe, explains, the party “cannot” acknowledge individual members’ activities “because the Woman Suffrage Party is *you*, together with a lot of other yous [sic]. It is the collective will of all its active members. Now, how can a collective will appreciate part of its own activity?” (1911: 28, italics in orig.). Howe thereby presents women’s suffrage activism as a selfless, one-for-all effort, where the “reward” consists of members’ “joy of service” and loyal “self-sacrifice” (28). Anyone seeking individual appreciation, should “[b]etter go back to crochet work” (28).

In this subsection I contrast the story’s textual narrative, which highlights suffrage as community action, with its visual presentation that paints Portia’s suf-

¹⁶⁵ Heterodoxy was an intellectual and unorthodox feminist debating club in Greenwich Village, founded in 1912.

franchise activism as an individual ‘one-woman endeavor.’ What do the textual narrative’s messages of plurality, and their absence in a visual narrative that focuses entirely on Portia’s personal action, reveal about the story and its underlying politics? By drawing on historical evidence, such as contemporary feedback on the WSP’s meetings, reports on the party’s classist attitudes, and elitist membership structures, I argue that the story’s limited outlook reflects how the WSP’s larger working-class and immigrant-focused socialist agenda for on-the-ground community action failed in its realization. “Portia Politics,” with its one-sided visual focus on a singular upper-middle-class protagonist’s personal emancipation thus has the same problem as the WSP with realizing its textually stressed aim of collective cross-class action.

Throughout the text, Portia presents suffrage as a culmination of women’s community-focused efforts. In episode III, Portia explains to her husband Dan how her practical work could benefit the community – from working as a street cleaner, to being a member of the park commission or school board. In the textual narrative, Portia repeatedly draws on women’s collective action for the greater good as an argument for their enfranchisement, emphasizing how women’s insights and experiences can benefit social reform efforts (Bailey and Preston 1912d: 16). Not least, by using Nelly as a placeholder for ‘the working woman’ and as a target for the white native-born, upper-middle-class woman’s social activism, Portia praises the strength of cross-class sisterhood in the fight for the vote.

Portia’s ‘politics’ are informed by a new form of social motivation and learning influenced by the Progressive era that transcends class boundaries and is rooted in older ideologies surrounding motherhood, most of all ‘public motherhood,’ which pervaded most conservative suffragist literature, including “Portia Politics.” Basis for this concept was the idea that mothers extend their domestic sphere (including their alleged predestination to ‘care’ and their moral influence) into the public sphere “to include the community and the nation as the larger ‘home’” (Mayo 2017; see also Lange 2020: 108–109). The influential ideology of ‘public motherhood’ emphasized women’s opportunities for effecting positive sociopolitical change in the public sphere, while also indicating how events in the public sphere threaten the sanctity of the domestic private sphere: “home, we think, is not four walls, but all our country wide” (Bailey and Preston 1912e: 16).¹⁶⁶

166 The element of women’s *public* responsibility distinguishes ‘public motherhood’ from the eighteenth-century concept of Republican Motherhood, which similarly emphasized feminine virtue and moral superiority, granting more influence to women and their work, but – contrary to ‘public motherhood’ – operated exclusively in the domestic sphere. A rich and influential ‘public mother’ could also be the (upper-class) ‘new society woman,’ and vice versa, which suggests that the ‘public mother’ did not have to be an actual mother to take her ‘mothering’ into the pub-

At least in the textual narrative, Portia’s type develops from the “new type of girl” that “has come into being” (“Girl of To-Day” 1913: 18) into the “new type of society woman [who] is rapidly being developed in this country,” a political persona described by Gertrude Barnum, labor reformer and settlement house resident, in an article for the *Woman Voter* of October 1911 (14). The “new type of society woman” believes in women’s cross-class solidarity and does not shy away from “get[ting] into the swim of the entire social sea” (1911: 14). Like her, Portia believes that equipping working mothers like Nelly with the right to vote will improve their social situation – a goal that aligns with the overall reformist mission of the WSP and the *Woman Voter*’s editor Beard.

Reasserting suffragism as a project of the upper-middle classes, both the *Woman Voter* and “Portia Politics” fit into a larger strategic move exercised in both the suffragist press and literary fiction.¹⁶⁷ The textual plot is propelled by Portia’s feelings of empathy for Nelly and joins in the ‘old’ altruistic refrain used by suffragists: With the vote, women would end social injustice and corruption in the public sphere, rather than claiming or usurping a male political sphere.¹⁶⁸ As she grows into an adult, Portia thus builds her (textually declared) intentions for social reform and women’s suffrage onto this friendship, testing the cross-class ties in the fight for the vote (Chapman and Mills 2012: 174): As Barnum continues, “[i]t is a matter of pride to the lady of leisure that she has gained the friendship of the glove worker and boot and shoemaker – that she, the possessor of mere book-learning, is not held in contempt by the self-made woman who has deep first-hand knowledge of life” (1911: 14). Society women fighting for working women’s enfranchisement were frequently criticized for ignoring the latter’s life realities, so that Barnum stresses the “realization of interdependence” and solidarity (“striving to abolish artificial barriers of rank, religion, race, color and sex”) as important pillars of the modern society woman’s suffragist activism (14, 23).

Although the textual narrative, by regularly drawing on Nelly’s condition to provide arguments for the text’s socialist reasoning, seeks to mobilize (upper-)middle-class women’s support for suffrage, Preston’s visual narrative does not re-

lic sphere. For a detailed account of women’s nineteenth-century political culture, see Baker (1984).

¹⁶⁷ Several suffrage novels negotiated class differences by narrating stories of how the “lives of privileged and poor women intersect” (Chapman and Lamont 2012: 268).

¹⁶⁸ As in other reform movements, for example the abolitionist and temperance movements, more conservative suffragist groups, including the Women’s Christian Temperance Union and the National Association of Colored Women, invoked the supposedly higher moral authority of women given their being role models as mothers to future voters (Tickner 1988: 217–218; see also Dennison 2003: 28; Lange 2020: 157).

flect the story's – let alone the political journal's editorial – goals. Apart from an unassuming visual juxtaposition of the rich girl with her less fortunate counterpart during their childhood years in the first episode, we never see Portia interact with the adult Nelly so that, visually, Portia does not mimic Barnum's altruistic “new type of society woman” (1911: 14). Instead, Preston singles out Portia's individual needs. Note how this is not the story of how Portia mothers, let alone befriends, the ‘Nellies of NYC,’ but the story of Portia's *individual* emancipation. Although Portia “pin[es] [f]or something really ‘doing’” (Bailey and Preston 1912a: 9) and “go[ing] in for politics” (Bailey and Preston 1912c: 7), she is seen fighting on her own. Even more, the visuals suggest that Portia fights for herself: for her graduation from college, for work, for her own dream of a farmhouse.

Portia's public speech, which also marks the grand political finale of “Portia Politics,” appeared in the *Voter's* “Parade Number” in May 1912. Its articles like “To the Men and Women in the Street” or the explanatory article “Why We March” provided a complementary read to the suffrage parade of May 4, 1912, in New York City, which saw twenty-thousand suffrage supporters marching. This newsworthy parade caused public attention certainly due to its elaborate aesthetics, with banners, “carefully and colorfully outfitted” participants, some of them on horses, accompanied by marching bands (Dismore 2015), but particularly given the sight of women boldly marching in public.¹⁶⁹ Yet, despite the media's presentation of suffrage as a visual mass ‘spectacle,’ and despite the text's announcement that Portia addresses “crowds of farmers and their wives” at the “State Fair” (Bailey and Preston 1912e: 16, my emphasis), Preston decided to visualize Portia's final speech as a one-woman show: Portia on a pedestal, the presence of other women only evident from Bailey's poem, which reports of an audience, but lacks the audience's replies. The textual claims for community action and Portia's repeated use of the personal pronoun “we” in her final speech remain unseen. The visual singularization of the privileged Portia that marginalizes or leaves out images of her friend Nelly, her own children, her family, as well as the rural audience, or any other activists, reveals: Not only is Portia the clear protagonist. Also, the (upper-) middle-class readers targeted by the *Woman Voter* are supposed to identify with the protagonist and her actions – “because the Woman Suffrage Party is *you*, together with a lot of other *yous* [sic].”

169 The large 1913 Woman Suffrage Procession in New York City was organized by Alice Paul and Lucy Burns for NAWSA and ended in a near riot. Whereas Paul wanted to secure the public's attention via parades, picketing, and protests, believing that attention would result in the “passage of a federal suffrage amendment,” NAWSA showed itself wary towards “militant tactics” and “preferred state-by-state campaigns and traditional methods like petitioning legislatures and lobbying politicians” (Maurer, Lange, and Bennet 2018).

The story therefore presents the movement for suffrage as a series of individual moves made by a singular leisure-class woman and, decisively, not as a cross-class community effort, thereby pointing out the problems and limitations of cross-class, communal suffragist action. This visual focus on Portia and her interests indicates that it is on (upper-) middle-class women to advocate for their working-class ‘sisters’ as Portia’s final speech underlines: “Woman must stand for woman, the weak protect the weak” (Bailey and Preston 1912e: 17). Yet not all women are equally weak: Exploitative working conditions, an impenetrable class system, or immigrant status, back then as well as now, leave some women by default ‘weaker’ than others in this ‘sisterly’ bond. Ignoring these systemic inequalities demonstrates how the ‘protection,’ exercised by leisure-class women towards working women, can be patronizing.

In its articles and calls to attend the national suffrage convention, the WSP repeatedly emphasized women’s “collective action” and their gender solidarity (Harvey 1996: 109–110), but its idea of cross-class solidarity was questionable, and an intersectional approach (across race and class) to women’s voting rights was even lacking. As Mary Chapman elaborates, suffrage campaigning, dominated by white, native-born women, was “often appropriative rather than inclusive, asserting shared interests with racial minorities through a series of tropes, while pragmatically and rhetorically excluding minority women’s participation in campaign organizations” (2014: 174). The “rhetoric of sisterhood,” originating with mid-nineteenth-century women’s rights activists to emphasize cross-class and -race ties to enslaved African American women (2014: 174, 176, 183), was one such idealistic trope that also “Portia Politics” perpetuates – and ultimately fails to convey.¹⁷⁰

Further, in Bailey’s text, Portia emphasizes female collectivity and cross-class sisterhood by presenting herself as a socially responsible ‘public mother,’ who stresses the plight of working-class mothers and children. To underscore the message of her speech, “Portia chose out her two twin sons to squire her to the Fair” (Bailey and Preston 1912e: 16).¹⁷¹ Pointing to her children during her soapbox speech, Portia announces: “My children are not only those here standing by my side” (1912e: 16). The continuation of her speech centers on child welfare and mothers’ fair judgment: “Give women voice in laws that guard the children of the State /

¹⁷⁰ With their hostile tone against Black male voters, early-twentieth-century white, native-born suffragists “turned away from natural rights arguments” and adopted “nativist and racially exclusive arguments” to vie for white men’s support of white women’s voting rights (Chapman 2014: 175). Ignored by the “persistent rhetoric of ‘sisterhood’” of white suffragists, Black suffragists decided to rely on their own organizations (175).

¹⁷¹ This is inspired by real events from the author’s life: Bailey supposedly “lent her twin babies to a suffrage pageant in 1911,” with one of the twins starting to cry midway (Neuman 2017: 81).

We know what burdens they can bear, what prudence they dictate” (16). As a ‘public mother,’ Portia emphasizes, “[m]y motherhood must feel their wrongs, those children are my care” (16). Despite these textual reference to maternal acts of care, Preston’s drawings of Portia, however, never show her as a mother with her own children or as a housewife. Episode IV presents an image of a crib, but despite Portia’s self-presentation as a ‘public mother’ to working women and children, depictions of care (for her own children, let alone the grown-up Nelly or other working women) are missing in the visual narrative. The only children featured in the illustrations show Portia and Nelly themselves as children, as well as Nelly’s siblings – their pity-eliciting image appealing to ‘public mothers’ to address the need for better child welfare in this suffragist publication.

Instead of chanting political slogans with other women from all social backgrounds to realize her textual advocacy for sisterhood, Portia appears in constellations with men as she confronts them about her personal goals (college, work, political participation). Out of nine illustrations, three show Portia on her own, three in discussion with men (twice with her father and once with her neighboring farmer). Only the remaining three images either show: Portia with Nelly, Portia with her mother and the nurse, as well as a portrait of Nelly’s family. Taken together with Preston’s two *Woman Voter* cover illustrations during the run of the serial, a total of five images show Portia next to men. For a textual narrative that emphasizes motherly ideals and emancipatory decisions, Preston’s visual narrative therefore remains surprisingly conservative, and is yet a mark of its time by relying on men’s presence and support for suffrage. This was a strategic move common among leisure-class women who used the social prestige and influence of their husbands to make suffragist messages heard (Chapman 2014: 29). Motivated by her own political progress, Portia thus focuses on those already in power (moneyed white men) instead of addressing Nelly and her community’s needs and enquiring how suffrage could amend working-class women’s hardships.

This discrepancy – between textual messages of suffrage activism as a women-led, cross-class community action and their questionable visualization in an upper-class individual woman’s personal emancipation story – indicates the WSP’s own biased politics and conundrum. With a membership structure consisting of numerous ‘Portias’ (white upper-middle-class women), the party failed to properly engage some ‘Nellies’ (working-class or immigrant women) in its suffrage activism. Consequently, due to this class bias in its membership structure, the party had a skewed and incomplete understanding of the social and systemic disadvantages underlying working-class woman- and motherhood.

The WSP’s reformist agenda to engage and benefit New York City’s working-class and immigrant communities is mirrored in the *Woman Voter*’s development: Whereas the 1910 *Woman Voter* was a bland, text-intensive bulletin report-

ing on party activities without any apparent socialist agenda,¹⁷² the increasingly colorful and graphic publication’s agenda and “editorial tone” under its 1911–1912 editor-in-chief Mary Ritter Beard cut across “class, age, and organizational boundaries” (Endres 1996d: 455, 458). The openly socialist Beard introduced editorial contributions by socialists, trade unionists, and labor activists, and emphasized the benefit of the vote for working-class women “in securing and defending better conditions of life and labor” (*WV*, Sept. 1911: 12, qtd. in Endres 1996d: 455; see also Beard 1912: 12–13), instead of only highlighting it as a “way for middle-class women to improve society” (Endres 1996d: 455). This is ironic considering the WSP’s classist viewpoints and elitist membership composition. Still, just as there is no verbal interaction between Portia and Nelly, and Portia only reports *about* Nelly and her life in an indirect manner when she speaks with her parents, also the *Woman Voter*, despite inviting the voices of labor unionists and socialists, ultimately only published texts *about* the city’s workers and immigrants rather than really engaging with them. This is also reflected in the WSP’s unsuccessful outreach attempts to working and immigrant communities.

The WSP availed itself of grassroots approaches to “actively recruit[] working-class women” (Vapnek 2009: 132) and to convince immigrant voters of various ethnic and religious minority backgrounds. In an attempt at progressivist, reform-minded fieldwork, the WSP sent out special settlement workers to New York City’s poorest areas and printed its information in various languages (Schaffer 1962: 275; Catt and Shuler 2020: 284–289). The nationalities addressed reveal a white bias, though: The WSP visited “[w]orkers in the subway excavations [. . .] with Irish banners and shamrock fliers,” “[canvassed] Turkish, Armenian, French, German and Italian restaurants” (Buhle and Buhle 2005: 404), organized “Irish, Syrian, Italian and Polish block parties,” and even elected chairwomen for “the French” and “the German” parts of its targeted audience (402). While “Portia Politics” does not refer to Nelly as a recent immigrant, let alone assigns her a nationality, the story makes references to certain common prejudices surrounding New York City’s European-born working-class population (such as a large family size or the precarious employment in garment factories).

Reprinting the original document for the “New York City Campaign 1915” in their *Concise History of Woman Suffrage*, Paul Buhle and Mari Jo Buhle (2005: 400–406) give an impression of the enormous publicity efforts undertaken by the WSP: Given Greater New York’s population of 4.7 million and the fact that the

172 The earlier numbers of the *Woman Voter* did not carry any visual content as exemplified by a roughly eight-page-long issue from June 1910 (vol. 1, no. 5).

WSP “had to appeal to native Americans¹⁷³ of all classes and conditions and to thousands of foreign born,” the party

sent its forces to local political conventions; held mass meetings; issued thousands of leaflets in many languages; conducted street meetings, parades, plays, lectures, suffrage schools; gave entertainments and teas; sent appeals to churches and all kinds of organizations and to individual leaders; brought pressure on legislators through their constituents and obtained wide publicity in newspapers and magazines. (“Document 71 (VI: 459–464): New York City Campaign, 1915” 2005)

With these immense efforts, the WSP was able to grow from 20,000 members in 1910 to more than 500,000 in 1917 (“Document 71” 2005). Yet, two reservations should be pointed out: For one, all these publicity stunts focused solely on white immigrant populations, passing over the enfranchisement of Black, formerly enslaved populations, whose long struggles for the vote were erased from the history of suffrage.¹⁷⁴ Second, the party’s overall goals of social reform and social justice notwithstanding, a 1911 survey of assembly districts revealed that especially those groups of society who would most benefit from such social reform acts were the ones opposed to suffrage and its reform goals (Schaffer 1962: 274). Certain immigrant groups opposed women’s suffrage for traditional reasons or could not be reached due to language or “cultural barrier[s]” (274).

These “cultural barrier[s]” between the WSP and the parts of the population it wanted to edify and ‘educate’ on the benefits of women’s enfranchisement were not surprising considering the party’s strong class bias. Just like in “Portia Politics,” the WSP’s messaging and campaigning on the benefits of the vote for working-class women and children remains on the level of top-down verbal preaching, rather than (inter-)action, omitting the real problems of working-class life. As such, Portia’s soapbox lecture fails to address the improvement of working women’s labor conditions and hours – even though her knowledge that Nelly’s family suffers from bad “tariff[s]” (Bailey and Preston 1911: 7) initially motivated Portia’s path into politics. Just like Portia, and as Ronald Schaffer already wrote

¹⁷³ The fact that the text originates with the original *History of Woman Suffrage*, published by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Matilda Joslyn Gage, and Ida Husted Harper between 1881 and 1922, owes to the wrong use of the term “native Americans” here: The authors mean those U.S.-Americans who were born in the country, but who were, by no means, indigenous Native Americans, who would be granted U.S. citizenship only by 1924. In many states, citizenship, however, did not automatically result in voting rights.

¹⁷⁴ The visual erasure of non-white women from suffragist cartoons is telling. One rare example that “present[ed] ethnic, immigrant, and working-class women as potential voters who especially needed suffrage to improve their own lives” was Cornelia Baxter Barns’s *One Man – One Vote* (Prieto 2001: 175).

in 1962, the WSP did not extend its white upper-class hand to slum dwellers: Whereas other political groups provided services for the poor, such as “coal in winter, interceding [. . .] with the police,” or offers of diversion such as excursions, the WSP’s goals rather *deterred* the working classes (1962: 274). Schaffer does not sugarcoat his explanation: “The suffragists wanted to do away with prostitution and child labor” – the latter is also addressed in Portia’s speech, “but prostitution and child labor were means of support for many wretched people” (1962: 274). As such, the party lacked an “intersectional approach” to women’s suffrage, as access to birth control outweighed access to the ballot-booth for working-class women (Choudhry 2015). It is telling that, contrary to more radical journals of the era, like the *Birth Control Review* or *The Masses*, the WSP’s *Woman Voter* and “Portia Politics” omit this topic that is so central to working-class women’s struggles.

This questionable bias was also noted by birth-control activist Margaret H. Sanger. In an article for the socialist *New York Call* about the 1911 WSP meeting that she attended, Sanger criticizes the classist “atmosphere” at the gathering that completely ignored the life realities of working-class women: Instead of addressing the needs for fair wages and working conditions, or access to birth control, the WSP members provided only “nice and polite and kind arguments in favor of the women in the home, who need the ballot to get CLEAN milk, clean streets and fresh air” (Sanger 1911: 15, capitalization in orig.).

This lack of interaction and interest in the working classes’ actual needs is reflected in “Portia Politics”: In a story that is presumably based on two girls’ cross-class friendship, Nelly is neither visually nor textually ever presented as Portia’s friend. The reader-viewer never sees the girls playing together or engaging with each other as friends. The only picture of Nelly and Portia shows them standing quite apart, with a wary distance, eyeing each other carefully.

The elite members of the WSP, despite their socialist argumentation, showed the same cautious reserve toward the urban working poor. Just like Portia does not interact with Nelly (beyond playing with her as a child), the party’s founder Catt and its socially conservative members, many of whom belonged to New York City’s “social elite” (Schaffer 1962: 274), exhibited a “middle[-]class bias,” even distancing themselves from mingling with “[p]oor, black, and immigrant women” (Choudhry 2015).¹⁷⁵ Sanger summarizes her impression of the WSP meeting, at which a female speaker suggested “to remove the dirty, smelling, sweaty men

175 From 1916 the WSP was chaired by the banker’s wife Vira Boarman Whitehouse and benefited from its leader’s connections when she appealed to Wall Street brokers for financial support (Neuman 2017: 78) – such appeals “from power to power, money to money” were strategically used by upper-middle-class suffragists (185).

from the polls,' so that she and her class could vote undisturbed," as follows: "[I]f the chairman [the female speaker at the gathering, my addition] and her class object to the smell of the workingman, so will they object to the smell of the working woman" (1911: 15, quotation marks in orig., qtd. in Choudhry 2015). It is telling that the story's visual focus is on Portia, while her 'disheveled' alter ego does not get on stage.

While the WSP aimed to be "the most democratic organization in the whole suffrage movement," as it declared in the September 1910 *Woman Voter* (8, qtd. in Schaffer 1962: 275), this call for a democratic suffrage movement masks the underlying conservatism, including the classist, and often racist, attitudes that underpinned the U.S.-American women's suffrage movement – the larger implications of which are today resurfacing in several states' moves for passing voting restrictions. These "racist, nativist, and elitist tendencies" (Chapman and Mills 2012: 2) could be found across the parties, from the Woman Suffrage Party and the National American Woman Suffrage Association to the National Woman's Party under Alice Paul, who "sacrificed black women's votes" and, once suffrage was granted, "refused" to support Black women's ongoing fight for political acknowledgement and enfranchisement (Lange 2020: 208).¹⁷⁶

Schaffer finds sharp words for this conflict between well-intentioned party strategies and working-class life reality: the "clean" government" that the WSP sought to create would "mean starvation" to the working class and its children (1962: 274, quotation marks in orig.). Whereas Portia's speech emphasizes women's responsibility towards their community and the larger political sphere, the WSP and its attitudes towards people like Portia's friend Nelly spelled a different sense of community. Schaffer addresses this contradiction: While the WSP "scorned and attacked them," the party also "appealed to the immigrants for their votes though it was humiliating to do so," since "many of the suffragists felt little in common with the filthy, malodorous, and to them, peculiar inhabitants of the lower East side" (1962: 274). Bailey's at times arrogant, prejudice-laden writing for "Portia Politics" in the party journal thus matches the WSP's cold and insulting view of New York's working classes: "[T]hey are never satisfied" and "they're often rude" (Bailey and Preston 1911: 7).

¹⁷⁶ The suffrage movement emphasized "the educated, white, middle-class female vote" and used this argument "as an antidote to the enfranchisement of Negroes and immigrants" (Tickner 1988: 266). The NAWSA and the NWP campaigns even explicitly worked against racial equality by "address[ing] fears that women's equality would lead to racial equality" (Lange 2020: 7).

Like many conservative suffragist groups, the WSP settled for a pseudo-socialist agenda. Instead of listening to what the ‘Nellies’ of New York have to say, the WSP rather surmised about them and how to best ‘protect’ them. The *Woman Voter*’s editor Beard, however, criticized these pseudo-reformist approaches, including those practiced by middle-class women under the name of ‘public motherhood’ or ‘Mothercraft,’ as Beard calls it in an article published in the January 1912 *Woman Voter*.

In “Mothercraft,” Beard draws attention to the flipside of ‘public motherhood,’ that is, to how the ideal “over-emphasize[s] the old moral responsibility of the ‘domestic’ mother” and thereby ignores the actual “industrial and urban conditions in the Twentieth Century” that are to blame in place of mothers (1912: 12–13). Beard thus recognizes a need for genuine “community action” for women’s enfranchisement that addresses the systemic poverty affecting working women (12, 13, italics in orig.). Historians like Johanna Neuman confirm that the *Woman Voter*’s editor-in-chief viewed suffrage as a joint “movement of middle-class *and* working-class women” (2017: 97, my emphasis). Beard derides how “it is easy and cheap for well-to-do persons to advise the poor or ignore them altogether” (1912: 12) and how their shortsighted recommendations leave “wages, unemployment, industrial accidents, wife desertions, tenement work, hours, congestion, drink” out of the equation (12, 13). Does Portia belong to the “dilettanti reformers” (13) who overlook the systemic disadvantages and needs underlying urban, working-class motherhood? And was Beard’s criticism then a tongue-in-cheek side blow against her own party’s members?

I argue that the ambivalent ambitions inherent in the WSP – between classist, conservative party politics and the socialist tendencies of the party journal’s editor – are also reflected in “Portia Politics.” The textual narrative illustrates Portia’s socially acceptable middle-ground as that of an (upper-) middle-class ‘public mother,’ yet, as seen, the visuals fail to adopt the textual narrative’s tone of cross-class solidarity.

In her speech, despite textually invoking the ideals of ‘public motherhood’ and women’s solidarity in the fight against political corruption, Portia overlooks the struggles faced by working-class women. Instead, the following excerpt of her speech mirrors the WSP’s firm trust in the concept of ‘public motherhood’ where a woman’s “share” of work affects as much the greater “public good” as the “private weal.” Women’s enfranchisement is not presented as a basic human right, but as a ‘fair’ remuneration of women’s work – a simplistic rendition of the complexities underlying the fight for the vote, since

[. . .] to deserve her favors free, woman must do *her* share
 In home and in the factory, in shop, and everywhere
 For public good, for private weal, Woman aloud must speak,

Woman must stand for woman, the weak protect the weak.
(Bailey and Preston 1912e: 17, emphasis in orig.)

Portia's respectable (visual) appearance at the state fair, where she gives a speech to "farmers and their wives," but also her education and social influence demonstrate how the fight for the vote is closely connected to questions of class, but also the availability of voice vs. voicelessness in the public sphere. Visibility here is closely related to voice and audibility, and invisibility to voicelessness, and both translate almost directly into the right to vote. It was primarily white upper- and middle-class women whose visibility and voice were already present and tolerated in public discourse, who were among the first women to gain the vote and who were for a long time the only suffragists celebrated and depicted in classic suffrage history books.

Like Beard, Portia was convinced that the vote would finally give the working woman her much-needed *voice* to be "political[ly] recogni[zed]" and thereby influence legislation that would offer her better "protection" ("Why Working Women Should Vote" 1912: 5) – but "Portia Politics" and its underlying classism reveal that the implementation of Beard's strategy was not that straightforward. The predominance of (upper-) middle-class women in leading the suffragist discourse and advocating for women of lower-class backgrounds implied that working-class women were not always appropriately represented – or properly heard. Overall, Bailey does not grant Nelly much voice in the story: Until the last episode, where Portia employs her as a so-called "barker" to attract an audience for her speech ("all, please, step this way"), Nelly is passive and never even speaks (Bailey and Preston 1912e: 16). Even then, Portia is unsure how to use Nelly's potential and actively involve her: "[W]hat does a 'barker' do?" Portia wonders aloud after a phone call requests her presence at the fair (16). It is telling how the story deceives the party's suffragist messaging, as Portia's engagement of Nelly as 'barker' is symbolic for Nelly's role: Largely invisible in Portia's emancipation story, Nelly lends her own voice to Portia's activism. Even more, contrary to the text's and the party's preaching of sisterly activism, where privileged women secure the vote to give a voice to their working-class sisters' needs, it is instead the working-class woman who uses her own voice to amplify the upper-middle-class woman's words and aspirations but who does not voice (let alone appear on the fair with) her own wishes, while her own (visual) appearance steps back behind Portia's public presence.

For sure: Although her speech fails to address the realities of working-class or immigrant female life (and offers no examples for how the "weak [shall] protect the weak"), Portia *intends* to speak for women of all classes – a working woman might not have the time, nor the influence for being asked to speak in public. Portia is explicitly requested by another influential suffragist to give a speech: "What,

Mrs. Tabitha Van Cott, to speak at the State Fair, / To crowds of farmers and their wives, ah me, I'd never dare!” (Bailey and Preston 1912e: 16). The influential Portia could potentially speak publicly on behalf of her working-class friend Nelly, who does not have the same access to Portia's middle-ground political approaches. Yet, note that Portia is supposed to lecture (“speak [. . .] to”) workers, not speak *for* them in a true act of allyship. While speaking out for those who cannot is a noble idea, farmers' wives, let alone the urban immigrant women exposed to sweatshop labor,¹⁷⁷ who were targeted by the WSP, had entirely different needs and understandings of ‘protection’ than a disenfranchised upper-middle-class activist like Portia and the members of the WSP could imagine.

Rather than engaging in direct conversation with the necessities and interests of the working poor, the WSP focused on a chiefly top-down, educational approach, as becomes evident from the party's 1909 mission statement. Its aims were, among others:

1. To diffuse among voters and non-voters a *wider knowledge* and *deeper understanding* of the underlying justice and expediency of woman's demand for the ballot.
2. To enlist the active co-operation of men and women by means of a systematic, vigorous, *educational* campaign.

[. . .]

New York must be *converted*; its *intelligence must be convinced* of the reasonableness of our demand; its conscience must be touched by the needs of women; and it must be made to feel that the enfranchisement of women is only another battle in the world's long struggle for human freedom.

(“Woman Suffrage Party Mission Statement” 1909, my emphases)

The WSP's upper-middle-class bias and its educational agenda shine through in the story: whether in the simplistic and deprecating telling names, the one-dimensional portrayal of Nelly and her family, or in the reference to workers suffering from big corporations, trade, and unfair tariffs and wages – which are supposed to be remedied once working women are equipped with the right to vote and have been educated in its benefits.

The party's incongruence between aiming to be a “an important voice for women in New York City who [are] interested in suffrage and equality” (Endres 1996d: 458) on the one hand, and its patronizing stance towards immigrants and

¹⁷⁷ As Laura Schwartz points out for the British suffrage movement, suffragist party's mobilization approaches “tended to focus on factory and sweated workers,” but rarely on “[d]omestic servants” (2019) like Nelly, who works in the Primrose's household.

working-class members who first have to be ‘enlightened,’ educated, and protected, on the other, can be explained by the general, likewise often ambivalent attitudes of Progressive-era activists (Schaffer 1962: 285). As I have demonstrated, at first glance, “Portia Politics” looks like a story of cross-class sisterhood that emphasizes the (anticipated) benefits of the vote for working women, a goal at the heart of the *Voter’s* editor Beard. But the story encapsulates the problematic attitudes and the class bias in the WSP’s agenda overall as well as in the *Woman Voter* itself, as the publication tried to mingle the middle-class ideology of ‘public motherhood’ with the party’s aim of equipping wage-earning women with the vote. The irony becomes clear: “Portia Politics” is a story that seeks to advocate for cross-class solidarity for the vote (Chapman and Mills 2012: 174) in a publication of a party that, itself, had problems initiating or living up to this same idea(l) of cross-class solidarity among its members and those the party sought to ‘protect.’ Just like the text’s socialist reasoning and activism is invisible at the visual level, the party’s political aims remained largely at the level of words.

The WSP’s top-down, didactic approach of “educat[ing],” “convert[ing],” and “convinc[ing]” the people of New York – and, as we saw, this meant a strong focus on the city’s minority population – marked Catt’s party as a close affiliate of the conservative NAWSA and its overall educational mission. The close association of the NAWSA and the WSP is not surprising, as Catt was not only responsible for the WSP and “the birth, life, and death of the [*Woman*] *Voter*” (Endres 1996d: 454), but was also twice president of the NAWSA (1900–1904, 1915–1920).¹⁷⁸

However, Catt’s top-down approach to educate New York’s minority groups on how suffrage would ‘improve’ their lives, as well as the WSP’s overall elitist membership structure did apparently not sit well with (or did not reach far enough for) the *Woman Voter* editor Mary Ritter Beard, who had deeper ties to the international labor movement and cared for the struggles of the working classes. Frustrated with the WSP’s and Catt’s more conservative, “educational” approach (“*Woman Suffrage Party Mission Statement*” 1909) and their distance from the real needs of working women,¹⁷⁹ Beard left the *Woman Voter* after

178 In October 1911, the *Woman Voter* ran an advertisement for the NAWSA’s *Woman’s Journal* (31), and in 1913, one year after Beard’s departure, briefly merged with the NAWSA’s New York State newsletter to form the *Woman Voter and the Newsletter*, before reverting to its old name a year later (Endres 1996d: 456–457). In a letter to the editor of the *New York Tribune*, Catt even referred to the WSP as “New York’s auxiliary of the NAWSA, which has 47 other similar branches” (1916: 10; qtd. in Van Voris 1987: 79).

179 See Beard’s 1914 comment on a letter by Catt in the *New York Times*. In this comment, Beard indirectly refers to Catt when she criticizes “those older women whose sole task has been educational” (qtd. in Kraditor 1965: 232n and in Endres 1996d: 456, 458n15).

the April 1912 issue to work for the Wage-Earners' Suffrage League (a branch of the WSP) and the New York Women's Trade Union League, before she would break with the WSP completely in 1913 and steer her focus towards legislation to protect workers.¹⁸⁰ The story thereby not only brings out the close, and yet complex ideological affiliations of the WSP with the larger NAWSA, but also how this exact affiliation might have conflicted with Beard's personal agenda for working-class women's emancipation and the recognition of their *actual* life realities overall.

4.6 Conclusion: Solidarity and Suffrage at Last?

"Portia Politics" mirrors the difficulties to align Mary Ritter Beard's perspective on wage-working women's lives with the more distanced, educational approaches of the WSP and its leader Carrie Chapman Catt. Similar to Beard, whose intersectional approach and socialist agenda to cross "class, age, and organizational boundaries" (Endres 1996d: 468) found their limitations within an elitist party's publication, Portia's idea to cross the boundaries of both class and gender at once also prove idealistic and have their limits. She may emancipate herself from her upper-middle-class's traditional gender roles, but she cannot 'cross' the boundaries of class, let alone race. Ultimately, Portia's composite figure is too limited in scope and lacks a genuine intersectional approach to take *real* (let alone visible) action beyond her white upper-middle-class sphere and her well-intentioned (textual) arguments. It is telling that the story not only begins, but also ends with Portia's (idealistic) *words*. The ending – Would Portia and Nelly celebrate their first joint walk to the ballot booth together? Would Nelly finally be paid fair wages to also enjoy the 'front seats at the show'? Or would Portia invite Nelly to live and work with her on the farm? – as well as the end of suffragist activism, would yet have to be written.

In 1915, the WSP hoped for a final decision in New York State in favor of women's suffrage, reflected in the *Woman Voter's* editorial focus on state victory under

¹⁸⁰ Influenced by her experience of English militant suffrage activism and the labor movement, Beard joined the radical Congressional Union (and its 1916 outgrowth, the NWP), founded by Lucy Burns and Alice Paul in 1913. There, she edited the *Suffragist*, was responsible for the Congressional Union's strategies, and organized as well as participated in rallies and parades. For the large 1913 parade, she encouraged the attendance of African American suffragists (Cott 1991: 69–70). In the 1920s, she also broke with the NWP to focus on legislation to protect workers (Cott 1990: 278–279; Van Voris 1987: 244n4).

its new editor Florence Woolston (Endres 1996d: 457).¹⁸¹ It failed, however. The women of New York State would not win the right to vote until November 6, 1917 (Corrice, Goodier, and Roesch Wagner 2018), and it would take even longer, until August 18, 1920, until the ratification of the 19th Amendment statutorily determined that “the right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex” (“19th Amendment” n.d.). Most Black women had to wait even longer to be enfranchised and for the Voting Rights Act of 1965 to prohibit any racial discrimination of voters.¹⁸² By then, the *Woman Voter* was already history, after its publication folded in 1917 into the greater publication *The Woman Citizen*, a NAWSA publication (Endres 1996c: 429).¹⁸³

With its calls for government intervention and state legislation to improve the lives of the urban working poor, the Woman Suffrage Party and the fight for women’s enfranchisement were part of the larger umbrella of progressivist reform movements. In particular, the contradictory activist approaches and top-down attitudes of the WSP attest to the ambivalence and multi-facetedness characterizing the Progressive era and the variety of progressivist approaches. I will examine this ambivalence between top-down social control and well-intentioned social justice in more detail in the next and final case study that centers on the illustrations by Jessie Willcox Smith, the famous illustrator of mother-child scenes, and Alice Beach Winter, another contributor to the *Woman Voter* from New York, whose socio-critical cartoons also appeared in the little magazine *The Masses*. Exploring the creative potential for personal and political expression across commercial and editorial illustration, this final chapter will address two aspects of magazine illustration and modern women’s lives that have been neglected in this study so far: the curious intersections between illustrated advertisements and ideologies of mother- and childhood.

181 For its January 1915 issue, the *Woman Voter* printed another suffragist drawn by Preston. With a self-assured hand on her hip, this fashionable woman, who is clearly inspired by Portia, calls for “Votes for Women” (see Sheppard 1994: 183).

182 Before 1965, poll taxes, literacy tests, and Jim-Crow-era violence would keep most Black Americans from casting their ballots (Waxman 2020; M. S. Jones 2020: 4). For thorough accounts of Black women’s long fight for the vote, see M. S. Jones (2020) or Terborg-Penn (1998).

183 In line with the NAWSA’s conservative party politics, Kitch stresses the *Woman Citizen*’s “upper-middle-class status” and the fact that the journal “often contained elements of moralizing and patronization, as well as cultural chauvinism” (2001: 82).

5 'It Floats': Jessie Willcox Smith's and Alice Beach Winter's Visual Narratives of Childhood between Commerce and Sociopolitical Critique

Dirtiness of any kind seems to us incompatible with civilization. We extend our demand for cleanliness to the human body too. [. . .] Indeed, we are not surprised by the idea of setting up the use of soap as an actual yardstick of civilization.
(Sigmund Freud 1961: 46)

Soap is the Scale of Civilization
("B. T. Babbitt's Best" slogan, qtd. in Lears 1994: 163)

5.1 Confidence in Cleanliness: A New Series of Ivory Soap Advertisements

A sparkling sense of newness pervaded the *Ladies' Home Journal* in its January issue of 1903. Combining New Year's resolutions with "standard[s] of purity," the Procter & Gamble company had purchased a rather expensive inside-cover slot in the popular women's magazine ("Announcement" 1903). In the very first issue of the new year, the company announced in a celebratory manner the start into a new advertising campaign for its famous brand Ivory Soap. The one-page advertisement prefigures what Ivory Soap ads of the turn-of-the-century were famous for: quality illustrations by the "best artistic talent" showcasing different scenarios of use (babycare, washing, shaving, cleaning the house), surrounded here by miniatures of the signature white bar of soap. The self-proclaimed "announcement" prepares the reader to expect one such full-page advertisement in each and every issue of this magazine "for several years to come." Its promise of "artistically attractive" advertisements underlines the company's claim to be "a *standard* of purity" (my emphasis). Literally reflected in a visual iconography of whiteness and textual proclamations on the importance of cleanliness, the soap's 'standard' is consistently upheld by its advertisement's serial monthly rhythm of publication for greater commercial effect.

Note: Parts of the argumentation of this chapter appear with different accentuation also in the essay "It Floats: Alice Beach Winter's Visual Narratives of Mother- and Childhood Between Commerce and Sociopolitical Critique" published in *Modernity and the Periodical Press: Trans-Atlantic Mass Culture and the Avant-gardes, 1880–1920*, edited by Felix Brinker and Ruth Mayer (2023).

GILBE & BEACH / NY N.Y.

How One Woman Cleaned Her White Parasol

"I made a strong suds of Ivory Soap and, with a soft hand brush, I scrubbed the upraised parasol with the Ivory Soap suds. I scrubbed hard, rubbing the strokes through the center of the sections longitudinally until all the stains were removed. Then I rinsed thoroughly by pouring water over the parasol and ended by sprinkling blowing water from a water sprinkler. The parasol, upraised, was placed in the sun to dry. The result was delightful. Snowy white and just a little stiff, it looked like new."

Ivory Soap is primarily a bath, toilet and *fine* laundry soap; but, because of its purity, it can be used for scores of purposes for which ordinary soaps are unsafe and unsatisfactory. The cleaning of white parasols is a case in point.

Ivory Soap 99⁴⁴/₁₀₀ Per Cent. Pure

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Figure 5.1: Winter, 1911b. "How One Woman Cleaned Her White Parasol." A woman presents the soap manufacturer's signature ivory-white cleanliness to the little girl and to the reader of the *Ladies' Home Journal*. Courtesy of *HathiTrust* via University of Michigan.

"[S]everal years" later, in the May 1, 1911, "Spring Romance Number" of the *Ladies' Home Journal*, the magazine's reader can witness a little girl's mishap. Her rueful expression says it all: She has soiled her mother's white parasol. She had only wanted to borrow it for playing 'fine lady' outside. Now she nervously wrings her little hands behind her back as she watches in amazement how her mother rolls up her sleeves, picks up a piece of Ivory Soap, and returns to the parasol the soap manufacturer's signature ivory white that glares brightly at the

reader of this issue (Winter 1911b: 4, Figure 5.1).¹⁸⁴ The pursuit of bright white cleanliness, and a mother's inculcation of her daughter with its value, take center stage in this fictitious account of "how one woman cleaned her white parasol."

This advertisement presents one of numerous illustrated advertisements for Ivory Soap that were circulated nationwide in early-twentieth-century women's magazines.¹⁸⁵ They were illustrated by famous artists of the Golden Age of American Illustration such as Jessie Willcox Smith (1863–1935), Clara Elsen Peck (1883–1968), Albert Herter (1871–1950), or Alice Beach Winter (1877–1970), the artist contracted for the present advertisement. Being able to study these artists' advertisement illustrations is not a given, as until very recently archivists often tore out ad sections from magazines prior to binding (or, later, filming or scanning them for microfilm or online databases).

Ivory Soap's popular commercials crossed the boundaries between commerce and fine art as they turned into widely collected artworks to be framed and displayed in American nurseries (Kitch 2001: 169; Higonnet 1998: 61–62) – a noteworthy circumstance considering the bisection of (fine) art and commercial art in the early twentieth century (Bogart 1995: 8–9). This appeal rests not least on the strategic visual engagement of nostalgic scenarios of childhood in many of Ivory Soap's early commercials, which figured forth the same properties that the soap manufacturer emphasized in its product: whiteness, purity, and innocence.

The girl in Winter's advertisement illustration belongs to the many generations of Ivory Soap kids who are confronted with the imperative of cleanliness and bodily hygiene in a commercial context. The trinity of children, cleanliness, and commerce that characterized Ivory Soap ads also becomes evident in the Ivory Soap illustrations by Jessie Willcox Smith. Like Winter and many other female illustrators of the time, Smith was a popular contributor of illustrations of child life to various magazines and advertisements and is best remembered today for her endearing mother-child scenes that decorated the same women's and household magazines that also carried her illustrated ads.¹⁸⁶ By the time her full-

184 The same ad was also seen by the author in *Cosmopolitan's* June 1911 issue.

185 Ivory Soap is a Procter & Gamble brand. Founded in 1837 in Cincinnati, the company played a pioneering role in "undertak[ing] systematic, widespread advertising" (Garvey 1996: 203n20; see also Presbrey 1929: 339). Following its first advertisement in *The Independent*, a religious publication, on December 21, 1882, Ivory Soap was soon marketed nationwide in major publications (Applegate 2012: 108, 112). In 1900, Harley Procter hired the Procter and Collier Company, a printing firm co-founded by a Procter family member, to "produce four-color advertisements" boasting "colorful illustrations" commissioned by "the most popular artists of the day" with reproductions being "available for Ivory wrappers" (115).

186 Between 1917 and 1933, Smith drew about 200 covers, most of them mother-child portraits, for *Good Housekeeping* (Kitch 2001: 144).



COPYRIGHT 1901 BY THE PROCTER & GAMBLE CO. CINCINNATI

CARE and precision are the characteristics of Ivory Soap manufacture. Each cake is just as good as any other and all are from soap that is as pure as it can be made. For these reasons the continued use of Ivory Soap gives confidence and pleasure; confidence by its harmlessness, and pleasure in the delightful sense of cleanness it brings.

Digitized by
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Figure 5.2: Smith. 1901. "Care and Precision." With a lot of "care and precision," this mother wipes her girl's face after washing it with Ivory Soap. Courtesy of *HathiTrust* via University of Michigan.

page, black-and-white illustration for the Ivory Soap advertisement “Care and Precision” was published in the October 1901 issue of the *Ladies’ Home Journal* (Figure 5.2), Jessie Willcox Smith was already a popular illustrator. She had manifested her expertise in the field of advertisement illustration during a five-year stint as staff artist in the advertising and production department of the *Ladies’ Home Journal*, drawing “everything from stoves to soap,” before she took up further art studies with Howard Pyle in 1894 (A. Carter 2000: 38; Kitch 2001: 169). Ivory Soap was aware of the artist’s standing and published the ad not only in the *Ladies’ Home Journal* (Oct. 1901: 2), but simultaneously in *Scribner’s Magazine* (Oct. 1901: 112), *Woman’s Home Companion* (Oct. 1901: inside front cover), and *Youth’s Companion* (Oct. 31, 1901: 580, see also Nudelman 1989: 167–168) – all in prominent positions during the same month. The fact that this advertisement appeared in the same month in the outlets of entirely different publishing companies indicates not only the sprawl of illustrated advertisements at the time, but also underlines the popularity of Smith’s visual art in general.

In her illustration, Smith visualizes the enactment of everyday bodily hygiene practices in a mother-child scene. Set in a typical middle-class bathroom with ornamental patterns and curtains, a mother, dressed in a similarly ornate morning robe, wipes the face of her daughter who patiently stands on a plush and elegantly floral-patterned pouf. The pleasing visual narrative is reflected in a comforting and inherently positive textual narrative: “[T]he continued use of Ivory Soap gives confidence and pleasure; confidence by its harmlessness, and pleasure in the delightful sense of cleanness it brings” (Smith 1901: 2).

As the children in Ivory Soap ads closely ‘watch and learn’ about the joys and health benefits of weekly tub baths, foot baths, or clean clothes, Alice Beach Winter’s and Jessie Willcox Smith’s advertisement illustrations for Ivory Soap suggest that children can playfully rehearse and internalize bodily practices and routines of hygiene. Both artists’ illustrations for Ivory Soap thereby equate the process of children’s civilization¹⁸⁷ with hygiene education. My reading will show how these illustrations for Ivory Soap advertise principles of cleanliness that are embedded

¹⁸⁷ Gail Bederman argues that civilization is not primarily defined by “what was meant by the term,” but by “the multiple ways it was used to legitimize different sorts of claims to power” (1995: 23). Particularly at the end of the nineteenth century, civilization became a “discourse that worked, albeit unevenly, to establish (or to challenge) white male hegemony” (23), “revolv[ing] around [. . .] race, gender and millennial assumptions about human evolutionary progress” (25). I thus understand ‘civilization’ in the exact sense that is suggested by the advertisements themselves: as an externally ‘managed’ or ‘steered’ *process* that entails the power-imbued imposition of values of cleanliness and order onto a person’s physical and mental being and their appearance, behavior, or manners.

in classist Progressive-era¹⁸⁸ discourses and that are here literally rubbed into the skin of children to win over the maternal audience of women's magazines.

At first glance, it may seem as if both Winter and Smith have similar starting points: Their works move in the field of civilizing and disciplining social programs and ideologies of the time where eugenic ideas form an important horizon. As the analysis will demonstrate, however, the two illustrators invoke and use this context in distinctly different ways. Particularly Smith's illustrations visualize 'whiteness' and 'purity' as exclusionary and hierarchizing values, highlighting cleanliness in terms of a system-optimizing progressivist logic of her time. Winter's Ivory Soap illustrations, on the other hand, show signs of subversion and connections to an alternative progressivist rhetoric of the time that operates much more with inclusion than exclusion. I contend that precisely because their works share so many similar starting points, the two illustrators exemplify the breadth of possibilities that were opening up in the commercial culture of the time. In this chapter I will show how visual imaginations of children could be mobilized both for approaches to child-rearing that were steeped in middle-class notions of functionalizing, controlling, or disciplining childhood, as well as for those approaches that were more communal, socialist, and humanitarian in character. Both illustrators' works thereby reflect metonymically what defined the Progressive era at large: a volatility and overabundance of interests and implications – sometimes contradictory or multi-directional – that converge in the rhetoric of social optimization. In the larger project(s) of Progressivism, this objective of optimization was pursued through diverse political agendas, campaigns, and reform practices that encompass both top-down, hierarchical (and often classist) ideas, as well as socialist, communal, bottom-up approaches. Progressivism spans the width of immigrant-tutoring settlement and charity work, self-help doctrines, eugenicism, laissez-fair economical theories, utopian city planning, Social Gospel believes, hygiene reform, and much more (Shalin 1988: 927–928). Smith's and Winter's works make clear that these frameworks could be used for different purposes, and both 'use' children for these purposes.

This chapter is divided into two case studies of Ivory Soap advertisements illustrated by female illustrators for different publications in the early twentieth century: The first case study focuses on Jessie Willcox Smith's presentation of toddlers in adult-like movements and actions for Ivory Soap advertisements printed in mass-published women's magazines. I will read her children's adult-like quali-

188 I follow Ruth Clifford Eng's allocation of the Progressive era to the timeframe of 1890 to 1920 against which she also sets her *Historical Dictionary* on the Progressive era's health-reform movement (2003: ix). Eng locates the peak of the progressivist health-reform movement in "the first two decades of the twentieth century" (ix), which coincides with the publication date of the advertisements analyzed in this chapter.

ties (such as responsibility, rationality, and ability of judgment) in the context of civilizational practices that are being controlled and rehearsed. The second case study analyzes Alice Beach Winter's illustrations across the divides of editorial and advertising realms to draw a multi-faceted image of her work agenda(s) in various publishing media. I subsequently complicate and expand these readings of Progressive-era hygiene education in Winter's work in a second reading that takes the illustrator's biographical background and her humanitarian and socialist agenda into account, thereby uncovering an underlying sociopolitical critique in her commercial illustrations. In looking at various facets of Winter's illustrations of children, this chapter further demonstrates how differently mass and little magazines participated in the circulation of progressivist reform issues: The case of Alice Beach Winter provides just one example for how artists commonly worked across the 'divides' of mass-produced, commercial magazines and the politically more radical, little magazines – and how this 'crossing' produces meaning.

I argue that just like the soap bar, true to its slogan, 'floats,' Jessie Willcox Smith's and Alice Beach Winter's illustrations for Ivory Soap, including their differing representation of child-rearing and welfare, 'float' between the registers of social *control* and social *critique*. These findings are only made possible through today's access to little-known sources, archival materials, unpublished sketches, and often only recently digitized magazines that allow periodical scholars to generate new meanings, spot new links, as well as to discover new layers of ideological and political thought in commissioned artwork published more than a century ago.

5.2 'Better Babies' and 'Educated Mothers': Child-Rearing and Cleanliness in the Progressive Era

American Progressivism was a rallying point for a plethora of ideas and ideologies that, by and large, straddled the space between well-intended reform and blatant racism (Leonard 2016; Southern 2005). The multi-faceted character of this movement reveals a complex entanglement with socialist ideas, which, not always, also meant social justice. Progressive reformers not only differed in their approaches, but also in their stance towards socialism and the values of social justice or equality. Dmitri N. Shalin refers to a "dual agenda" that was "both conservative and radical" and rested on faith in democratic institutions as much as it was "critical" of the latter (1988: 918; see also Hofstadter 1955: 236). Even though Progressive reform was informed by socialist ideas, which gained acceptance in the late nineteenth century among the middle classes (Shalin 1988: 916, 918; see also Goldman 1956: vii), reformers tended to resort to conservative means to implement social change. These conservative, top-down approaches could today be described as expressing the era's

idealization of efficiency and rational thinking, which often collapsed into elitist, detached, and classist or racist patterns of thought. As David E. Bernstein and Thomas C. Leonard contextualize, “the Progressive Era marked not only the advent of the welfare state but also an extraordinary vogue for race thinking and for eugenics” (2009: 177). Progressive reformers therefore represented a spectrum of sociopolitical values between uplift and social control (179).

With respect to educational, child-centered projects, this means that progressivists either lobbied for children’s protection and their “human liberation” from an unjust, “oppressive social system” or, on the more technocratic side of the spectrum, for their “social control” – thereby targeting either “the fate of the individual” or “the fate of society” (Kirschner 1975: 70). Particularly, related health-reform projects relied on hierarchical notions of ‘discipline’ geared toward controlling a growing immigrant population through the physical invigoration of their children, while at the same time endorsing principles of communal action inspired by the Third Great Awakening and the Social Gospel movement’s liberal socialist ideas (see Engs 2003: 316–317).¹⁸⁹

Janet Golden enumerates several “microrevolutions” (2018: 5) that wrote (Progressive-era) infant history: “a decline in infant mortality, [. . .] a growing reliance on so-called scientific methods of infant care,” but also “the appearance of new ideas about infants’ cognitive and emotional development” (4–5). Golden even speaks of an “intellectual shift” that “produced new ideas about what babies ought to experience and what parents ought to be doing [. . .] as they raised babies” (6). What parents, that is, first and foremost mothers, “ought to be doing” was being demarcated in more or less straight lines by several movements that can be subsumed under the umbrella term Clean-Living Movements.¹⁹⁰ In these movements, social reformers, legislators, and producers of hygiene products aimed to influence, direct, and educate mothers under the mantle of civilization and cleanliness, fostering specifically ‘scientific’ approaches to motherhood and child-rearing.

In the process, child-rearing and welfare were elevated to the epitome of social optimizability – with the help of an ideology of ‘educated motherhood’ and ‘Better Baby’ campaigns, both of which were promoted by the era’s women’s mag-

¹⁸⁹ According to Engs, the Progressive era’s health-reform movement was characterized by an “emphasis on personal hygiene, exercise, good diet, sexual purity, and the ‘whole man’ embodying physical, mental, and moral fitness” (2003: x).

¹⁹⁰ The Clean-Living Movement is a 1990 coinage by Engs to describe “a period of time when a surge of health-reform crusades, many with moral overtones, erupts into the popular consciousness” (2003: 73).

azines.¹⁹¹ First instigated by settlement houses and women's clubs, the popular ideology of 'scientific' or 'educated' motherhood combined the era's rhetoric of efficiency with expert-guided training and scientific approaches to child-rearing. In an 1899 *Ladies' Home Journal* article on "The True Meaning of Motherhood," journalist Helen Watterson Moody proclaimed: "If maternity is an instinct, motherhood is a profession" (1899: 12). While motherhood was professionalized and optimized, child-rearing was institutionalized – most significantly through the founding of childcare authorities, such as the US Children's Bureau,¹⁹² or the particularly long-lived school hygiene movement between 1890 and 1940 (Engs 2003: 301–303).

According to Ruth Clifford Engs, the Better Baby campaign was "both a positive eugenics and a public health campaign to educate parents in adequate child care, hygiene, and sanitation" (2003: 42). Launched to "promote routine health assessments of children by medical professionals," this outright monitoring of child health in a public competitive context awarded mothers with cash prizes, while "mirroring theories established in the US's eugenics movement of the twentieth century" (Gerais 2017). Resembling "livestock shows at agricultural fairs" (Engs 2003: 42), special Better Baby contests provided a crass and commercial example, but also a competitive incentive for mothers to track and compare their children's physical development and health. The contests started on the East Coast in the 1890s and were co-sponsored by women's magazines, such as the *Woman's Home Companion* or the *Child Welfare Magazine*, in the 1910s. A peak of the campaign was the Better Babies Bureau founded by the *Woman's Home Companion* in March 1913 "to educate mothers in 'race betterment'" through 'proper' methods of child-rearing (Engs 2003: 42).

Women's magazines played a major role in communicating progressivist messages and the importance of cleanliness in child-rearing to the targeted maternal reader. In a curious cross-fertilization underlying magazines' fictitious and commercial narratives, readers could educate themselves on progressivist topics in a back-and-forth viewing practice between magazine fiction, service content, and advertisements – particularly after magazines began to break up the clear boundary between editorial and advertising rear sections and mingled these contents. Thus

¹⁹¹ The term 'educated motherhood' goes back to Sheila Rothman's 1978 book *Woman's Proper Place* (see also Powers 1992: 77; Skocpol 1992: 333).

¹⁹² An important institution for mothers' childcare education, the US Children's Bureau was founded in 1912. It "gathered data, reached out via radio broadcasts, distributed pamphlets, and answered individual letters from worried mothers" – often with a "[p]atriotic rhetoric" (Golden 2018: 45–46). Rather than directly tackling social inequality, the Bureau followed a mainly educational agenda that historians nowadays criticize as an example of "social control" given its imposition of "middle-class cultural values" onto a wide social-class stratum (46).

(literally) set between information, entertainment, and commerce, magazine advertisements or fiction could spell progressivist messages masquerading as commerce or entertainment. This way, the educational discourse took up a central and all-encompassing position and role in women's magazines.

Yet, to assume that periodicals *acted on* or *blindly followed* the demands of Progressive reformers would be inaccurate. Magazine editors just as much acted in their own (economic) interests: By catering to readers' interests, editors ensured their long-term loyalty and subscription. After all, a large readership meant higher ad revenues. Some editors, like Edward Bok of the *Ladies' Home Journal*, became rather active in the field, initiating various progressivist campaigns that turned his *Journal* into "a forum for the prohibition, birth control, eugenics, public health, and pure food and drug movements" (Engs 2003: 52; see also Bogart 1995: 48).¹⁹³ Scholars like John C. Burnham have stressed the role of the press as a central discussion platform for middle-class readers' concerns for the Progressive-era health reform movement (1984: 190–191). Once these concerns had been discussed in the muckraking press of *McClure's* and others, they turned into reform issues – circulated, yet again, by the mass media (Engs 2003: xiii), including its ad sections.

Reform-minded education was viewed as an important service element to readers: Mary Ellen Zuckerman goes so far as to write that, "[d]uring the early years of the 20th century, women's magazine editors saw education as a significant mission of their journals" (1995: 87). Even more: The early-twentieth-century women's magazine reader in fact *expected* such educational discourse on topics such as "child labor, venereal disease, maternal and infant care, and sanitary conditions in public places" (87). Magazines also spread this educational discourse through such popular departments as "the fiction, homemaking, and advertising sections of the magazine, all of which carried implicit as well as explicit messages" (86, 88).

Further, with the emergence of a market for consumer mass products, women's and household magazines encouraged mothers to make 'wise' or 'educated' choices, while manufacturers of hygiene products capitalized on the idea that "proper parenting was linked with the use of new products" (Kitch 2001: 144). The idea that these ads and the underlying product manufacturers wanted to influence and manage hygiene practices of their targeted customer group is perhaps best illustrated in Ivory Soap booklets that use the same Ivory Soap illustrations

¹⁹³ Further examples for women's magazines' support of reformist messages are the 1912 introduction of a "code to regulate advertising" by the Curtis Publishing Company that also published the *Ladies' Home Journal* (Zuckerman 1989: 736) or the 'Good Housekeeping Institute' and the 'Seal of Approval' introduced by *Good Housekeeping* in 1901, respectively 1912.

popular among the readers of women's magazines and which were regularly advertised below the mass-printed ads in magazines. These booklets contained advice on "How to Bring up a Baby: A Handbook for Mothers"¹⁹⁴ or encouraged the reader to solicit a "[s]ample package and booklet of directions free" for "Ivory Soap Flakes" (Smith 1920). With the help of such booklets, the product manufacturer, but also the reform-oriented authors, tried to establish patterns and routines of hygiene in the targeted female consumer and, hence, in her children. In an era that saw both the professionalization of childcare and motherhood as well as a growing mass consumer market, baby booklets are therefore also evidence for the shift from "educated citizenry" to "educated consumption" (Zuckerman 1995: 87).

Magazine culture supported this idea of maternal self-improvement and optimization through commerce and consumption: As Carolyn Kitch adds, by the 1920s, "[p]opular magazines, borrowing from Progressive-era rhetoric, described housework as 'domestic science' and homemakers as 'domestic engineers,'" where "[m]otherhood became a similarly professional and full-time endeavor guided by the advice of psychiatrists and pediatricians" (2001: 11).¹⁹⁵ This fundamentally affected the idea of mother-child relations and determined the values of motherhood and proper childcare that were being inscribed and 'advertised.' The individual illustrators, in turn, had quite some impact on these processes of meaning making. What is more, Jessie Willcox Smith and Alice Beach Winter's works for Ivory Soap attest to the ambivalence of Progressive-era approaches: Their individual strategic use of child imagery can be read and employed for quite different, sometimes diametrically opposed, ends and political agendas.

194 The 40-page booklet "How to Bring up a Baby" was one of several pamphlets published by Ivory Soap that could be acquired upon writing to the Procter & Gamble Company in Cincinnati. These booklets were often advertised at the bottom of Ivory Soap ads – here as part of Ivory Soap's "Saturday Night is 'Tub Night'" ad (Winter 1907: 6). According to the text below the "Saturday Night" advertising copy, this booklet "contains valuable information about the Care of Children," with "helpful suggestions and sound advice" on topics such as "Food, Sleep, Dress, Cleanliness, Ventilation, the Care of the Eyes, Ears, Nose, Teeth, Hair, and Nails" – allowing for a systematic and medical assessment of the child's entire body (Winter 1907: 6). The booklet's author, Elizabeth Robinson Scovil, was a well-known nurse and writer about children's health – often with a Christian undertone (Golden 2018: 112).

195 Further research in this area could shed light on what this 'professionalization' of motherhood meant for the 'identity' of mothers in private and public spheres. Research questions could explore how a 'professional mother' differed from a professionally employed woman and how magazine illustrations interpreted this potential role conflict. However, since the increasing employment of middle-class women did not begin until the 1930s and '40s, these questions are not part of this chapter's timeframe.

5.3 Two Magazine Illustrators, Two Magazine Formats, and Two Approaches to Advertising

As members of the Golden Age of American Illustration, Alice Beach Winter and Jessie Willcox Smith were part of an emerging group of female illustrators who flocked to the magazines. The growing magazine market allowed female illustrators to profit from a new commercial understanding of illustration, an increasing demand for editorial and advertising visual content, and a growing female mass readership. Women illustrators were popular on the magazine market – particularly with the magazines' male art directors,¹⁹⁶ who tended to hire them for their *alleged* 'propensity' to illustrate "babies' or children's items, women's fashions, and bathroom furnishings such as towels [. . .] and soaps" (Bogart 1995: 70) and to advertise these 'women's products' by drawing feminine or maternal subject matter, like cats, pets, or chubby-cheeked children.

The biographies and work fields of Jessie Willcox Smith and Alice Beach Winter are similar. Both graduated from art schools with high acclaim, both were rather well-known illustrators for women's magazines and children's books, and were also sought after as portrait painters: Smith only towards the end of her life (Nudelman 1989: 19), while Winter was regularly portraying the offspring of New York City's elite families (Zurier 1988: 182) – the city in which she also worked and resided. Indeed, this seems to be one of their main differences: While Jessie Willcox Smith lived in Villanova, near Philadelphia, in the famous idyllic "Red Rose Inn" with her artist friends and colleagues Elizabeth Shippen Green and Violet Oakley (see A. Carter 2000), forming a creative female community of artists,¹⁹⁷ Alice Beach Winter and her husband were part of New York's political and artistic intelligentsia. Here she drew socio-critical cartoons for radical little magazines or suffragist party journals. While both illustrators' editorial contributions for magazine covers or stories have been the focus of scholarly analysis before,¹⁹⁸ their advertisement illustrations have not.

196 The stereotype of the female illustrator hired by the male art editor to advertise 'women's products' hints at the "gendered relationship" that Ellen Gruber Garvey sees between the "male advertising creator [here referring to ad copy writers or men working for advertising agencies in general, my addition] and [the] female advertising consumer" (1996: 175). Garvey evokes a typical "courtship paradigm" of "anxious male advertisers and ad writers courting women who hold men's fate in their hands" (177) – referring to women's purchasing power that could decide over a product's success or failure.

197 See also the introductory chapter.

198 For Winter, see Schreiber 2011; M. C. Jones 1993; or Zurier 1988. For Smith, see, for example, Nudelman 1989.

This disregard and scholarly neglect can be attributed to larger deprecating assumptions regarding the implied readers of these ads (Garvey 1999: 83): “Advertising was considered low class, attractive primarily to women and uneducated men, and this may have contributed to the enthusiasm with which it was discarded” by early archivists during the archiving process (87). It is thanks to dedicated archivists and curators that seemingly irrelevant ephemera like soap ads have been preserved and made available for scholarly research today.

Magazine advertisements were crucial for financing the commercial, mass-circulated, women-targeted fashion, household, needlecraft, or society magazines like the *Ladies' Home Journal*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Good Housekeeping*, or *Woman's Home Companion*. These magazines carried large advertising sections that often took up half the space of early women's magazines (Beetham 1996: 8). At the same time, commissioned art had to respond to the demands of different customers, publication venues, target readerships, as well as diverging editorial policies and agendas. Not least because of this cross-fertilization between external demands and the artists' own representation of reality, advertising illustrations provide periodical scholars with a valuable source to understand contemporary conceptions of femininity, particularly in the ads that targeted mothers.

On the other side of the spectrum covered by this chapter, the little magazines followed a strict little-to-no advertising policy. Most little magazines, however, copied the ‘big magazines’ and espoused their own highly artistic illustrations. As such, even the more radical and political little magazines carried a small number of advertisements, though of a different, more political, and less commercial kind. Little magazines, for example, would promote the products of a related cooperative store, and suffragist magazines would advertise special suffrage dolls wearing the respective magazine's sash. In little magazines, even the ads presented political slogans. This chapter, then, also allows exploring the possibilities for alternative, possibly political, readings within mass-appealing, serially, and commercially published advertisement illustrations in magazines.

5.4 The System of Advertisement Illustration and Illustrators' Agency

Advertisement illustration is a field with its own rules and work practices only some of which I can briefly delineate here.¹⁹⁹ In order to better understand the

¹⁹⁹ For an in-depth introduction to advertisement illustration, see Bogart (1995).

mechanisms and effects of Ivory Soap advertisements, it is necessary to keep in mind a few points:

In an era of surging circulation numbers, particularly the publishers of mass magazines, where “pictures sold magazines” (Bogart 1995: 22), were reliant upon steady advertising revenues – and, hence, attractive imagery. While advertising provided a profitable source of income in the Golden Age of Illustration overall, particularly in the Progressive era the ‘Truth in Advertising’ movement gave new weight to advertising illustration. On a convention of the Associated Advertising Clubs of America in 1911, advertisers plunged forward by launching this campaign to instill factuality in (magazine) advertisements. As Michele H. Bogart writes, advertisers viewed especially illustration as “invaluable in attracting the public’s attention, in obtaining its sympathy, and in improving their own credibility” (1995: 47). As a consequence, particularly advertising that had been rendered allegedly trustworthy through illustrations, answered to and visually supported the demands of Progressive-era health reformers and legislators.

Also, often (unrightfully) considered “the aesthetic stepchild of editorial art” (Kitch 2001: 160),²⁰⁰ advertising art could provide particularly female (editorial) illustrators like Smith or Winter with a profitable side career and “compelling financial incentives” – especially considering that “magazine publishers signed illustrators to exclusive contracts that prohibited them from doing editorial work for other magazines” (161).²⁰¹ As Mary F. Holahan explains, “[w]hile it was uncommon for female artists to illustrate fiction and news, there was no such prejudice in the magazine’s advertising department” (2019: 301). Particularly the underlying serial distribution mechanisms of print advertisements, often spread simulta-

200 Quite emblematic is here also *The Masses* editor-in-chief Max Eastman’s disparaging commentary on commercial illustration in his 1916 treatise *Journalism versus Art*, in which he writes that illustrators “have given up their profession [. . .] and gone into the manufacturing business,” where, out of commercial reasons, they only innovate little and take “no risks” (1916: 42). As Bogart explains, for Eastman, “illustration itself became an emblem of the deleterious consequences of modernization,” and he “denounced illustrators and editors as commercial hacks who had sacrificed all freedom and artistic integrity because they were at the mercy of mass-market publishers who cared only about circulation” (1995: 42, 52).

201 National advertising and mass-market publishing conventions render the field of magazine illustration for advertisements a highly commercial one, and it was this ‘taint of commercialism’ that has long kept magazine illustrations from scholarly recognition. Once illustrators overcame the looming ‘taint of commercialism’ that clang to working for the magazines, let alone advertisements, they were able to earn in the range of \$10,000. A *New York Times* article from 1910 estimates yearly earnings of \$12,000 for Jessie Willcox Smith (“Latter-Day Industry and Its Rewards” 1910: 9; see also Bogart 1995: 312n33). Even though, according to Nudelman, Smith “favored this medium [of advertising, my addition] least of all,” she produced a remarkable number of advertisement renditions for companies such as Ivory Soap, Kodak, and Cream of Wheat (1989: 18).

neously in several magazines, granted illustrators greater exposure than the illustration of magazine fiction. In a business letter of April 26, 1902, to illustrator Alice Barber Stephens, another well-known illustrator who produced a number of Ivory Soap illustrations, Harry W. Brown, a Procter & Gamble executive, offered Stephens to “give your work a wide circulation and probably ten times the opportunity for it to be seen and appreciated by the public than you get on the average from your pictures that are made for a single publication or book” (Harry W. Brown 1902, qtd. in Ann Barton Brown 1984: 29 and in Kitch 2001: 161).

However, this “wide circulation” would not always be a given – especially for new artists who first had to establish themselves with art directors and advertisers. The oftentimes tedious and lengthy commissioning process as well as art directors’ exertion of power over (and often exploitation of) especially lesser-known illustrators tell a less glamorous story than the business letter above. As Bogart writes, in order to secure commissions, artists first

had to reach the art editor (also known as the art director) who had primary authority over the artwork in a magazine. The art editor selected the illustrators, doled out assignments, enforced deadlines, and approved or disapproved the submissions. Prior to about 1900 he often selected the subject to be depicted. After that time the illustrator had more leeway to decide, an indication both of art directors’ regard for illustrators’ judgment and of their own diminished time for such tasks. (1995: 33; see also Larson 1986: 25)

Still, the art director’s power was ubiquitous: Bogart continues that, “[e]ven after accepting a drawing or assigning a commission, the art director might demand substantial changes, some of which could alter the finished composition entirely” (1995: 33). As the chief buyer of the artwork, the art director “determined the production of the illustrator’s wares and fixed the terms” (34). As such, also the issue over whether an artist was supposed to sign their work or not, tells of an artist’s acclaim, and whether the client wanted to associate the respective product with a specific artist. The fact that art directors were mostly male while illustrators for the growing women’s magazine market were largely female then only adds to the steep and gendered power imbalance between buyer and supplier.

A point important to keep in mind when cross-reading advertisement texts and their illustrations is the fact that “[t]he average artist rarely had contact with the client or with other personnel of the advertising agency. Prominent artists like Rockwell Kent and Norman Rockwell were the exceptions” (Bogart 1995: 66). The ad copy would often be written by professionals in the companies’ growing marketing departments. This is also why artists could not always exercise control over the use of their artwork in advertisements: As Bogart writes, “[w]ith mass-market magazines and national advertising, an artist could no longer be certain that his audience’s reactions would correspond to his own concerns. He found that his work

might be used for purposes that he did not anticipate and could not oversee" (1995: 10). And still, depending on "an artist's social background, past experiences, expectations, artistic style, reputation, connections, geographic location, client, and budget," there could be a "great deal of variability" in this work process (66). It is probably due to this 'great variability' that we cannot delineate the exact processes behind Jessie Willcox Smith and Alice Beach Winter's works for Ivory Soap today. Furthermore, the decision-making process regarding advertising illustration is so obscure, because "preliminary studies were usually thrown away along with the notes and correspondence. It wasn't just that they didn't want it known 'how the sausage was made' [. . .], but that so much of advertising was based on psychological tools, and the agencies didn't want their secrets to be discovered," as Roger Reed told me in an email (Reed 2019b).

How does this complex commissioning process affect the generation of meaning in advertisement illustrations? I argue that knowing the complex processes and decisions underlying commissioned illustrations for advertisements, where the illustrator's autonomy is often forfeited, opens the possibility of readings other than those offered or (possibly) 'intended' by the illustrator, the art director, or the advertiser. Advertisement artwork as an originally commercial and purpose-oriented ("Gebrauchsgrafiken," see Barr 2016: 231), and therefore inherently 'closed' text can thereby be 'opened up' for new readings across the commercial and Progressive-era sociopolitical spheres that differ from those that were read or even implied a century ago. The convoluted process of commissioning thus defies readings predicated on singular 'goals' or 'intentions' by either of the involved parties, and – more even than artistic expression in general – invites to perceive multiple layers of meaning-making and reading options for both past and present reader-viewers.

Part of this chapter therefore also illustrates the impact that the artists' personal authorship had on commercial art and other commissioned work – and, via their work, on the targeted reader-viewer. In a next step, I will hence also look into the role of advertisements vis-à-vis the dominant political positions of the time: I argue that, rather than merely adopting, depicting, and thereby reproducing the era's ideas of Progressive hygiene reform for the sake of selling products, advertising had a significant effect on these developments, even helped (re-) shape these positions. Ivory Soap ads thus also contributed to shaping discourses surrounding mothers' role expectations and reform-steered hygiene discourses of their time.

I locate this meaning-producing effect of Winter's and Smith's Ivory Soap ads in two areas: the visual and textual narratives produced by illustrators and copy writers, and, on the other hand, periodical publishing mechanisms. The combination of appealing child iconography with the typical mechanisms of serialization

and repetition underlying periodicals and advertisements thus mediates and intensifies repetitive patterns of hygiene and child-rearing practices in the targeted maternal reader. The visual appeal and the serial patterns thus help to normalize messages of social discipline and hygiene instruction. Gradually, then, these ads generate political meaning and shape ideals (and idealizations) of Progressive-era mother- and childhood.

I read advertisement illustrations printed in magazines as specifically visual devices. With the help of these visual devices, female illustrators could *advertise* and *manage* Progressive-era ideas pertaining to an ideology of 'scientific' or 'educated' motherhood, or steer imaginations of children's life trajectories. In their role as illustrators, women like Alice Beach Winter and Jessie Willcox Smith could literally 'draw' certain political ideas, ideals, promises, and imaginations of Progressive-era motherhood into their editorial and commercial illustrations. In the cross-fertilizing and hybrid field of commercial and sociopolitical illustration, illustrators thus generated meaning or reacted in a critical manner to their time. This does not necessarily happen in the textual messages conveyed by advertisements, but, even more so, on the visual level, that is, via these illustrators' aesthetic and the advertisements' visual content. These soap illustrations were not only made-to-order, commissioned artwork that 'erases' its originator. Instead, illustrators have agency that comes into effect even in commissioned art, and some artists surely use and demonstrate their agency more than others.

5.5 The Bathroom Taskforce: Jessie Willcox Smith's Illustrations for Ivory Soap

The turn of the century saw a unique confluence of commercially motivated hygiene 'propaganda,' periodicals, and Progressive-era politics. This was no coincidence, but rather a strategic coalition. After all, the growing market for women's magazines and consumer goods, as well as the first big nation-wide advertising campaigns, all happened to evolve side by side with the popularization of a progressivist, health-related agenda that instructed mothers how to take adequate care of their young. Jennifer Scanlon writes: "Standards of womanhood rose as products proliferated. At the turn of the century women felt that they provided adequate care for their children if they kept them fed, clean, and dry" (1995: 32) – obviously one look at the era's women's magazines and their vast ad sections suffices to figure out that most of all purchase of the 'right' products would do the 'trick' to keep children "fed, clean, and dry" (see also Kitch 2001: 144).

Using the 'right' products was one aspect. Following the 'right' daily hygiene routines for oneself and especially one's children another. In the Progressive era, women's and household magazines, among other outlets, educated mothers in how and how often to wash their children, that is, how to raise them under an 'agenda' of cleanliness and civilization. An advertisement illustration by Jessie Willcox Smith for Ivory Soap presents a group of children who have obviously internalized these learnings and know how to "[b]egin the [d]ay [r]ight" (Smith 1920, Figure 5.3).

Printed in the Chicago-based *Woman's World*²⁰² in 1920, this full-page, presumably black-and-white advertisement depicts a triplet of children in a playful lockstep 'march' towards cleanliness. Each equipped with a white bar of Ivory Soap and a white towel, wearing identical, white-collared nightgowns, as well as slippers, the children behave almost machine-like as they move in synchrony towards what the ad copy refers to as a "morning plunge."

Textually, the ad copy is split into several free-standing text boxes and employs devices of alliteration and combination. The central call for action, "[b]egin the day right," is followed by a dash and a text that explains, that to "begin the day right," you need to "[b]athe with Ivory Soap" as this "will make you fit and eager for work or play." The product's central tagline "It Floats" accompanies the product name as well as a small picture of the product. Taken together, the product visualization, the logo (with the company's founding date), as well as the curiously exact information that this soap is "99 44/100 % Pure," underscore the era's discourses of empiricism and its new scientific approach to domesticity:²⁰³ A brand that intended to appear trustworthy among a number of other (possibly even patent-medicine) advertisements within a magazine made sure that it stressed its company name, founding date, logo, the product's exact appearance, and, if given, scientific data or statistics that support the advertised product properties or benefits.²⁰⁴

202 The same ad was also found in *Red Book Magazine* (Smith 1921a: 22) and *The Saturday Evening Post* (Smith 1921b: 2).

203 Particularly after the Pure Food and Drugs Act of 1906, as a first form of governmental, progressive regulation on sanitation and public health reform (Berthold 2010: 8), determined what could or could not be sold (and advertised), advertisers began highlighting their products' (alleged) scientifically proven benefits.

204 The company lore surrounding Ivory Soap retells how Harley Procter ordered chemists and chemistry professors to "analyze Ivory" (Applegate 2012: 111) to scientifically underline his claim of pure ingredients. These findings would later be employed in advertisements as testimonials for allegedly scientific evidence – the brand slogan "99 44/100 % PURE" is used ever since 1879 ("Birth of an Icon" n.d.). As Dana Berthold remarks, however, the soap's "whiteness [. . .] must be maintained by an artificial preservative" so that Ivory Soap's "[p]urity never seems to come naturally, even though it gets presented as foundational" (2010: 13).

IVORY · IVORY · IVORY · IVORY

Jessie Willcox Smith

Copyright 1920 by The Procter & Gamble Co., Cincinnati

Begin the day right—

Bathe with Ivory Soap. Then the morning plunge will make you fit and eager for work or play.

IVORY SOAP  99 ¹⁴/₁₀₀ % PURE

IT FLOATS

Send for this
Artistic Calendar for 1921
 Printed in color, 12x17 inches. Popular subjects by Jessie Willcox Smith, Elizabeth Shippen Green Elliott, Lucile Patterson, and John Rae. Especially for nurseries, playrooms, school-rooms, etc. Sent postpaid for five two-cent stamps. Department 19-C, The Procter & Gamble Co., Cincinnati, Ohio.

How long do your silk blossoms last?
 They will not be harmed even gradually if washed with Ivory Soap Flakes. Genuine Ivory Soap in flake form, convenient, quick, safe, economical. Sample package and booklet of directions free. Address Division 19-C, Dept. of Home Economics, The Procter & Gamble Co., Cincinnati, O.

Figure 5.3: Smith. 1920. “Begin the Day Right.” Each equipped with soap, towel, and determination, these three kids know how to “begin the day right.” Courtesy of *Ivory Soap Advertising Collection, Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution.*

The product’s visual presentation itself, but also the textual narrative’s double combination of “fit and eager” and “work or play” evoke Progressive-era vocabulary of physical exercise and efficiency-led work regimes. Smith’s depiction of children who “[b]egin the day right” must thus be read in the context of the individual’s optimiza-

tion and compliance with reform-era hygiene practices and machine-age efficiency. The copywriter²⁰⁵ and Smith join these textual and visual messages of the individual's perfection with child-like attributes such as playfulness, rendering their imperfection adorable. In Ivory Soap ads, patterns of routine and serialization – in text, image, publication mechanisms, and also the reproduction and adoption of hygiene-related messages – work alongside child iconography to resemanticize and naturalize processes of children's disciplining and domestication. In the context of Smith's soap advertisements, I read popular seriality as a practice that transfers industrial into cultural standardization (where tasks or practices are 'serially' repeated until they become habitual), with the illustrations of cute and harmonious childhood scenes at the same time aestheticizing this standardization. This also becomes evident in the way Smith uses seriality to neutralize or even remove the impression of military uniformity (which one might associate with discipline and immaculateness): The children may look strikingly similar, and yet there are small differences and imperfections in the children's group of three that are endearing (open shoelaces, slipping soaps, or hanging towels that 'disturb' an otherwise perfect scene). The main difference, however, is that what would look coercive in a scene showing adults walking in lockstep, appears funny and adorable with 'little ones.'

How exactly did serial publishing mechanisms, including ads' advocacy of routines, help establish these hygiene practices? I argue that the effect of Ivory Soap's advertisements rests on magazines' publication schedules and the targeted reader's regular exposure to thereby 'serialized' norms and values. Advertisements for children's weekly bathing routines or every-day 'morning plunges' appeared in a likewise regularized women's magazine. Often the same print advertisements were circulated nationwide in various magazines over several months: There is proof that Jessie Willcox Smith's Ivory Soap ads appeared in different magazines during the same month.²⁰⁶ The publication rhythm of its carrier medium takes up the advertisement's message of routinization and, simultaneously, enhances the advertisement's character as a (commercialized) monitor for regular, weekly chores in the lives of families. The advertisement's own pattern of serial spread as well as its visual-textual message of regularity in child-rearing thus converge with the

205 Presumably the copy had been written by a special copywriter, and not Smith herself. As an illustrator, Smith most likely worked on commission and was either engaged by an advertising agency or, very likely, the Procter and Collier Company that produced Procter & Gamble's early advertisements from 1900 (see Applegate 2012: 115).

206 This 'sprawl' of individual advertisements, according to Garvey, "gave the [advertised] products an ongoing life within the two-dimensional neighborhood of the magazine, as well as in the three-dimensional world of the grocery shelf" (1996: 165), underlining the inherent serial dimension of magazine advertisements.

daily rhythm of a mother's household and childcare routines, including the ritualized reception practice of 'her' magazine. Female modern life was therefore also determined by patterns of continuity, recurrence, and an overall rational management of time and the body – patterns whose rehearsal was mediated, managed, and *synchronized* through the modern periodical press, week after week, month after month.

Both the ad's visual and textual narratives emphasize the *serial* process underlying cleaning and physical care and, hence, the functionalization of everyday hygiene processes. Underlined by visual patterns of serial repetition and imitation, the advertising copy hints at the need for regular bathing, that is, the need to regularize and standardize children's bodily hygiene practices. The history of bodily hygiene underwent a process of 'serialization' whereby, "[b]etween 1750 and 1900[,] washing went from being an occasional and haphazard routine of a small segment of the population to a regular practice of the large bulk of the people" (Bushman and Bushman 1988: 1214).²⁰⁷

Further, the process of cleaning as well as the transmission of values of cleanliness and purity are always a steady "reenactment" (Bushman and Bushman 1988: 1228; see also Elias 1978: 167–168, 188) where a mother, once trained in values of cleanliness herself (or instructed by magazines' copious advice columns), passes on these values to her children. Whereas the illustration presents a humorous glimpse at three children's version of beginning their day right, the prompt, to 'begin the day right,' is directed at the targeted maternal reader.²⁰⁸ The mother is not absent, but indirectly present as the adult figure whose assumed bathroom routines are here being *reproduced* by (her) children in an adult-child role transmission. The ad tells mothers that beginning their youngsters' day "right" is only achieved if you "[b]athe [them] with Ivory Soap," so the soap becomes a 'tool' in this regimen. In the context of progressivist health and hygiene reforms, maternal acts of care therefore always also have the function to reproduce and thereby manifest routines and values of hygiene in children.

The value in following set patterns and routines of hygiene is also apparent in the "Care and Precision" ad introduced above (Figure 5.2). Smith's illustration

²⁰⁷ In their "Early History of Cleanliness in America," Richard L. and Claudia L. Bushman retell the mid-nineteenth-century emergence of bodily hygiene as a regular practice that has been influenced by "eighteenth-century religion, genteel manners, and medicine" (1988: 1217) and that has first been proclaimed as a middle-class value of great "cultural strength," "measur[ing] [. . .] a society's rank on the scale of civilization" (1225).

²⁰⁸ The fact that the ad addresses female readers, most likely mothers, also becomes evident from the small-print question "How long do your silk blouses last?" and the advertisement of an "[a]rtistic [c]alendar" for "nurseries" (Smith 1920).

underscores: Much like patterned wallpaper, rugs, and robes, everyday hygiene routines, like cleaning your youngest' faces every morning, should follow a set pattern. Even the advertiser, proclaiming "the *continued* use of Ivory Soap" (Smith 1901: 2, my emphasis), seeks to establish and affirm patterns and routines of hygiene in the implied female consumer-reader's life.

The Ivory Soap ad "Begin the Day Right" close-circuits the '*norm-alization*' of serially repeated domestic and hygiene tasks with a modern-era, machine-age context, where even personal hygiene is scheduled and takes on the form of 'patterns.' Children's rehearsal and habitualization of reform-era hygiene practices is enhanced through visual and textual patterns of seriality and repetition in this ad: The *daily* "morning plunge," just like "work or play," are everyday habits. Repeating these tasks eventually results in learning and optimizing them. In a striking visual repetition of posture and dress, the children move steadily into one direction on a long carpet that invokes images of a conveyor belt and the Fordist assembly line. These children will one day be "adjust[ing]" to the "single efficient system" that Jackson Lears describes in *Fables of Abundance* (1994: 12). Both the textual and the visual narratives already map out a trajectory where haphazard "play" will one day be substituted by systematic "work," and it is never too early for children to rehearse and internalize the importance of everyday bodily morning routines until they appear natural – right now, nothing in this image appears natural. The children's almost identical looks, their synchronous movement, as well as the square-patterned tiles that are repeated at the bottom of the full-page advertisement all emphasize the beauty of patterns: to be found here in the orderliness and routines of hygiene.

Further, the conveyor-belt-like scene already anticipates that the future proper 'functioning' of these adults-in-the-*making* depends upon their steady rehearsal of daily civilizing practices. Only by adhering to their "morning plunge," will they become "fit and eager" citizens or, in line with health-reformist ideas, "'whole m[e]n' embodying physical, mental, and moral fitness" (Engs 2003: x). These daily civilizing procedures may contain getting up early each morning, washing oneself, or, metaphorically, staying aligned. In fact, the last child in line appears to nearly fall out of 'line.' Not looking straight ahead, the small girl on the right tilts her head towards the reader-viewer and runs the risk of losing her towel and soap. Also, the small boy in front of her allows for some 'malfunction' in the system: His shoelace is open and therefore poses a danger for the following child to fall. And yet: In an evolution from the imperfection to the (almost) perfection of bodily hygiene practices, the illustration's three-tier arrangement indicates a linear process of self-improvement or learning phases: Even the child on the very left, who leads this group and hence the children's learning process, still needs some learning to perfect her walk to the "morning plunge," given that her towel hangs dangerously low.

By visually stressing the children's imperfection, Smith therefore downplays the text's advocacy of schedule-like hygiene 'lessons' to "[b]egin the [d]ay [r]ight" in order to become productive and functional ("fit and eager") individuals. The humorous scene of children clumsily mimicking an adult sense of responsibility and routine elicits pleasure in the reader-viewer.

In the process, the advertisement systematically deploys what Joshua Paul Dale et al. call "The Aesthetics and Affects of Cuteness." For Dale et al. this is an "aesthetic category" (2017: 4) of the twenty-first century, but I argue that the "aesthetics and affects of cuteness" already had their place in progressivist culture and can well be applied to the present case study. Dale himself defines cuteness by its "affective reaction," which "is fundamentally benign rather than adversarial" (Dale 2017: 36). The function of the adorable, lathered-up Ivory Soap kids is therefore, next to obviously encouraging the purchase of the product, to trigger certain emotional responses, such as warmth and care – and I argue that Jessie Willcox Smith and Alice Beach Winter functionalize children differently in this respect.

Smith's Ivory Soap advertisements pursue didactic purposes of hygiene education for the implied female consumer-reader, systematically presenting them as 'cute' and identifying them as play. These ads imply that mothers inculcate particularly their daughters with values of cleanliness and civility that the daughters will adopt and reproduce, in turn, as also Smith's illustration "Though the Children" (1917: 2) suggests.

Illustrated by Smith and published in 1917 in the *Woman's World*, this ad systematically instrumentalizes the iconography of children and a cute scene of play-pretend to promote and naturalize an underlying ideology of cleanliness and discipline. Like a mother, a small girl rubs the face of what could be her toddler-aged little brother. The advertising copy remarks that Ivory Soap is even suitable for little hands, emphasizing that the soap's non-toxic, "distinctive mildness" makes it an ideal toy for 'playing family' when children, who have closely observed and learned from their mothers, "wash each other with greater vigor than care." Just as soap becomes a toy here and children playfully and amusingly (re-) enact adult personal hygiene practices, discourses of hygiene reform and discipline are downplayed. I therefore read Smith's illustration alongside a political agenda of preempted domestication where children, once sensitized, educated, and 'disciplined' by a maternal figure in cleanliness and hygiene, now take up these practices in a strikingly self-conscious (and thereby entertaining) manner. As 'mini-mes' of the (invisible) 'educated mother,' the children render their mother's work and education visible.

Smith's illustration for "Though the Children" (1917: 2) visualizes Richard L. and Claudia L. Bushman's idea of children's 'reenactment' of previously learned values: The 1917 Ivory Soap ad 'updates' Smith's 1901 illustration of a mother wash-

ing her daughter's face (Smith 1901: 2, see Fig. 5.2). Though published sixteen years apart, the two images display a strikingly similar montage. Next to an only slightly updated and less ornamental *mise-en-scène* (including an almost identical furniture set-up and wallpaper), even the two children in this illustration resemble the 1901 illustration in posture, orientation, and movement. Just like the mother bends down to clean her daughter's face in the 1901 illustration, the girl bends down to wash her little brother. The cupboard in the background, the placement of towels, water jugs, and curtains reveals that Smith here repurposed her older drawing, but with a more humorous inflection. What in 1901 was still depicted as a mother's typical (and possibly tedious) morning task that had to be carried out with "[c]are and precision," in 1917 is presented as a scene of innocent play-pretend, epitomizing Bushman and Bushman's statement on the continuous and almost serial "reenactment of the civilizing process" (1988: 1228) – every day, passed on from mother to child, and from child to (younger) child.

I argue that Smith's illustrations invite the viewer to tease out an inner logic of hygiene education that visually underscores the very *processuality* of civilization. A magazine reader who consumes various monthly issues of the same or various magazines could easily compare different Ivory Soap ads. This way, she would see herself confronted with a *ubiquitous sprawl* of processes of civilization that follows the transmission of civilizatory values through the different phases of child-rearing and child growth. Smith's advertisements could thus be read as a pattern in which mothers, once 'educated' in proper hygiene practices by 'their' magazines, pass this education on to their daughters, who in turn playfully practice these values on younger siblings.

Over time, as Procter & Gamble began to employ the marketing value of child imagery in more strategic ways, Ivory Soap advertisements both became more playful and referred to fictitious children as young testimonials.²⁰⁹ Ivory Soap ads of the 1920s would show little girls clumsily washing themselves, while the ads reassured the reader to "trust a child" to distinguish the benefits of Ivory Soap (Smith 1921c: 6). While in 1901, it sufficed to advertise the soap's gentle properties on children's skin (Smith 1901: 2) in an endearing mother-daughter scene, the soap advertiser, from around 1920, decided to use cute and funny children as the best testimonials for the soap. The product is mild enough not only for washing children's hands, but also for being used by children's hands themselves when they mimic their mothers' household chores or engage in play: "Was there ever a

²⁰⁹ In the 1930s, Ivory Soap ads even availed themselves of a full mother-child role-inversion where "10,000,000 babies [. . .] give you complexion advice" (Dorothy Hope Smith c. 1930). Adult women of the 1960s were even instructed in how to "[c]ompete with [their] [d]aughter's Little Girl Look" by using Ivory Soap (Scavullo 1969).

boy or girl who did not love to play with Ivory Soap?" (Smith 1921c: 6). This endowment of trust to children is curiously set against a mother's instinct to 'know what is best' and downplays the centrality of mothers' care work. In the context of Progressive-reformist advice literature and discourses of 'educated' or 'scientific' motherhood, earlier textual narratives followed a logic of 'only the product manufacturer or physicians know what is good for the child,' implying also that only *educated* mothers 'know best.' But in these newer advertisements, the *child*, or even better, the product's effect on the child, replace both mother and reformer as the ultimate 'teacher,' so that the product metonymically comprises the educational act and the instructor.

These examples point to another obvious common denominator in Smith's illustrations for Ivory Soap. The artist repeatedly turns to the cluster of harmonious, intimate mother-daughter relationships, where a mother focuses all her love and care onto her daughter, while priming her for predetermined roles as mother and wife under the mantle of domesticity – a blue-print advertisers could chip in on.²¹⁰ The Ivory Soap kids, most of them girls, are presented as empty vessels – to be filled with (commercialized) adult values and rules or schedules of cleanliness (see also Henebry 2014: 3). It is noteworthy how both Smith and Winter mostly draw little boys as babies or toddlers who are *being* bathed and taken care of by their mothers, while little girls are depicted as caretakers themselves, who emulate their mothers' behavior (see Kitch 2001: 145; see also Lief 1958: 12).

Feminine-connoted, mundane domestic tasks (washing dishes, making picnics, hanging laundry) that would never cause a stir on a magazine cover are suddenly transformed when children take over these responsibilities. A 'cute' child hanging its doll's clothes draws a magazine reader's attention. Instead of the mother being the center of attention, Smith's illustrations clearly focus on the child (Kitch 2001: 137). As Kitch observes, the women's "body position" and attention towards their children in most of Smith's (editorial) illustrations always "directed readers' eyes toward the youngsters" so that "[i]n Smith's vision, maternity was more about the child than the mother" (145).

The strategic use of well-behaved, cute children, of course, had to do with the increased use of visual persuasion in the advertising industry. As Roger Reed writes: "The advertising industry grew in lavishness and sophistication in tandem with the popularity of psychology, and the science of visual persuasion was born" (2019c: 331). In her Ivory Soap illustrations, Smith's visualizations of white chil-

²¹⁰ Smith's illustration for a 1932 children's cookbook *Kitchen Fun*, which repurposed a 1931 *Good Housekeeping* cover showing a girl rolling out dough with a rolling pin (Nudelman 1989: 21), can be interpreted as another primer on household and domestic tasks.

dren in serene or domestic (upper-) middle-class settings thus also participate in visually communicating and promoting the brand's explicit and implicit messages of purity, whiteness, and discipline.

The signature appeal of Smith's illustrations rests on white, middle-class values and promises of harmony. As I have argued elsewhere, Jessie Willcox Smith's illustrations appear to have 'fallen out of their own time' (Friedrichs 2019b). She avails herself of a similar old-world, "conservative nostalgia" that Dale et al. also detect in twenty-first-century 'cute' objects (2017: 9). At a time when women's magazines already sported the sleek looks and urban activities of the 'new woman,' Smith's mother-child scenes for magazine serials, covers, or ads retain a harmonious, upper-class aesthetic from the nineteenth century in both scenery and fashion, making the 'look' of 'true womanhood,' with the role of motherhood at its center, commercially viable (Friedrichs 2019b).²¹¹ I argue that reader-viewers even collected her works because of this slight anachronism, using them to decorate nursery rooms across the nation. Note that the bottom right of the "Begin the Day Right" advertising page indeed promotes an "[a]rtistic [c]alendar for 1921," featuring Ivory Soap illustrations by "Jessie Willcox Smith, Elizabeth Shippen Green Elliott, Lucille Patterson, and John Rae," some of which are reproduced on the advertising page (Smith 1920).²¹²

Smith's whitewashed middle-class fantasies were highly aesthetic and sought after, as a letter to the editors of *Good Housekeeping* reveals: In a letter dated Nov. 28, 1926, the magazine's reader Lucy writes "how much [she] enjoy[s] the covers [. . .] by Jessie Willcox Smith," pointing out how "Miss Smith depicts children who really look like children, and[that] in this advanced age, where [. . .] children are not what they were, we can at least look at the charming kiddies on the cover

211 As Kitch points out, "[t]he seeming universality of Smith's cover children [was becoming] a generalized representation of motherhood in the 1920s" (2001: 148, my addition) with this "presence of children" labeling the woman on the cover "a woman, not a girl" (144–145).

212 There were several ways that commercial work was elevated to a piece of art: Brands had their own 'artist competition' – as was the case with Smith's illustration "Child Washing" that won the 1901 Procter & Gamble artists' competition (Nudelman 1989: 14) – or used joint promotional efforts like "[a]rtistic [c]alendar[s]." Procter & Gamble presented Smith's illustrations as "art" for home display," elevating them to "status objects": Readers were asked to send in Ivory Soap wrappers in return for either a frameable illustration or a wall calendar with that specific ad illustration (Kitch 2001: 169, 179). The extended usage of ad illustrations as decorative art was common during the Golden Age of American Illustration when the (framed) "calendar image was [often] the only art hanging in the home or workplace" (Reed 2019c: 333). An anecdote retells how Smith complained in a private letter that, when she visited a friend's family, she was confronted with a child's room entirely plastered in her wall calendars and illustrations (A. Carter 2000: 88).

of your good magazine" ("Correspondence 1901–1931"). Smith's common type of children (white, blond- or brown-haired, blue-eyed, in clean and colorful, well-made children's clothes with heart-winning charm) was well-known to the targeted female magazine reader of domestic women's magazines: As Kitch attests, "[t]he cherublike children of Ivory Soap ads did not merely resemble Smith's *Good Housekeeping* cover children; they *were* these youngsters, drawn in the same form by the same hand" (2001: 160–161, emphasis in orig.).

Jessie Willcox Smith's illustrations for Ivory Soap showcase tidy, bright bourgeois settings (with large houses, proper bathrooms, or well-groomed gardens) that resemble the scenes in magazines' serialized stories or the well-decorated homes of the rich and famous that were so often photographed for women's magazines. While the images surely did not convince everyone who saw them to also purchase this soap, they were certainly nice to look at for a larger viewership, considering that the print media of the day were not as visually oversaturated as today's media.

The fact that magazines and advertisements offer illusions for marketing purposes is nothing new, and harmonious mother-child relations certainly added to this retreat from motherhood's realities. Yet, Smith's Ivory Soap ads allow for an interesting observation: The textual narratives in these ads often appropriate a moralizing tone for instructing mothers in how to wash their children. By projecting these 'lessons' onto children and systematically identifying washing and other domestic or hygiene tasks as play, Smith's Ivory Soap illustrations tone down the advertisements' conditioning and controlling messages of hygiene education. Also, the more mothers recede into the background, appear passive, or are absent in these scenes, the less encroaching the messages of hygiene and discipline appear.

As shown, Progressive-era ideas of hygiene routines and of regulating childcare found their commercial equivalent in serially published magazines, advice columns, and advertisements. In the Progressive era, Smith's ad or cover illustrations thereby contribute to promoting the cultural *standardization* of child-rearing that offers only one advised and correct manner to educate and clean your children, with advertisements promising that there is pleasure to be found in setting and following fixed habits and hygiene processes. Smith's child iconography thereby cleverly helps to promote the pleasurable whiteness and the middle-class values marketed by Ivory Soap.

The color white in these ads emphasizes purity, cleanliness, but also harmony – where there are no stains, there is no trouble. Obviously, this falls far from the wayside of child-rearing realities, let alone lower-class realities of child-rearing, where financial worries, as well as a more difficult access to safe birth control, added to the usual troubles of raising an often larger number of children.

Smith's Ivory Soap ads, which "reflect[] a flawless, self-contained world imagined by middle- and upper-class white Americans" (Holahan 2019: 302), thus closely link child welfare, civilization, and cleanliness to white, middle-class values, where mothers are able to buy the exact same products and appliances advertised in 'their' magazine or can afford household help.

Smith visually enhances the advertising copy's advocacy of whiteness with her iconography of white children, who are customarily accompanied by a caring mother in distinguished, clean, middle-class attire, surrounded by an overall strikingly white *mise-en-scène*. Where whiteness constitutes the norm, black presents the deviating 'Other' that, according to the era's soap ads, either needs to be eradicated or brightened.²¹³ Just as in the printing process black presents white's negative, the present advertisement illustrations position the contrasting unclean or impure visibly against the white, pure, and primal, which can only exist and shine so bright in this direct comparison. However, since in Ivory Soap ads, dirt is almost never depicted, the illustrations rely on the darker shades of surrounding elements, such as furniture or accessories, which make the white of the soap or lather (or the towel or undershirt washed with Ivory Soap) shine.

I argue that these ads naturalize an underlying exclusionary and hierarchizing ideology of whiteness as a truly middle-class value by connecting it to the iconography of the child. In the context of Progressive-era hygiene reform, Smith's illustrations of white children therefore also take on the role of a nice-to-look-at visual device that literally washes over a larger racist visual history of whiteness as (racial) purity and of soap and cleanliness as historical means of civilization.

In the contexts of colonization, immigration, and immigration restriction at the turn of the twentieth century, numerous soap ads present the use of soap as civilization. In this colonial-era context, particularly the promotion of a soap brand called 'Ivory' that spells *whiteness* and *purity* in both its textual and visual narratives invokes a vocabulary of racial 'purification' and eugenics. As Dana Berthold writes, notions of cleanliness and purity have a racist history. According to Berthold, cleanliness "was associated explicitly with civility, high class, and whiteness" in the early United States (2010: 2). Whiteness was not only equated with "physical hygiene" and "a lack [. . .] of pollution" (2), but also turned into a "practice" (15), where "discourses of purity" helped to uphold whites' position of

213 Typical for the era's soap or detergent ads, the emphasis was on (sensationalized) brightening effects, and yet Anne McClintock points out the irony of advertising brightening agents, such as Chlorinol, or soap without depicting "[t]he working women, both Black and white, who spent vast amounts of energy bleaching the white sheets, shirts, frills, aprons, cuffs and collars" (1995: 223).

power (22).²¹⁴ Some illustrations for Ivory Soap by other illustrators, such as Albert Herter, expose their commodity racism by depicting Black children who are whitened and experience racial uplift through the glorified use of an allegedly 'purifying' soap. Other Ivory Soap ads justify the subordination of Native Americans who are presented as backward and learn about the 'benefits' of civilization by washing themselves with Ivory Soap (Berthold 2010: 12–13). As Anne McClintock remarks about an ad by the competitor Pears' Soap that shows a Black man at a beach 'discovering' a bar of soap, "[c]ivilization is born [. . .] at the moment of first contact with the Western commodity" (1995: 223). Not only in the context of British colonial history, in which Anne McClintock reads soap advertisements, but also in the U.S. Progressive era, soap is instrumentalized as a civilizing "agent" (220, italics removed), embodying promises of racial uplift and class advancement. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, McClintock detects a "shift from scientific racism – embodied in anthropological, scientific and medical journals, travel writing and ethnographies – to [. . .] commodity racism," where especially (but not only) advertising "converted the narrative of imperial Progress into mass-produced consumer spectacles" (33, italics removed). Other than scientific racism, commodity racism was able to reach the masses by "packag[ing], market[ing] and distribut[ing] evolutionary racism on a hitherto unimagined scale" via everyday consumer products, such as soap and concomitant soap advertising (209). At a time when "Victorian advertising took explicit shape around the reinvention of racial difference" (209), especially illustrated soap ads stepped into and visually aided a mass marketing of whiteness as superior and desirable.²¹⁵ That this was also the logic in a U.S.-American context, becomes apparent in Ivory Soap ads.

Emphasizing mothers' decisive role in civilizing the child, the present Ivory Soap ads further espouse motherhood as *the* means for racial improvement in the context of such eugenic ideas as selective human 'breeding' or 'better breeding.' Mothers' *regular* use of Ivory Soap not only makes sure that already the 'little ones' are inculcated with the importance of purity, but it also playfully teaches children U.S.-American white, middle-class values of regular tub baths (seen also in another ad by Alice Beach Winter below) for the sake of civilization. This is even more cynic given that especially wealthy white households often relied on

²¹⁴ On purity ideals and power relations in society, see M. Douglas (1966), as well as Lugones (1994).

²¹⁵ McClintock places her analysis of the "social history of soap" in a British colonial context, where "domestic commodities were mass-marketed through their appeal to imperial jingoism," that is, where soap was employed to "persuasively mediate the Victorian poetics of racial hygiene and imperial progress" (1995: 209).

the labor of Black domestics and nannies to take care of the children and their bathing routines.

Berthold confirms that “purity ideals” are always also “reproduced through popular discursive practices” so that “[w]e consume and reproduce this ideal” on a daily basis (2010: 5–6). Seen in the context of an advertisement for a hygiene product that evokes a vocabulary of cleanliness or purity as whiteness, and literally ‘reflects’ and replicates this whiteness through the use of mirrors, tiles, and a strikingly shiny-white iconography, “physical and moral purity ideals form popular discursive practices that help reproduce white identity, which is formulated to reinforce white dominance” (6). Berthold continues to make out the “negative concept” within purity, as the latter is always “defined by what it is *not*” (6), similar to the implied negative message in “Begin the Day Right,” which is that, without soap, you begin the day on the wrong foot. This can also be seen in certain Ivory Soap advertisements where washing oneself is presented as a *process* of improvement, leading away from impurity to achieving a higher ideal of purity. Particularly in Ivory Soap’s more openly racist ad illustrations, this idea of a “negative concept” also indicates “exclusion” (Berthold 2010: 13). The imposition of cleanliness values on children instills then not only domestic middle-class values but also the sociopolitical meanings of soap prevalent during the era.

In the second part of this comparative analysis, I will demonstrate how Alice Beach Winter invoked the context of eugenics and civilizatory values of children’s cleanliness in a very different way. Despite the striking similarity and the same magazine formats that carried both illustrators’ Ivory Soap ads, Winter’s presentations of child- and motherhood disclose a different image that deviates from Smith’s whitewashed child-rearing fantasies.

5.6 “Saturday Night is ‘Tub Night’”: Caring for the Child in Alice Beach Winter’s Illustrations

At first glance, Winter’s Ivory Soap illustrations appear to resemble Smith’s: Just like in Smith’s scenes of mothers inculcating their daughters with the values of cleanliness and whiteness, Winter’s illustration of “[o]ne [w]oman [c]lean[ing] [h]er [w]hite [p]arasol” shows a girl, presumably the woman’s daughter, who closely ‘watches and learns’ (Figure 5.1).

Upon closer examination, however, the visual composition of Winter’s Ivory Soap illustrations reveals several frictions in the advertisements’ class-informed message of ‘cleanliness as civilization.’ First, the ad reveals a tension between its visual and textual narratives: Although the caption and the accompanying testimonial of the cleaning procedure imply that the parasol belongs to the woman

(which may well be, since early stroll umbrellas were smaller in size than normal umbrellas), Winter's illustration suggests that the parasol belongs to the child who has soiled her own toy. The pronoun "her" in this context thus misleads or at least complicates the reader-viewer's understanding of the ad.

Second, in contrast to Smith's harmonious (and often unrealistic) scenes, in which mothers exclusively attend to their children, or in which well-behaved children seem to groom and wash themselves almost magically, this scene depicts the child as a disruptive element who has soiled the pristine white fabric. Here, the mother must 'fix' the daughter's accident, while the daughter is inculcated not only with the value of cleanliness, but also, judging by her look, with guilt for misbehaving. In Winter's illustration, children therefore do not simply learn by imitation (positive learning), but also by the powerful affect of shame or guilt (negative learning). The fact that the girl is mentioned neither in the testimonial nor in the product description in this advertisement, places even more visual emphasis on her remorse. The child as troublemaker may not be a subversive message, but certainly differs from Smith's sparkling-clean and harmonious mother-child relations. Finally, whereas Smith's Ivory Soap ads often characterize their subjects as mother and child, this allocation is not even that clear in Smith's ad which only shows "how *one woman* cleaned her white parasol" (my emphasis). This woman could, after all, also be the child's nanny.

The most striking difference to other Ivory Soap illustrations, however, lies in Winter's choice of darker colors within a context that promotes whiteness. Winter's illustration introduces whiteness only as something external that can either be carried (the white parasol), worn (the white socks or the white collar of the woman's dress), or used to achieve whiteness (such as cleaning utensils like the sink, the little pot, and obviously the soap). The rest of the illustration appears in dark tones: Both mother and daughter wear rather unassuming clothes and have dark hair – the mother even seems to have a noticeably darker or tanned skin tone.

Compared to Smith's visual narratives, Winter appears to favor working-class backgrounds in her commercial artwork. In the present example, the wooden paneling and the simple sink signal a lower-class background, and it can be assumed that the wooden tub that is used to clean the parasol doubles as a bathtub. Except for rare instances when Winter included a bathtub in her illustrations, the literal background (that is, the furniture or the flooring) in most of her Ivory Soap advertisements depicts lower middle- or working-class settings. Children are shown standing on bare wooden planks, washing their feet in a simple tub or water basin heaved onto a wooden footstool, or wearing plain white chemises (Figures 5.4a and 5.4b). The title of Winter's advertisement illustration "Grandma's Morning Task" (1915: 8) identifies the grandmother, in cap and spectacles, as 'mother's helper.' While the mother is presumably off to work the early shift, the grandmother

8



WITH youngsters growing bigger every minute and flannels shrinking smaller every washday, woolen under-garments soon feel anything but comfortable to the tender skins and active bodies. These garments, however, can be kept to their original size and shape if washed according to the following suggestions:

- 1st.—Use warm water of the same temperature throughout the washing and rinsing.
- 2nd.—Cleanse by drawing the garment through the hands and by working it up and down in the suds.
- 3rd.—Make the suds with Ivory Soap paste. (See directions inside wrapper.)

This method avoids rubbing and extremes of temperature, both of which make woollens shrink. And, most important, the use of the mild, pure, neutral Ivory Soap keeps the suds free from alkali, which not only shrinks woollens but makes them rough, stiff and uncomfortable.

IVORY SOAP  99 ⁴⁴/₁₀₀ % PURE

Factories at Ivesdale, Ohio; Port Jervis, New York; Kansas City, Kansas; Hamilton, Canada

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Figures 5.4a and 5.4b: Winter. 1915. “Grandma’s Morning Task.” Winter. 1910. “Children Frequently Suffer from Headaches.” In the above ads by Winter, plain white chemises, simple furniture on bare wooden planks, and the splitting of care work across generations indicate a lower-class background. Courtesy of *HathiTrust* via University of Michigan.

Page 2 WOMAN'S HOME COMPANION

April, 1900



Children frequently suffer from headaches. Headaches cause wakefulness.

Next time your youngster is afflicted with wakefulness, bathe his feet in hot water, using Ivory Soap.

By no possible chance will harm follow; and it is almost a certainty that good will.

But please remember one thing: It is the hot water that soothes the child's nerves. Ivory Soap makes the bath more efficacious. But Ivory Soap has no medicinal virtue. No soap has.

For bath, toilet and fine laundry purposes; for the nursery; for shampooing; for everything and anything that necessitates the use of a better-than-ordinary soap, Ivory Soap is unequalled.

Ivory Soap It Floats.

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Figures 5.4a and 5.4b (continued)

dresses the children who stand barefoot on the plain floor. Many of Winter's drawings also show how more grown-up children wash themselves on their own. These obvious tenement environments with sparse furniture have often darker settings than the 'typical' shiny-white domestic bathroom scene complete with mirrors that we know from Smith, for example. An article from the April 23, 1922, *Brooklyn*

Daily Eagle, while praising Winter's appealing child renditions, also mentions the "muddy" (i.e., apparently unclean) background colors (Coster 1922: C5). This darkness is not an effect resulting from a darkening of the colors through mechanical reproduction or improper conservation, as a glance at the papers of Alice Beach Winter in the Smithsonian Archives reveals. Even in her sketches for her Ivory Soap artwork, the children are dark-haired (Winter n.d., Figure 5.5a). The darker hair color and skin tone, the obvious lower or lower middle-class settings, but also the less harmonious undercurrent in her depictions of children and childhood set Winter's artwork apart from that of other illustrators such as Jessie Willcox Smith, Elizabeth Shippen Green, or Clara Elsen Peck, who invariably represent Ivory Soap in terms of whiteness, purity, and middle-class livelihoods.

Winter's ads impose whiteness thus only as something external that is produced elsewhere, and certainly not in a tenement environment, but that can be achieved by buying this soap. Her ads present whiteness as a marker of class (and, hence, upscale mobility), and the mother here scrubs the parasol very hard to restore its whiteness. Note how the text emphasizes the importance of *restoring* whiteness to the parasol so "it looked like new": If you need to keep items for a long time and cannot easily replace them, just like a perhaps passed-down toy umbrella, you want to make sure it still looks white after many uses. Also, the fact that the mother uses "blueing water" – a common remedy used in the late 1800s and early 1900s to bleach fabrics ("All about Bluing" n.d.) – underscores her intention to make this parasol look like new: White fabric would lose its brightness over time, particularly so in urban areas that could not rely on clean running water.

Like Smith's, Winter's Ivory Soap advertisements appear to embody the progressivist values of the era. In the following two examples that visually and playfully link U.S.-American citizenship to children's civilization and cleanliness, I demonstrate how the achievement of whiteness and cleanliness as distinct markers of class are already inculcated in the youngest.

The advertisement from a 1907 issue of the *Ladies' Home Journal*, which Winter prepared in the sketch above, suggests that already children know that "Saturday Night is 'Tub Night'" and self-confidently rehearse the weekly cleanliness ritual all by themselves (Figure 5.5b). Other than in the introductory example of the soiled parasol, the girl in this ad appears self-reliant. She no longer needs to be convinced by her mother of the benefits of cleanliness. Just like the advertised soap cannot be seen in this ad, also the mother, her labor, and her imposition of discursively constructed middle-class values of cleanliness and discipline are rendered invisible. Yet, even if Winter's illustrations thereby present little children's performance of everyday bodily hygiene practices as natural and intuitive, they of course never really are, as they are constructs that have been taught by parental guidance.

The advertisement’s textual accompaniment highlights the *enactment* of routines of hygiene: The text fashions the weekly routine of hygiene into a veritable ceremony, presenting it as “Le Grand Bath” – here further explained to the reader as a “weekly function” for “a thorough cleansing from top to toe,” which adds to the ceremonial character, but also underlines the modern ideal of the optimized, ‘fit’ body. Evoking a European legacy of luxury, gentility, and cultivation, the Francophone word choice helps to elevate an everyday act of hygiene to a ceremonial act pervaded by modernist, functional thought where even children gladly demonstrate that Saturday night is the best time for bathing in a good dose of civilization.

An ornamental frame around the ad, which cites the bathroom tiles’ pattern and exhibits the profiles of contented children, mirrors the idea of repetitive and regularized rituals. In keeping with the Progressive era’s efficiency-imbued functionalization of everyday life routines, this advertisement allocates a fixed time and place for bodily hygiene in children’s (and, implicitly, adults’) weekly schedule: in the bathtub, every weekend.²¹⁶

Optimization through discipline and regularity is key in advocations of bodily hygiene. Ivory Soap ads were published during a time when not only the workplace was being optimized “under the aegis of scientific management,” as Lears (1994: 165) writes so fittingly, but where also Progressive reformers exercised social control through messages of personal efficiency, rationality, and hygiene.

These messages of social control had clear ethnic dimensions: Institution-backed recommendations of “one tub bath daily,” and other disciplinary approaches were supposed to elevate particularly children of immigrant background (Bushman and Bushman 1988: 1231; see also Allmendinger and Allmendinger 1973: 19). Various health or public education campaigns of the day aimed to “‘clean up’ America,” and “to permanently eliminate destructive behaviors and undesirable conditions in order to bring the country to a golden age free from crime, disease, filth, and poverty” (Engs 2003: ix, see also 73–74), imposing middle-class ideals of hygiene onto the growing working-class or immigrant public at the turn of the cen-

²¹⁶ A similar advertisement by Ivory Soap that appeared in *The Delineator* (Nov. 1908) takes this idea of a fixed routine even further into the semantic field of Fordist or Taylorist regularization by specifying the “route,” “time,” and “equipment,” as well as the exact order in which to wash the baby (“Here is a ‘Personally Conducted Excursion’” 1908: 656). This association of Ford is not even far-fetched, since Ford’s own Sociological Department “exerted particular control over the home lives of his largely immigrant workers” to “Americanize” them – also by telling them to bathe regularly with soap (Lepore 2018: 383). Ironically, the “Saturday Night is ‘Tub Night!’” advertisement couples modern-era imperatives of optimization with good-old Christian maxims: Saturday established itself as universal bathing day as it preceded children’s attendance of Sunday School (Gould 1989).



Figures 5.5a and 5.5b: Winter n.d. Sketch for “Saturday Night is ‘Tub Night.’” Winter. 1907. “Saturday Night is ‘Tub Night.’” The unpublished sketches for Winter’s Ivory Soap illustrations confirm that the artist consciously chose to depict darker-haired children within an otherwise glaringly white visual context. Photo of sketch courtesy of Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. Published advertisement illustration courtesy of *HathiTrust* via University of Michigan.

6



ARTIST: THE ST. LOUIS & NEW YORK

A. L. G. B. E. A. M. C. O. S. P. T. U. R.

SATURDAY NIGHT IS "TUB NIGHT."

It is the night when ALL the little ones are given what the French call "The Grand Bath"—a thorough cleansing from top to toe.

In this weekly function, Ivory Soap plays an important part. A white soap, it yields a snow-

white lather—alather that cleanses but does not harm.

Ivory Soap has another advantage over most bath soaps—*it floats*. If you happen to drop a cake of Ivory in the bath-tub, up, up it comes to the surface of the water.

Write for a copy of our booklet, "How to Bring Up a Baby." It contains 40 pages of valuable information about the Care of Children. Every phase of the subject is covered—Food, Sleep, Dress, Cleanliness, Ventilation, the Care of the Eyes, Ears, Nose, Teeth, Hair, and Nails. Full of helpful suggestions and sound advice. Charmingly illustrated. Free. Though issued only a few months ago, more than 60,000 copies of this booklet have already been distributed. THE FAOETTER & GAMBLE CO., Cincinnati.

Ivory Soap It Floats.


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Figures 5.5a and 5.5b (continued)

ture (316–317). Particularly as eugenic undertones took hold, bodily hygiene became increasingly equated with the “prevent[ion] [of] racial degeneration” (251–252).

HARPER'S MAGAZINE ADVERTISER.



“I was explaining to a neighbor, who had commented on the glossiness of my palms and ferns, that I kept them clean with Ivory Soap, when she laughed and said: ‘Don’t talk to me about air-ships. I believe that Ivory Soap is the real wonder of the age. You know what a time I have had with Raymond about his bath? You ought to see him now! He was yelling at the top of his voice, and I had given up in despair, when I was seized with a brilliant idea. I picked up a nice new cake of Ivory Soap and stuck a small flag in each end. In a very few moments I had enticed him into the bath, and I have never had any more trouble, except in getting him out.’”
(Extract from a Letter)

For the bath and for every other purpose that involves the use of a better-than-ordinary soap, Ivory Soap is unequalled. It is mild. It is gentle. It is pure. It does what soap is intended to do—it cleans but it does not injure.

Ivory Soap It Floats.

When writing to advertisers kindly mention Harper’s Magazine.

Figure 5.6: Winter. 1911c. “I was Explaining.” In a scene of ‘splash’ and ‘stripes,’ Winter depicts a woman and a boy whose skin and hair tone differ starkly from those of the persons presented in Smith’s Ivory Soap illustrations. Retrieved from the *Modernist Journals Project*.

Another Ivory Soap advertisement by Alice Beach Winter, published in the quality monthly *Harper’s Magazine* in January 1911, depicts a veritable scene of ‘splash’ and ‘stripes,’ where a little boy is bathed by a woman who looks compara-

tively darker-skinned and darker-haired than the women presented in other Ivory Soap ads (Winter 1911c, Figure 5.6).²¹⁷ The boy plays with a boat that consists of a piece of Ivory Soap with two American flags pinned into it to resemble sails. Winter instrumentalizes a visibly ‘Americanized’ piece of soap to symbolize the process of ‘whitewashing’ as ‘Americanization’ of a little boy, who may represent an immigrant child being molded (and cleaned) for U.S.-American citizenship. Bearing in mind that the U.S. Children’s Bureau used “[p]atriotic rhetoric” in its address of mothers in order to shape future citizens who can “contribute to an expanding national economy” (Golden 2018: 45–46) or that health reformers tried to impose control on immigrant parents through their children’s health (Engs 2003: 316–317), this reasoning is not far-fetched. However, since the text does not clarify this, the woman could also present one of the many domestic helpers (who often were of working-class, immigrant background) in middle-class households at the time, who is here washing a middle-class family’s child.

Below the visual, the ad reserves half of the copy space for a (fictitious) “[e]xtract from a letter” (Winter 1911c). Early advertisements often made use of testimonial-style conversations to mask the commercial message and to create an atmosphere of familiarity reminiscent of advice columns. In a conversation between two women on the topics of household and child-rearing, one woman explains the “glossiness of [her] palms and ferns” with her use of Ivory Soap, upon which her neighbor reveals that she “enticed” Raymond (who could be her son) “into the bath” with the here visualized ‘soap ship.’ This “brilliant” epiphany came to her rescue as she had already “given up in despair” and Raymond “was yelling at the top of his voice” when confronted with a bath. The prominent positioning of Stars and Stripes banners on a piece of soap thereby turns into a visual attempt to manage ideas of ‘proper’ *U.S.-American* child- and motherhood, or caretaking practices, in the contexts of progressive imperatives and early-twentieth-century immigration.

As Anne McClintock writes, “[t]he poetics of cleanliness is a poetics of social discipline” (1995: 226). Two soap producers from the era, one of them B. T. Babbitt, phrased it even more explicitly: “Soap is Civilization” or even “the scale of [it]”

²¹⁷ This ad was also featured in the January 7, 1911, edition of the *Saturday Evening Post*, where the woman’s face appears lighter-skinned, presumably due to better digitization. Ultimately, the ad leaves it up to the reader-viewer to decide whether the woman presented by Winter is supposed to be a U.S.-American-born white woman or a (white) woman who is perhaps of Southern-European immigrant background (which I, personally, read into the illustration). The same applies to the child, who could either be a child born to immigrant or working-class parents or the child of a (white) middle-class family. This ad thus presents one of many examples where missing documentation of the commissioning process and the art director’s or artist’s work process or notes defy any singular or unique readings.

("B. T. Babbitt's Best" 1885). Cleanliness thus evolves into a social value that children need to adopt to function as civilized members of a modern U.S.-American society. As we have seen, Winter's ad illustration of a little boy playing with soap uses American patriotic symbolism to promote mass-produced consumer products and to spread ideas of cultural homogenization, including the meanings (of hygiene as civilization, e.g.) these products represent and normalize.

However, while Winter's illustration appears to endorse the ideal of Americanization, the text does not convey the impression that it seeks to 'educate' or elevate a potentially immigrant public. Instead, having publication venues like the quality monthly *Harper's* and similar magazines in mind, the writers of this ad copy imagined a white, middle-class, 'fern-fever' enthusiast who obviously appreciates and has the time and money for *washing* ferns, as the ad text implies. If either the woman or the child (or both) really were of immigrant, working-class background, these textually presented domestic middle-class values of cleanliness would run *counter* to working-class or immigrant life realities or would at least appear misplaced.²¹⁸

Upon closer look at the advertisement of these two children in bathtubs, and the advertisement's proclamation that "ALL the little ones" are given regular baths, doubts arise – also given turn-of-the-century standards of home appliances and work schedules. A bath was not a given for "all" the children: Before running water became standard, most American households did not even have a bathtub, let alone bathroom with "basin, pitcher and washstand" (Bushman and Bushman 1988: 1227).²¹⁹ Until the second half of the nineteenth century, still only the wealthiest could afford a bathroom, and a porcelain-coated iron bathtub, as presented in Winter's illustrations, was solely a middle-class asset (Engs 2003: 251; see also Bushman and Bushman 1988: 1225–1226).

The text in this soap advertisement reiterates contemporary U.S.-American policy makers' views of child-rearing as a domestic, private-sphere endeavor (thereby totalizing middle-class values and life worlds), where "proper parenting" depends on the consumption of the 'right' (hygiene) products (Kitch 2001: 144).

²¹⁸ The publication context clearly pointed to a middle-class readership: The ad appeared in the advertising rear section of *Harper's Magazine* on the third to last page next to advertisements for household goods, "[f]ine [f]ootwear," pianos, heating systems, holiday resorts, or "yachting cruises" in the West Indies. Kitch adds that magazines at times presented "[s]tartling juxtapositions of editorials and ads" that "underscored the class tensions [. . .] in the 'Americanization' work of Progressive Era reformers" (2001: 82).

²¹⁹ As Bushman and Bushman write, it took "until 1850" that "regular personal washing bec[a]me routine in large numbers of middle-class households" (1225). Nineteenth-century conduct manuals on washing rather used a "defensive tone, as if readers had to be convinced" of the 'benefits' of washing oneself (1226).

Winter’s illustration, on the other hand, presents a mother or nanny whose ‘parenting,’ or caretaking responsibilities, respectively, are based on inventiveness, creativity, and patience rather than purchasing decisions or preferences of a certain brand. Ivory Soap’s textual narratives perpetually present children’s bodily hygiene and the following of schedules for cleanliness as necessities of good child life and mothers’ (or other caretakers’) expert knowledge, while at the same time totalizing middle-class life worlds. Winter’s visual narratives, however, deviate from this strict, top-down message – especially if we assume that this scene shows an immigrant mother with her child. Her illustrations show children who experience joy in bathing, despite their mothers’ struggles to make ends meet in obvious working-class livelihoods and with whatever items and products they have available. After all, little Raymond plays with a piece of soap and does not appear to have any other bath toy.

The texts of these Ivory Soap advertisements make a strong connection between consumerism and health care, where taking adequate care of one’s youngest becomes a question of income (Golden 2018: 102). The use of expensive brand products, as well as the proclamation of weekly or even daily baths, was, however, utopic for working-class or immigrant mothers.

It is interesting to note that the Procter & Gamble company, as the manufacturer of Ivory Soap, also used images and texts that “reached out to health providers working with low-income families” (Golden 2018: 112): In an advertisement from 1929 in the *American Journal of Nursing*, a woman of presumably Italian descent, “Mrs. Lamperti, the wife of a day laborer,” has learned “[f]rom a settlement house nurse” that “only Ivory would do for her four-month-old Mario” (Golden 2018: 112; “The Baby the Stork Left ‘Four Flights Up’” 1929). Still, even if Mario were to develop better under the influence of soap and running water, what use was this information to Mrs. Lamperti (unless the settlement house nurse was providing her with a free piece of soap every other week)?

The links between class, cleanliness, and children are obvious in these advertisements. As Bushman and Bushman confirm, there was a “social power” inherent in cleanliness (1988: 1228), visible in the quite “confident[t]” “middle-class assumption” that “people, particularly children, might be instantly upgraded with a washcloth and soap” (1988: 1230; see also Applegate 2012: 100). Bushman and Bushman phrase it drastically: “[M]others knew the social dangers of dirt” (1988: 1231). Largely unattainable for working-class mothers, the ideals of middle-class hygiene propaganda and their concomitant imperatives of consumption need to be seen as disciplinary measures, which inscribed the discourse of cleanliness with the affective register of shame. The little girl who nervously watches how her mother cleans her white parasol feels shame and guilt, and also the present

advertisements hint at a constructed fear of dirtiness – found in one's children, plants, or parasols.

In Smith's and Winter's Ivory Soap illustrations, cleanliness evolves into a social value that children need to adopt in order to function as civilized members of a modern U.S.-American society. A wider glance at the era's magazine market, however, suggests that the magazines' visual and textual imaginations of childhood in the Progressive era were more diverse and complex than this first impression may suggest. Examples found on the pages of little magazines present child welfare from a comparatively more radical and humanitarian standpoint. A cover from the May 1912 issue of the socialist little magazine *The Masses* (1911–1917)²²⁰ clearly places the abolition of child labor before the eradication of dirt through bubble baths. Standing against the backdrop of a factory with no bubble bath in sight, a young girl directly confronts the reader-viewer with her sad wide eyes as she accusingly wants to know: "Why Must I Work?" (Winter 1912b, Figure 5.7).

Next to child labor, *The Masses* addressed topics such as class and labor struggles, feminism, suffragism, birth control, race, and religion (Tadié 2012: 836), referring to itself as "a free magazine" that is "[p]rinting what is too naked or true for a money-making press" as it is "searching for the true causes" ("Free Magazine" 1913: 2). The little magazine often took on a pioneering role: In "Puzzle: Find the Race-Problem," a rare example of an illustration that depicts a Black child, the March 1914 issue invites the reader-viewer to contemplate the topic of racism (Winter 1914: 20). The drawing shows a Black boy clutching a white doll next to a white child clutching a Black doll. Although the boy seems deep in thought, the children appear to sit close together in innocent harmony. Only the title hints at the mere idea that there might be a problem with this seemingly innocuous constellation.

Although *The Masses* ironically "never truly reached the masses" in the form of a working-class public that it could 'enlighten'²²¹ about the "evils of capitalism" (Schreiber 2011: 9), the publication still prided itself on being a radical political organ that was, simultaneously, an artistic journal (in the tradition of *Jugend* or *Simplicissimus*) supported by a loyal Greenwich Village intelligentsia (Tadié 2012:

220 The monthly little magazine *The Masses* was founded in 1911 by the Dutch immigrant Piet Vlag and folded in 1917, after federal prosecutors ruled that the articles published by the magazine had tried to conspire against soldiers' conscription during World War I, which revoked the magazine's mailing privileges. The circulation numbers of *The Masses* are stated by scholars as anywhere between 10,000 and 25,000 (Tadié 2012: 834–835), or even 40,000 copies a month (Morrisson 2000: 177).

221 The aim of "bettering" the working classes "whether they want it or not" was the stated intention of *The Masses*' founder Piet Vlag, who, however, left the magazine after only one year (qtd. in Hinnant and Hudson 2012: 119; Tebbel and Waller-Zuckerman 1991: 125). The socialist magazine's contributors took up the loose ends, minus the condescending 'educational' agenda, and "revived" it (Tebbel and Waller-Zuckerman 1991: 125).

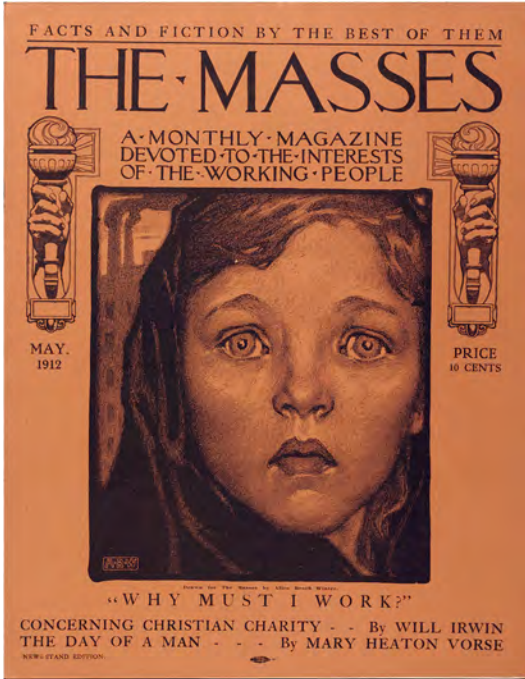


Figure 5.7: Winter. 1912b. “Why Must I Work?” With her eyes open wide, this girl on the cover of the socialist little magazine *The Masses* wants to know: “Why must I work?” Retrieved from the *Modernist Journals Project*.

834, 855–856). For his aesthetically ambitious goals, the little magazine’s first editor Thomas Seltzer engaged notable artists from the “metropolitan magazines” (Seltzer 1911: 1). The staff list of *The Masses* reads like a ‘Who’s Who’ of the illustrators known from the big magazines, from *Collier’s* and *Cosmopolitan* to *Woman’s Home Companion* and *Puck* (see also Bogart 1995: 52–53). Emphasizing his contributors’ artistic double lives, the magazine’s long-time editor-in-chief Max Eastman wrote in his memoirs that *Masses* artist Charles Allan Winter was producing “drawings [that were] illustrating poems for the popular magazines. He was well paid by those magazines, and so was his wife, Alice Beach Winter” (1948: 398, qtd. in Morrisson 2000: 174; see also Zurier 1988: 30–31). Indeed, the artist of these critical views on childhood was none other than Alice Beach Winter herself.

While she secured her income and her reputation through the typical activities of a female illustrator of the day – advertising, children’s books, illustrations for

(elitist) mass publications like *Collier's*, *Scribner's*, and *Cosmopolitan*,²²² or “delightful” portraits of the youngest of New York’s and Gloucester’s upper classes (“Art Notes Here and There” 1909: 58) – Winter always also engaged in less profitable, but probably more heartfelt projects as a cartoonist, co-founder, and yearslong contributing art editor for *The Masses*. As a “Norman Rockwell of the Left,” as she is called in Margaret C. Jones’s book on the female *Masses* contributors, Winter was known in this little magazine for her child illustrations that exhibited both “pathos” and “sentimentality” (1993: 12) and that helped her to criticize child labor or advocate birth control (see also Zurier 1988: 182). Imagery of ‘cute’ children thus has the potential to elicit what Dale et al. describe as a “key subject/object dynamics” that can range from “instigating caretaking behavior” to “shared affect, empathic responsiveness,” or even “prosocial behaviors” (2017: 5) – a strategy that was already used by early creators of advertisements, but also reform-minded socialists.

Winter received her art education at the St. Louis School of Fine Arts and completed her studies at the New York Art Students League known for its “progressive teaching methods and radical politics” (Simkin 2014). Also, Winter was “a dedicated member of New York’s Branch One of the Socialist Party” (M. C. Jones 1993: 12), as also biographical sketches and *Who’s Who* entries found at the Smithsonian Archives of American Art confirm (*Lineage Record* 1933). She further published drawings in the suffragist *Woman Voter*²²³ or the *Christian Advocate* (Kennedy 2018: 221). Winter drew her socialist causes into her artwork: She breached radical topics by “capturing the experience of slum children and contrasting the worlds of rich and poor” (Sheppard 1994: 205), mainly by employing visual “maternal (or paternal) appeal,” while always sticking to the child’s perspective, that is, to “the laborer herself, not her protector” (Kitch 2001: 83), as seen in the present realist depiction of a young girl laborer for the May 1912 cover of *The Masses*.²²⁴ As in this prominent cover art, Alice Beach Winter’s socio-critical drawings brought out their sentimental appeal by “show[ing] children not at work but staring in mute appeal at the viewer” (Zurier 1988: 123). Particularly the captions helped to bring across these appeals to the reader-viewer, as exemplified by her cartoon in the December 1912 issue of *The Masses* with the caption “Quit Cher Bellerin! Look What I Gotta Carry! Look

222 According to Zuckerman, *Scribner’s Magazine* and *Century* (next to *Harper’s Magazine* and *Atlantic Monthly*) belonged to the rather elitist magazines on the spectrum, “publish[ing] articles and fiction of high literary standard for a relatively elite audience” (1989: 722).

223 See chapter four on May Wilson Preston’s illustrations for the *Woman Voter*.

224 Influences from the Arts and Crafts movement meant that Winter’s illustration style was “conservative visually, relying on symmetric, decorative compositions and references to classical forms” (Schreiber 2011: 5) and “more old-fashioned than the modern, avant-garde approach of some of the more politically radical artists, such as Art Young, John Sloan, and Robert Minor” (82).

Wha We All Gotta Carry!" (Winter 1912a: 17) that directly calls upon the reader-viewer's attention by "look[ing]" at what these children (literally and figuratively) must carry. In her editorial illustrations, captions thus have an important, socio-critical function: Rachel Schreiber notes that Winter's illustrations "are only activated as political critique" when paired "with a particular caption" (2011: 82) – in this case, an accusing question about why the little girl has to work.²²⁵ "The Brood," another cartoon by Winter, for the June 1913 issue of *The Masses* (Winter 1913: 20), depicts a mother surrounded by her five small children and a baby who play hide and seek in her vast plaid skirt. What first appears like a joyful illustration for a magazine story, a children's book, or like the scenes of playing children that also decorated Jessie Willcox Smith's Ivory Soap ads or nursery-room calendars, receives a new meaning by the simple, yet powerful, caption "The Brood." The children's sheer quantity and the mother's overburdening tasks as she bends over a washboard are underlined by the fact that the illustration renders her faceless, creating a focus on the children that surround her lower body half. The slightly disparaging title "The Brood" therefore turns this illustration into a critique of the conditions for working-class motherhood, but also childcare, as this mother cannot possibly give all her children due attention and care. Like in Winter's Ivory Soap advertising illustration above, children here form a disruptive factor.

As a socialist, Alice Beach Winter was aware of the facts: Not only did the Comstock Law censor information on and impede access to birth control for working-class or immigrant families. Also, in 1910, when she was active as an illustrator, about 15 per cent of all children aged 10–15 were part of the regular labor force.²²⁶ Against this backdrop, and in view of her left-leaning, socialist party affiliation, even her commercial and commissioned drawings for Ivory

²²⁵ Schreiber writes about *The Masses'* illustration procedure that, contrary to commissioning artists "to illustrate very specific aspects of [a given] text," the magazine invited "the *Masses* artists [to] publish[] graphic satire and drawings of their own conception. Every drawing in the *Masses* included an attribution to the artist, an unusual practice for the time that symbolized the authorial parity accorded to artists" (2011: 3). Thus, "many cartoons in *The Masses* were completed first as standalone drawings to which the editorial board later added captions" (67), apart from Art Young who wrote his captions himself. I assume that also Winter followed Young's procedure.

²²⁶ In 1900, the number of children aged 10–15 in the nonagricultural labor force was at a record high at 1.7 million (or 18.2 per cent). This number fell only slightly to 1.6 million (or 15 per cent) by 1910 (Boyer et al. 2011: 637). The numbers were probably higher given that many young girls were already listed as women workers, for example in sweatshops, such as the tragically infamous Triangle Shirtwaist Factory, which burned down in 1911. As Boyer et al. write, "[b]y 1907, [. . .] thirty states had outlawed child labor" (2011: 638).

Soap advertisements suddenly seem to echo the ideas of Progressive-era social reformers.

Winter's Ivory Soap illustrations take on new meaning when read in the context of the artwork she was producing for *The Masses* at the same time. I argue that Winter's promotional illustrations for Ivory Soap, though commissioned works that served a specific function, were nonetheless informed by the artist's personal humanitarian agenda. Her work stands out against that of other illustrators for the soap producer as it simultaneously interrogates and re-negotiates the role that personal authorship can play in commissioned and functional texts by *actively shaping* discourses surrounding 'educated motherhood,' child-rearing, and, most of all, child welfare. The visual material produces its own dynamics, its own meanings, and its own ways of reading over which neither Procter & Gamble nor Alice Beach Winter had complete control. In addition to their (obvious) promotional effect, these ads are also informed by underlying ideological and political components, some of which only become clear today when we consider the bigger picture of Winter's background and oeuvre.

Not only in her artwork for *The Masses*, but also in her illustrations for Ivory Soap, Winter brought to the fore child-wellbeing, but especially 'adequate' child-rearing in contexts of hygiene and child-targeted Progressive reform, in working-class or even immigrant environments. Seen against the backdrop of her work for *The Masses* and other little or political magazines, where Winter visualized her down-to-earth, communal, and compassionate motivation for child welfare within class-sensitive settings, her commercial work for Ivory Soap thus appears to prioritize the child and its wellbeing. This becomes particularly evident when set against textual narratives accompanying her Ivory Soap ads that spell children's wellbeing and motherhood in a slightly more top-down, controlling, and ostensibly expert-led manner, as seen in these examples.

Although Winter's and Smith's illustrations both foreground children, there are noteworthy differences in their presentations of mother-child role constellations. In her illustrations for Ivory Soap but also *The Masses*, Winter draws a metaphorical dividing line between mother- and childhood, visually separating a working, caring, and inventive mother from her happy child and its welfare. Even if the child soils its white clothes, the mother is the one who puts everything in order. Winter clearly separates the mother's work from her child's play, allowing the child to be a child, dirtiness and disorder included. On the other hand, Smith's works for Ivory Soap center considerably more on presenting mothers as good examples for their children, often by visually (and in a cute manner) assimilating these mostly female children to their mothers. All of them are clean and all know how to keep their house clean. In other words, Winter gives 'her' working-class children caring parents and a safe childhood that many of them probably do

not have, whereas Smith always portrays children as ‘mini-mes’ of their mothers. The regularization of children’s baths and hygiene routines, but also the obviously poorer settings, which only become apparent when viewed in the context of other illustrators’ sparkling-white scenes, thus invoke the sociopolitical context of Progressive-era childcare reforms.

This idea of an educational agenda for the sake of children’s health and welfare in Winter’s Ivory Soap illustrations seems even more obvious when one considers Winter’s later works: She resigned from *The Masses*’ editorial board in 1916 after a magazine-internal “dispute between the magazines’ artists and writers” (M. C. Jones 1993: 186) and ensuing artists’ strike. In 1931, she and her husband left New York for Gloucester, Massachusetts, where Winter continued to draw her socialist agenda into her illustrations and “produced materials for public education projects” (186). As Rebecca Zurier adds, next to magazine illustration, from 1922, Winter “actively engaged in providing posters for various causes and organizations” (1988: 182).

Her 1927 illustration for the American Lung Association, published by the State Committee on Tuberculosis and Public Health, shows a toddler blowing out its first birthday candle. Above and below, the caption calls to the reader: “My Birthday Wish! Protect Me from Diphtheria” (Winter 1927c). This work, commissioned by the Committee for the Prevention of Diphtheria, underscores her commitment to reform-minded, progressivist messages of child welfare even after she left the socialist little magazine. What looks like a health-reform-minded illustration specifically produced for the Committee, was actually a repurposed cover of the “First Anniversary Number” of *Children: The Magazine for Parents* (Winter 1927a) that listed “30 Features on Rearing Children From Crib to College.” While the image of a chubby-cheeked child longing to reach its first birthday thanks to a life-saving vaccine strikes sentimental notes with the parental reader, the same image on the cover of the anniversary issue of a parenting magazine has a celebratory feel. This example highlights how artists’ commissioned artwork was often reutilized for several clients and publications at once, and here the Committee strategically chose an appealing depiction of a child by a famous illustrator. The same illustration that sent a health-reformist message for children’s vaccination was ‘injected’ into mothers to increase and stimulate the serial, ‘viral’ circulation of a mass-print medium on child-rearing methods.²²⁷ In this case, one singular illustration crosses the divides between the purposes of commercial, editorial art (with aesthetic and embellishing

²²⁷ The poster illustrates the Progressive era’s striving for social and health reform via mass-print media: In 1894, the New York City Board of Health had started to regulate the immunization of children with diphtheria antitoxin, and in 1921, a record-year of diphtheria-related deaths, large-scale immunization campaigns had been launched (“Timeline” n.d.).

purposes, vying for a growing readership and circulation rates) and socio-critical, reform-era art (calling on parents to track their children's healthcare routines), and once again it is the caption that changes the meaning.

The same underlying messages for mothers' and the public's education in child welfare also apply to her illustrations that framed didactic texts about child-rearing methods or even advocated for better child policies. Winter contributed illustrations for a treatise by Martha Bensley Bruère called "A Universal Mother" (part of *Good Housekeeping's* series "The New Profession of Matrimony") that highlights the role of the state in educating and caring for children via cooperative nurseries (a radical idea in 1913 U.S. America, introduced by the text as "[a] dose of near-socialism") or public schools, so that they become the future citizens the nation needs (1913: 850, 854). In Winter's illustration of a French nursery, a textbook example of a community-led, cooperative initiative, "[h]appy children" smile at the viewer or are immersed in play (Bruère 1913: 853). While this very specific visualization of children in a nursery shows that Winter was probably briefed for this text, it is also possible that, in other cases, magazines simply repurposed Winter's popular art to embellish their own articles without the artist's knowledge. This was most likely the case in another cover illustration for *Children: The Magazine for Parents* that instructs the latter on "[h]ow to [p]revent [c]olds" and shows a girl with ice-skates slung over her shoulder (Winter 1927b). Also, Winter's image of a scolded, crying child next to an article on the "Punishment of Children" (Jordan and Winter 1908: 5) in the November 29, 1908, *Evening Star* could have been repurposed from a magazine story, even though it suits the context a little too well. The sheer multiplicity of toddlers that form the decorative header on "The Child" (Park and Winter 1907: 3), an article on "[t]he [p]roper [t]raining and [d]evelopment of [c]hildren" (written by Robert E. Park, the Chicago School sociologist) in the *New York Tribune*, on the other hand, looks so unique and ornamental that it was possibly the result of an artist brief. I enumerate these examples that reach far beyond classic examples of women's magazines here, because they demonstrate how extensively Winter participated in the circulation of Progressive-era reformist messages on child welfare. In the case of her Ivory Soap illustrations, she did so with a socialist undertone in mass-magazine formats where she could project certain socialist, reform-minded demands for child welfare into advertisements read and seen by a large audience consisting not only of mothers.

Compared to Jessie Willcox Smith's Ivory Soap illustrations, a reading of Winter's overall oeuvre including her art for *The Masses* reveals that her vision of 'educated motherhood' and 'proper' child-rearing stems from a more serious, sociopolitical motivation. Whereas Smith stylizes child-rearing as the epitome of social optimization (with orderliness and cleanliness as *the* central means of mothers' and children's so-

cial upgrading), Winter's socialist approach to children's civilization and mothers' education operates much more with inclusion than exclusion. Underlined by her biography, Winter focuses more on children's welfare and the state's, rather than the children's, optimization. Winter's visual approach to child-rearing centers more on children's general wellbeing than on raising clean, domesticated children trained in the proper usage of soap. Though both approaches to child-rearing sound similar, Winter's work suggests that it is not children who have to learn to 'function,' but that it is the state's *function* to ensure that all children can grow up healthy. In short: She confronted (the state's) social control with *socialist* ideas (for the state to implement).

5.7 Washing it Off: Conclusion

This chapter probed the connections between advertising art, Progressive-era reformist agendas, and roles of authorship, tracing the possibilities for role-shaping political expression in commissioned advertisements published and serialized in magazines in the early twentieth century. As I showed, Smith and Winter were not only both involved in the pragmatic management and 'drawing' of children's roles and life experiences across the divides of editorial and commercial illustrations, and, in Winter's case, even across the little- vs. mass-magazine divide. As seen, Smith and Winter's work also opened up possibilities for different readings, as well as semantic parallels, in the rather contracted format of commercial advertising art with its textual and visual narratives. The use of child imagery as a strategic visual device for selling products is still widely popular today, and yet the Golden Age of Illustration was the first period that saw widespread advertisements showcasing 'cute' and appealing children who wanted to sell the reader soup, soap, or even socialist messages.

6 Imagining the Next Generation

6.1 Everlasting Lines: The Impact of Early Female Magazine Illustrators

This study has given attention to how female magazine illustrators Rose O'Neill, Nell Brinkley, May Wilson Preston, Jessie Willcox Smith, and Alice Beach Winter, between 1890 and 1920, visually contributed to shaping the sociopolitical changes in the lives of white, U.S.-American women: graduating from college, foregoing or stalling marriage, advocating for suffrage, (literally) self-fashioning one's identity via fashion and movement, or navigating Progressive-era messages for the female body and conceptualizations of maternity. As creative agents, the women illustrators in focus impacted on these developments by providing their targeted female magazine reader-viewers with options that often go beyond, play with, or even thwart the ideas of femininity presented by the illustrations' accompanying textual narratives. The reader-viewers thereby see themselves confronted with a curious visual-textual semantic interplay on the magazine page, whereas the illustrators construct or deconstruct female gender roles and ideals across female life stages from girl- to woman- or motherhood. As I have further shown, aspects of temporality, the affordances of the periodical press, the commissioning process, but also the marketing strategies of the respective magazine are closely tied to and inform these creative visual constructions of femininity.

I employed a complex methodological framework, where I close-read visuals as if they were texts, and vice versa, to analyze how female illustrators pragmatically managed aspects of change and temporality in women's lives via illustrations that were themselves subject to the temporal affordances of the serial magazine format. The study has shown that these illustrators visualized changes in women's lives and roles in ways that aimed for adaptation and compliance rather than radical rupture – often by confronting the targeted reader-viewer with alternative reading options.

In four case studies, I brought to light the emancipatory and expressive potential of female illustrators' visual narratives in turn-of-the-century magazines: Whether illustrators confidently employ stereotypical yet powerful visual allegories of nature to express a distinctively feminine experience of time (while drawing attention to women's newfound possibilities at the turn of the twentieth century), or use a fashion column to present creative or deviant possibilities for self-expression – the illustrators' visual narratives often add to the accompanying textual narrative or present alternative readings and semantic parallels to it. I also explored the potential and limitations of illustration as a visual strategy for

marketing products or promoting sociopolitical messages, and, finally, I interrogated the room for personal expression in commissioned illustration. Taken together, the case studies show that women illustrators, albeit pioneers in their field, were able to carve out a powerful position for themselves by not only visualizing but also influencing the self-perception and individual self-expression of a female magazine reader-viewership.

As demonstrated in the introductory chapter, the featured illustrators were themselves emancipated women, who had to assert themselves in an industry that was predominantly controlled by male teachers and editors and had to claim their rightful place in art education and the periodical market. This enabled them to capture turn-of-the-century women's lives, aspirations, and challenges from a uniquely female and contemporary vantage point. It is my hope that the reader will have gained an understanding from this study about the substantial impact female illustrators had as important public figures during their time. The immensity of their influence on conceptions of femininity also becomes apparent in subsequent generations of female artists and their creative visualizations of modern female characters, such as in the comics of Dalia 'Dale' Messick, who, together with Nell Brinkley, shall serve here as an outlook to what happened to visualizations of femininity in periodical media post 1920.

While this study has focused on medially prevalent visualizations and experiences of white, heterosexual, and aesthetically pleasing women in the United States during the turn and the beginning of the twentieth century, the findings of this study offer points of departure for future research into the visual imaginations and experiences of marginalized female groups. Although the big women's and domestic magazines of the turn of the century wanted to have their readers believe this, there was, of course, no universal, let alone essential, picture of womanhood. It would therefore be insightful to examine the portrayal of femininity by non-white female illustrators or by (non-white) illustrators whose work was commissioned by magazines targeting Black, Brown, or indigenous audiences, such as the house magazine of the NAACP, *The Crisis* (1910–), founded and edited by W. E. B. Du Bois. In analogy with the publications mentioned in this study, *The Crisis* showcased visualizations of Black girls, women, and children drawn by early African American women illustrators, like Laura Wheeler Waring, a regular contributor to *The Crisis*, or the editor's daughter Yolande Du Bois (whose April 1922 cover "Spring" for *The Crisis*, in its fine-line, art-deco style, resembles the artwork by Nell Brinkley published in this era). Amy Helene Kirschke also mentions a small number of female African American artists who made a name for themselves contributing to *Opportunity: A Journal of Negro Life* (1923–1949) during the Harlem Renaissance, among them Jessie Housley, Gwendolyn Bennett, Louise E. Jefferson, and Georgette Seabrooke (Kirschke 2014a). Even if

illustrations of Black femininity in Black publications *stylistically* resembled the ones of white femininity seen in this study, illustrators inscribed entirely different political meanings and hopes into these images that just cannot be analyzed through the same lens as white illustrators' images of white womanhood. Analyzing Black and other non-white illustrators' works would thus allow for a broader, more diverse glance at turn-of-the-century conceptions of womanhood, one that operates beyond the 'white gaze.'

Throughout this book, joyful and optimistic illustrations of 'sweet-girl graduates,' playful 'outdoor girls,' or 'self-fashioning' modern girls, who liberally interpret magazines' progressive-era guidelines, all could convey the impression of female illustrators painting young women's lives at the turn of the twentieth century as one continuous story of progress – from 'suppressed beginnings' to a 'liberated future.' Yet, women's emancipation was far from straightforward, and, just like the artists behind these illustrations faced obstacles and had to assert themselves in an industry that was predominantly controlled by male art teachers and magazine editors, also women's illustrations paint a far from linear picture – some illustrators do so more, others less obviously. Upon closer look, even the present five illustrators' works in both mass and little magazines reveal breaks, dismissals, or even backwardness, whether used strategically (to signal coherence and navigate conflictive situations, as in May Wilson Preston's depiction of Portia Primrose, see chapter four of this study) or aesthetically (to propagate a successful image of womanhood, as in the veritable late-nineteenth-century 'look' of true womanhood that can be found in so many of Jessie Willcox Smith's mother-child illustrations). Not least suffragist artists painted a less neat picture of women's emancipation, including setbacks and despair, on the long way to (white) women's enfranchisement. This perspective could be even further explored by including more examples by suffragist illustrators and birth-control advocates like Cornelia Baxter Barns.

Other possible lines of research involve using different methodological approaches to the same material: While this analysis has covered the little magazine *The Masses* and the suffragist journal *Woman Voter*, future research could expand this approach by investing a (comparative) look at the text-image relations in additional little magazines or political outlets. Research from the perspective of reader-reception theory could also delve deeper into my central argument by examining what actual readers made of these depictions of femininity. This approach would provide real-life data that could bolster my claim regarding the real-life impact of these illustrations.

In the 1920s, the Golden Age of American Illustration slowly came to an end, and just like the date of its beginning is a matter of debate, also its end (and more

so, its reasons) are heavily discussed by illustration scholars and artists alike.²²⁸ After 1920, the five women in the focus of this study continued to illustrate, but their works increasingly moved into other directions in terms of topics and publication venues, or took on new forms. Some of these new directions represent the larger path illustration took in the first half of the twentieth century, whereas some illustrators' careers seem to have faded altogether after years in the lime-light with their traces petering out after 1930.

As artist and author James Gurney (2021) writes in his blog post “When Did the Golden Age End,” the Golden Age’s demise is not simply told as a story of media change that set in from the 1920s, when photography, as well as radio, movies, or (later) TV started rivaling illustration as a means of (visual) information and entertainment. Indeed, it was not until 1952 that, for example, the *Ladies’ Home Journal* would switch to solely photographic covers (Plunkett 2019: 400). Magazines carried rich illustrations at least until the early 1950s (Gurney 2021) so that, lending from comics studies terminology, comic artist Charley Parker, commenting on Gurney’s original post, prefers to speak of a ‘Silver Age’ of American illustration, especially in the 1940s and ’50s (Parker 2021). This sustained popularity of illustration is at least partly reflected in the careers of the illustrators of this study: As such, Jessie Willcox Smith illustrated her famous *Good Housekeeping* covers from 1917 until 1933 (the longest continuous run of magazine covers by any illustrator). Also, while May Wilson Preston’s career is difficult to trace beyond the early 1930s (a Britannica article lists a skin infection as a plausible factor that ended Preston’s career in the 1930s, see Britannica 2023), Reed and Reed mention that she illustrated for the big magazines at least until 1931 (1984: 140), including advertisement illustrations in the early 1920s, or her illustrations of two F. Scott Fitzgerald stories for the *Saturday Evening Post* in 1920 – about the time that she and several other female illustrators were finally allowed to join the Society of Illustrators as full members. Finally, Nell Brinkley was as popular as ever: The star artist, who had already produced black-and-white columns for Hearst newspapers in 1907, would even expand her reach with her lavishly colorful, full-page serials for the Hearst syndicate’s Sunday supplements until she retired in 1937.

²²⁸ As is the case with historiography’s ill-defined demarcations of time periods in general, the Golden Age of American Illustration did not end abruptly, but faded out slowly from about 1920 and throughout the following decade. Illustration scholars either set the end of the Golden Age at the outset of WWI (Goodman 1987: 13), sometime after the end of the war around 1920 (Grove 2013: 12), in the middle of the 1920s (Scanlan 2015: 2), or right after the Great Depression hit (Kennedy 2018: 4).

From the beginning of the 1930s, however, sources indicate that illustrators' prime career years were over for good, and, while some had already added other career legs, such as illustrating postcards and merchandise, to their repertoire during the 1920s, the beginning of the 1930s marked an incision. This had to do with the Great Depression and the downswing of the market, but is also due to changing tastes, new technological possibilities that allowed for greater use of photography in magazines, and media preferences that were already prefigured during the 1920s. Illustrators like Rose O'Neill tried to keep afloat with advertising jobs during the financially hard 1930s, whereas Alice Beach Winter and May Wilson Preston moved out of New York City (Rubinstein 1982: 166), focusing on painting, gardening or, in Winter's case, occasional illustrations for public education projects. Winter, together with her artist-husband, also worked as an instrumental teacher (given the Depression, perhaps for financial reasons). Illustrators may have sensed that their careers would change: Although she supplied covers to *Good Housekeeping* until 1933, starting in 1925, Smith had dedicated herself more to portraiture and less to magazine and book illustration (Kennedy 2018: 19) – a move that is also visible in the career of Alice Beach Winter, who exhibited her portraits in New York City in 1922 (“Art Notes: Alice Beach Winter’s Exhibition” 1922: 33), or in the later years of Nell Brinkley.

Some of the artists' works underwent interesting developments in format, content, and visual-textual composition that, on the one hand, reflect and confirm what I have found out about visualizations of femininity in periodical media at the turn and the beginning of the twentieth century. On the other hand, they began to add new forms that would prefigure the following eras of visual art in periodical print media. I present two examples from Nell Brinkley's visual contributions to periodical media from the late 1920s and late 1930s, as these examples reveal possible continuations of what I found out in this study. They demonstrate that my key findings about visual-textual narrations and conceptions of femininity for the years 1890–1920, including the focus on feminine looks and strong female roles, were still prevalent even after 1920, but were at the same time developed further, when artists like Brinkley engaged with new serial formats and visual trends.

6.2 Flappers

In this exemplary episode of Nell Brinkley's serial *Pretty Polly*, published on February 10, 1929, in the *Philadelphia Record's* Sunday Feature Section, the eponymous protagonist becomes “[f]ascinated by the Ego Plus Psycho Analysis” – the latest craze in the late 1920s (Figure 6.1). The episode narrates how Polly first decides to



Figure 6.1: Brinkley and Wells. 1929. “Twas a High-Brow Battle, Won, as Usual, by Jim.” In a comic-like story, arranged on a full-color 22x16 inch newspaper page, Polly decides to engage in a “high-brow battle,” but eventually returns to her low-brow romance novels and her boyfriend Jim. Photo by the author.

teach psychology before she impulsively abandons this plan and calls her boyfriend Jim. In the end, as the episode’s title reveals, “Twas a High-Brow Battle, Won, as Usual, by Jim.”²²⁹

²²⁹ The serial *Pretty Polly* was published on the covers of the Hearst Sunday newspaper magazine supplements from Nov. 18, 1928, to March 3, 1929 (Holtz 2019). As was common for Brinkley’s

Viewed in direct comparison with the illustrations analyzed in this study, particularly the format of this newspaper page deserves attention: Printed in full-color on a full 22x16 inch newspaper page – a privilege that was reserved for the “cream of the artistic crop” (Robbins 2020: 2), this page contains five individual images that are scattered across the page and partly overlap each other. Five sequentially numbered rhyming quatrains that narrate the story and direct the reader-viewer across the large page accompany these images. The text is written by potboiler-novel writer Carolyn Wells, who also authored the texts of many other Brinkley serials during the 1920s. Not only does this format differ from Brinkley’s magazine column illustrations in the mid-1910s (see ch. 3), her black-and-white newspaper cartoons, or her tableau-like serials, such as the successful *Golden Eyes and Her Hero, Bill (Over There)*, printed in newspapers’ Sunday editions in the late 1910s. With its panel-like layout consisting of *multiple* sequentially arranged images on *one* page, this Sunday Feature episode also differs significantly from the individually placed and non-sequential magazine illustrations I discussed in the chapters of this study.

From 1925, Nell Brinkley initiated a distinctive transformation in visual style and format when she began producing multi-paneled serials in her Sunday Feature pages. As Robbins clarifies, Brinkley “was drawing comics” (2020: 2), or rather: “proto-comics, full pages of continuity, but without [the] panels or speech balloons” that we nowadays associate with the format (Robbins n.d.).²³⁰ It was not until her 1928 serial *Dimples’ Day Dreams* or her 1933 serial *The Princess From Nowhere* that Brinkley’s previously borderless panels became more contoured and pronounced in shape, but they always remained ornamental, decorated by floral borders, or drawn in unusual shapes – after all, this was Nell Brinkley.

This episode also points to certain lines of continuation from what early female illustrators had already established at the turn and beginning of the twentieth century. During and shortly before the 1920s, artists like Nell Brinkley, but also Rose

serials of the 1920s, the episodes were self-contained: Main characters like Jim recur in other episodes (in the final episode, for example, Polly marries Jim), but each episode narrates new, unconnected events.

230 This was not the first time, though, that Brinkley drew comics. I thank Christina Meyer for her helpful remark that Nell Brinkley, as early as 1908, created her presumably first comic, “Love Will Find a Way”: a three-line comic strip, consisting of two borderless panels each, as well as framed text boxes and numbering to direct the reader. This early comic was printed and distributed across various U.S.-American newspapers in March 1908 – the same year that would mark the first peak of Brinkley’s still young career (not only did she cover the ‘trial of the century’ of Harry K. Thaw with impressive drawings of his beautiful wife Evelyn Nesbitt, also, Bloomingdale’s organized its “Nell Brinkley Day” in this year, and the Ziegfeld Follies’ own Brinkley Girl show, dance, and songs lifted the artist to stardom).

O'Neill, who were both illustrators and cartoonists, developed intermediate forms that approximated the modern comic-strip format. They harked back to their illustration heritage when they were drawing one-page consecutive stories with multiple images and rhyming verses (as exemplified by the *Pretty Polly* episode or O'Neill's Kewpie episodes published in Sunday newspapers from 1917 to 1919), but from there gradually shifted towards using the grid-panels we are familiar with nowadays, as in the Kewpie Sunday paper comic strips from 1935 to 1937 (see Madura n.d.). In a similar manner, periodically published visual representations of femininity traveled from the pages of magazines to newspapers and there especially to the new format of the comic strip, where they found an entirely new audience and were surrounded by a different publication context, all of which again impacted on the meanings and readings of these images of femininity. The gradual onset of this process is exemplified by Nell Brinkley's colorful, paneled serials from about 1925, as seen above, but eventually took hold in widespread periodical media at the beginning of the 1930s. At this time, magazine illustration was in decline, whereas comics enjoyed increasing popularity and especially the newspaper comic strip was at its height (Gardner 2012: 64–65).²³¹

At the same time, the serial *Pretty Polly* continues Brinkley's emphasis on appealing looks and self-fashioning that is already apparent in her work in the 1910s that I discussed in chapter three: In each *Pretty Polly* episode, Polly explores new career paths and hobbies, frequently accompanied by a change in style and appearance, with Polly sporting situationally appropriate and always fashionable outfits. Polly thereby exemplifies the newfound relative freedom of choice available to young women in the 1920s. Never mind that Polly abandons each of these ideas as quickly as she adopted them and eventually marries her sweetheart – but even this is a continuation of Brinkley's typical romance plots and happy end-

231 The success of newspaper comic strips owes not least to their publication medium: The specifically serial comic format lent itself particularly well for newspapers and their supplements with their shorter (that is, daily, respectively weekly) publication rhythms, returning “daily audiences,” open-ended serial continuity (Gardner 2012: 46, 47), and, not least, cheaper paper, compared to the comparatively expensive magazines with their glossy paper and longer, monthly publication intervals. The use of cheap paper for printing newspapers, as compared to the thicker, higher-quality paper used for magazines, impacted on the material available to scholars today. Unlike famous male illustrators John Held Jr. and Charles Dana Gibson, Nell Brinkley published most of her work in newspapers. However, printed on cheap pulp-paper, these newspapers met an unfortunate fate during the 1940s when they were “sacrificed for the war effort in nationwide paper drives” so that Brinkley's existing printed art was mostly lost, while her art in higher-quality magazines (see ch. 3) or books was preserved (Robbins 2001: 134).

ings that can already be found in her adventurous romance serial *Golden Eyes and Her Hero, Bill (Over There)* that she produced during World War I.²³²

Brinkley-expert Trina Robbins has repeatedly lamented Brinkley's 1925–1933 flapper serials, to which also *Pretty Polly* belongs, as a “disappointment” (2020: 2, 144). They starred pretty, yet terribly superficial and clichéd flappers in foreseeable, silly adventures, which stood in contrast to Brinkley's very early, proto-feminist cartoons and serials from the 1910s, which often showcased working girls, athletic girls, or girls flying airplanes. Yet, from the first half of the 1930s, when the careers of first-generation magazine illustrators were essentially over, the newspaper starlet churned out yet *another* decade of proto-feminist serials, again written by herself (Robbins 2009: 124) and again focusing on female strength and cleverness.²³³ This is noteworthy because, after her flapper serials and just before concluding her career in 1937, Brinkley reoriented herself towards her earlier work by citing her own visual-textual portrayals of courageous and smart female characters from her newspaper cartoons and Sunday-supplement serials of the 1910s. In a revisionist approach, she thereby altered and once again redrew the lines of her more superficial depictions of femininity from her 1920s serials.

6.3 Heroines

In 1937, before she retired, Brinkley drew and wrote her last Sunday serial, *The Heroines of Today* (Robbins 2001: 131; Robbins 2009: 124). In each Sunday installment of this serial, Brinkley introduces another real-life heroine in a pulp-like style: a young woman who rescues her shipwrecked boyfriend, a female soldier, a female firefighter.

In the episode “Quick-Trigger Woman” (*The Salt Lake Tribune*, Oct. 24, 1937: 10, Figure 6.2), Brinkley portrays Mary A. Shanley, one of the few women on the NYPD's pickpocket detective unit at the time, who stalled two shoplifters mid-action and was subsequently promoted. In the full-page, full-color spread consisting of four images and three commentaries, Brinkley uses devices of visual-textual juxtaposition and substitution to invert gender stereotypes of the ‘weaker

²³² For an overview of Brinkley's early Sunday newspaper serials, including her hit-serial *Golden Eyes*, see Meyer (2013), Robbins (2001: 75–78), or Robbins (2009: 20, 22–39).

²³³ And yet, by the mid-1930s, the signs of her waning star were evident in Brinkley's career: Hearst newspapers no longer carried her columns on a daily basis, some even dropped her panels altogether, or “moved her from the upscale *Journal* to the much lower-class *Mirror*” in New York, whereas, in San Francisco, “she went from the *Examiner* to the trashier *Call-Bulletin*” (Robbins 2001: 129; Robbins 2009: 124).

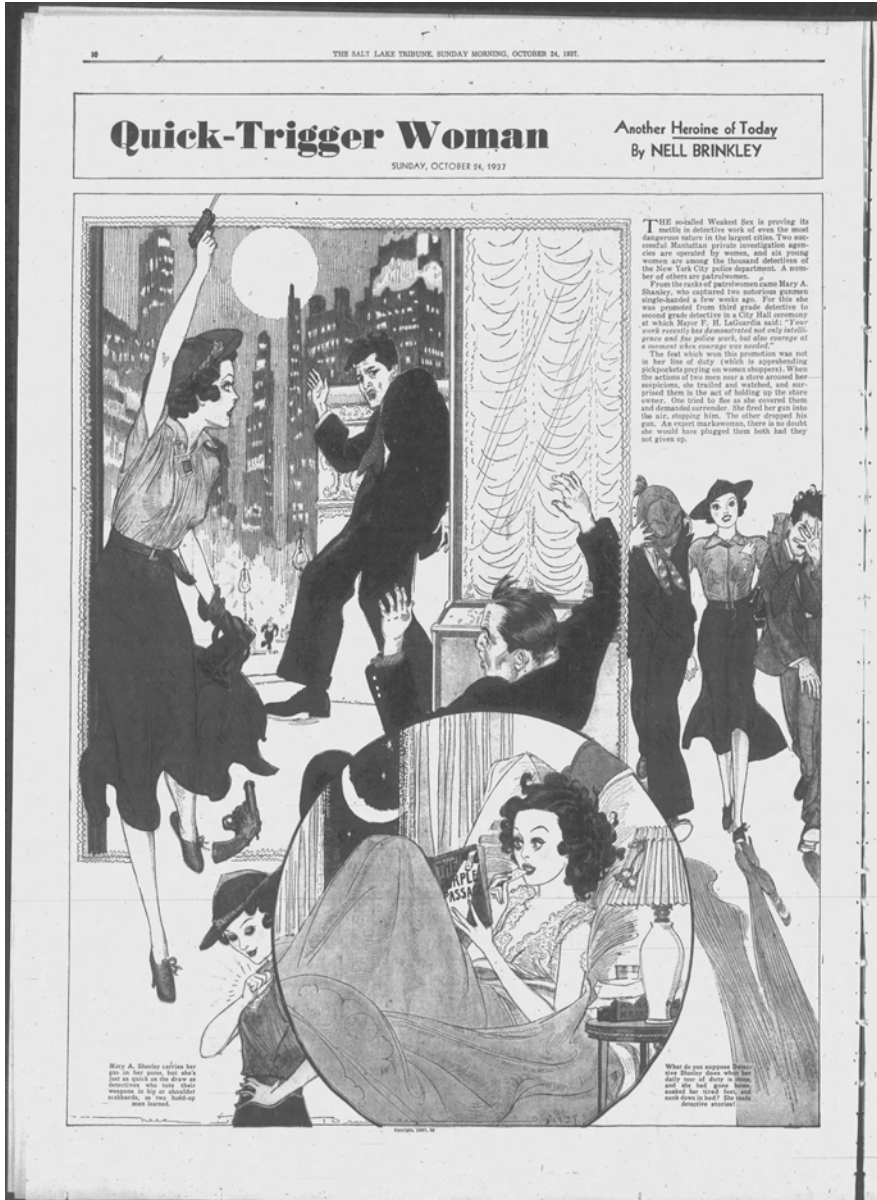


Figure 6.2: Brinkley. 1937. "Quick-Trigger Woman." For her episode "Quick-Trigger Woman," part of her series *The Heroines of Today*, Brinkley adopts the style and storylines popular from the pulp comics of the 1930s. Nell Brinkley © 1937 King Features Syndicate, Inc.

sex' and to invite the reader-viewer to reflect on gender roles. Compared to *Pretty Polly*, Brinkley's *Heroines of Today* serial from the late 1930s thereby resumes what I found out about early female illustrators and their visual narratives that presented the targeted female reader-viewership with reading options that either contributed to, extended, or altogether thwarted the textual narrative by providing alternative readings.

Visually and verbally, Brinkley adopts the style of the pulp magazines and comics that were popular in the 1930s: A central image sets the crime scene by depicting a nighttime New York City, complete with skyscrapers against an ominous full moon, as a random person runs past a streetlight. The three characters, Mary A. Shanley and the two shoplifters, are arranged in different layers against this background. In typical pulp-like fashion, there is a lot of movement: While one man shirks as Shanley fires her warning shot into the air, the other man seems to fall backwards, hands lifted above his head in a surrendering motion. Shanley herself is depicted full-size how she seems to be running out of the central panel that is framed in gold like a Fifth-Avenue shop window, one foot still in it, the other outside of its border as she interrupts the crime scene: With this courageous act, Shanley steps out of her usual *frame* of duty and thereby also provides a metaphorical, visual-textual message for women stepping out of their comfort zone and into employment in public service. By reading about the heroic acts of real-life women in these widely circulated and commercially published newspaper illustrations, young female reader-viewers could contemplate, or even assert control over their own life paths, career choices, and political aspirations. This demonstrates the political possibilities of mass culture as a creative, generative sphere for a female audience.

It would not be Brinkley's work, however, if she did not "g[i]ve real women the Brinkley treatment" (Robbins 2001: 129), infusing this action-scene with her signature attention to fashion and feminine beauty: The pretty-faced Shanley dons a yellow blouse and a skirt in police-color khaki that accentuate her slender body. Her fashionably short curls are topped with a likewise modish green hat. A small extra feature of her markedly feminine disguise is explained in text and image, both juxtaposing a typical female accessory with professional gear: "Mary A. Shanley carries her gun in her purse, but she's just as quick on the draw as detectives who tote their weapons in hip or shoulder scabbards" (Brinkley 1937).

Further panels juxtapose Shanley's private and public persona, while playing with male vs. female stereotypes: With an open smile, Shanley proudly delivers the two criminals who shamefully hide their faces. The accompanying text underlines this reversal of "[the] so-called Weakest Sex [who] is proving its mettle in detective work of even the most dangerous nature in the largest cities" with a double superlative to underline the outstanding nature of her courageous act. The text attempts to dissuade stereotypes by giving exact figures and stats about

the number of female detectives and police officers in New York City. While this episode and its centering on Shanley's beauty may be reminiscent of pulp detective stories, the latter usually placed male detectives front and center, delegating women to secondary roles of endangered or murdered victim. Brinkley's depiction and textual description of Shanley therefore broaden typical contemporary visual-textual representations of female roles in periodical media.

The layout of this episode, consisting of one rectangular and one round panel-like shape, with two additional images to the sides, differs markedly from the magazine illustrations analyzed in this study. And yet, the visual-textual narration on this page calls to mind the image-text relations seen in the magazine illustrations of earlier decades. Also, the focus on strong female agency, opinion, and opinion-making, represented via visually appealing femininity and fashion details, draws a clear line of continuity from Brinkley's and other artists' works from the beginning of the twentieth century to the 1930s. Typical for Brinkley's visual strategy that she already employed in her earlier cartoons and magazine illustrations, the women in the *Heroines* serial visually resemble beautiful magazine cover girls, but simultaneously are involved in actions or placed in settings that were considered non-typical for women of the time. Other than the works analyzed in previous chapters of this study, where visual and textual narratives conflicted with each other, however, this serial provides a strong and coherent visual *and* textual message for female activity and influence. At the same time, the episode plays with varying reading options.

Visually playing out, while also contradicting, clichés about femininity and fashion, Brinkley further presents her heroine in a cliché-ridden, yet strong scene in a central round panel. After her alliterative "daily tour of duty is done" and "she had gone home, soaked her tired feet, and sunk down into bed" in a yellow nightgown (a direct visual substitution of the yellow blouse she wore to work), the viewer is afforded a peek at Shanley at home during her favorite pastime: reading detective stories with an expression of excitement in her wide-open eyes, while nibbling crackers. The collage-like arrangement creates a constant back-and-forth comparison of Shanley's different private vs. public experiences and performances of agency – a visual strategy that Brinkley also adopted in other episodes of the *Heroines* serial. The panel's size and round shape centralize this bedroom scene, so that, without the accompanying textual narrative, one could easily assume that this woman reads a detective story and dreams up the surrounding scenes – as probably many (female) readers of the era's detective stories and comics did.

Nell Brinkley was very aware of her own influence and, for her very last serial, revisits her own legacy by once again portraying confident, independent female characters as in her early newspaper cartoons and her 1918 to early-1920s adventure-charged full-page tableau-like serials. However, while her characters Golden

Eyes or Kathleen (from *Kathleen and the Great Secret*, 1920–1921) had resembled the courageous female protagonists caught in perilous situations in the silent-film serials of the 1910s, now, in the 1930s, her female protagonists were real-life heroines dressed in the visual language also found on the covers of the era’s pulp-fiction novels. Brinkley thus incorporated self-referential elements in her art, while she always also adopted the prevalent visual and textual trends of her time.

I introduced these two examples of Brinkley’s works in the 1920s and ’30s as they reveal much about the direction that visual imaginations of femininity moved into. What I want to emphasize here are the resonances, and how female artists and visualizations of femininity from one generation not only circled back to their own pasts, but also faced forward. The early female illustrators featured in this study not only impacted on their era’s conceptions of young womanhood, as I have argued. Also, the legacy of female illustrators’ early work, the path they drew, continues and manifests itself in the work of subsequent generations of artists. Although several trajectories emanate from the work of the early illustrators I examined in this study, among them also commercial illustration for lifestyle ads or editorial illustration, the comic strip stands out as the most productive one. New representations of modern femininity went hand in hand with the new, popular comics format so that, for example, the ‘new woman,’ after dominating the Golden Age of American Illustration in the magazines, “claim[ed] fresh territory in the nation’s newspapers, where female cartoonists had begun making their mark” (Kennedy 2018: 26). We can see how the format, style, and topics of the magazine illustrations analyzed in this study decisively informed the visualizations of femininity in periodical media of the following decades by looking at the examples of female-created comics. As such, Brinkley’s pulpy *Heroines of Today* directly precedes and prefigures the ensuing decade’s action-packed comic strips starring smart, independent, and beautiful female protagonists drawn *and* written by immensely talented female artists such as Dalia ‘Dale’ Messick (1906–2005). It is particularly through Messick’s portrayal of Brenda in her serial newspaper comic strip *Brenda Starr, Reporter* that the creative and emancipatory impact of early female illustrators, as discussed in this study, comes to light: While Messick quoted and continued the early artists’ distinctive pairing of feminine aesthetics with female agency, as evident in certain parallels to the works examined in previous chapters, she also innovated on and expanded earlier ways of visualizing femininity in style and theme.

6.4 Star Reporters

Three years after Brinkley portrayed Mary A. Shanley, the detective and passionate detective-story reader would have been able to read the comic *Brenda Starr*,

Reporter, starring the eponymous female reporter-turned-detective and first action heroine in a newspaper comic strip authored by a woman. Drawn and written by Dale Messick,²³⁴ the “Grand [sic] Dame of comics” (Robbins 2012: 11, 5), *Brenda Starr, Reporter* premiered on June 30, 1940, and ran until 2011 (the first 40 years of which Messick was responsible for the strip), making it one of the longest running comic strips in newspaper history.

In cliffhanger fashion, the plucky and pretty protagonist, whose glamorous looks and red hair are modeled after movie star Rita Hayworth, finds herself in all sorts of adventures far more exciting than real reporters’ assignments: parachuting out of airplanes, escaping a Frankenstein-like mad surgeon, or working dangerous undercover missions in exotic locales. Along the way, the story shifts genres – from pulpy mystery to action-adventure to soap opera romance, with outfit changes that could stem from a fashion magazine (Pietrzyk 2012: 124; Gentile n.d.).

The untitled weekly episodes were first published in a self-contained comic book addendum inserted in the *Chicago Tribune*’s Sunday edition – a measure to not lose newspaper readership to the increasingly popular comic books (Howell 1998; see also Gardner 2012: 64). Published in vertical tabloid form, the strip was divided into two sections, initially consisting of 16 panels in total, that readers could cut out and fold to create their own comic book (Robbins 2013: 64–65, see Figure 6.3). In late 1941, the strip moved into the regular comics section of the *Chicago Tribune*, where it ran as a “half page’ in a horizontal format” (Herman 2012: 16). From October 22, 1945, daily, black-and-white episodes were integrated into the story next to the colorful Sunday strips.

The syndicated strip with its signature blend of adventure and romance was so popular that, at its peak in the 1950s, it ran in 250 newspapers (“Dale Messick” 2023) and was enjoyed by a worldwide readership of over 60 million (Henderson

²³⁴ Dale Messick (born Dalia Messick, 1906–2005) was “one of the first women to draw and write a syndicated newspaper strip” (book blurb on the back cover of Herman 2012). After studying at the Chicago Art Institute, she worked as a greeting card illustrator, while creating and sending out comic strips under the masculine-sounding name ‘Dale’ – a strategic move to evade prejudice from male editors against female comic artists. It was not until 1940 that the assistant Mollie Slott recognized the potential in a mailed-in sample strip that her boss, Joseph Mill Patterson, head of the Chicago Tribune-New York News Syndicate, had discarded. Slott eventually convinced her boss to run the strip in the syndicate’s Sunday newspapers. She advised Messick to fine-tune the story and turn Brenda from a bandit into a reporter – and *Brenda Starr, Reporter* was born. Messick was awarded with a Story Comic Book Award and the Milton Caniff Lifetime Achievement Award by the National Cartoonists Society – accolades comparable in prestige to an Oscar (Howell 1998). In a 1998 interview, Messick summed up her life and career: “I was married twice, divorced twice, [. . .], had a baby, and in 43 years never missed a deadline” (Howell 1998).



Figure 6.3: Messick. 1940a. *Brenda Starr, Reporter* [first episode]. *Brenda Starr, Reporter* premiered in a self-contained comic book addendum of the *Sunday Chicago Tribune* that readers could cut out and fold into a comic book. © Tribune Content Agency, LLC. All rights reserved. Distributed by Tribune Content Agency. Retrieved from *Newspapers.com*.

2006).²³⁵ Soon, given deadline pressures, as strips had to be “drawn six weeks before publication” (Howell 1998), but also due to the increased workload after *Brenda Starr* became a daily strip, Messick relied on assistants with whom, as common in comics, she shared the work, though in a largely and curiously gendered division of labor: While “Messick wrote the stories and drew Brenda (exclusively),” as well as “the fashions, other important characters, and action scenes,” her (mostly male) assistants worked on “layouts, lettering, spelling corrections,

²³⁵ The medium, style, and plot of *Brenda Starr, Reporter* suggest that it must have appealed to a predominantly female readership. Moreover, when it dropped the strip in 1973, the *Tucson Daily Citizen* received numerous angry fan letters from women (Robbins 2001: 137n17). However, given its syndicate circulation of more than 250 newspapers worldwide, it is probable that many men also read the strip. Not least men’s fan-mail to Messick, in which they requested a ‘daring picture’ of Brenda, who often wore revealing, pin-up style clothes on her curvaceous body (Howell 1998), indicate the existence of a male readership.

and the drawing of outdoor backgrounds, male anatomies, buildings, automobiles, and other mechanical objects” as per her instructions (Gentile n.d.; see also Liberator 2023; “Dale Messick” 2023).²³⁶ Dale Messick had occasional female assistants, and she was generous with helping out young artists, Richard Pietrzyk told me in a telephone conversation (2024), but she always drew Brenda Starr herself.

She held the reigns of the comic strip until she retired in 1980 when she was in her late 70s, “turning the strip’s entire production over to a two-woman team” (Gentile n.d.).²³⁷ About the Brenda drawn by her successors she said in a 1998 interview: “Now it doesn’t look like Brenda at all. [. . .] She looks more like she works at a bank. No glamour, no curves, no fashion – but it’s still going pretty good” (Howell 1998). Fans could also enjoy a number of product tie-ins, such as comic books containing reprints, cut-out paper dolls that appeared with the Sunday editions and that were later gathered in a coloring book (Gentile n.d.), a serial starring Joan Woodbury (Columbia, 1945), a made-for-television film (ABC, 1976), and even a feature film starring Brooke Shields (New World, 1989/1992), of which Messick said in the 1998 interview, “Don’t see it, it’s awful” (Howell 1998).

The strip narrates the adventures of Brenda Starr, a female reporter working in a male-dominated workplace at the newspaper *The Flash*. Brenda knows how to use her good looks wisely to get what she wants: whether to make an inmate talk or to crash a masked ball undercover in costume to retrieve first-hand information. Throughout, Messick dresses her protagonist in glamorous clothes and flaunts Brenda’s long bare legs, red hair, and curvaceous body.²³⁸ It would be an understatement, though, to summarize Brenda’s strategy as using her pretty face. Instead, Brenda is courageous, a confident and clever go-getter, who often thinks ahead of her male colleagues, making her a more modern version of Nell Brinkley’s Brinkley Girls or May Wilson Preston’s Portia. Like the suffragist Portia, Brenda, as well, follows a trajectory of heteronormative love by marrying and

²³⁶ Particularly during the so-called Golden Age of Comics in the 1930s, the collaboration between artist and writer was highly professionalized. In magazine illustration, on the contrary, illustrator and writer often worked independently of each other and were not even aware of one another (except for editorial stipulations).

²³⁷ Ashyia Henderson presents an alternate version of events: “The Chicago Tribune-New York News Syndicate forced Messick to retire in the mid-1980s. [. . .] Messick, who drew a salary and did not own the rights to the strip she created, was given a small pension for her retirement” (2006).

²³⁸ Over its decades-long run, the comic strip provides an excellent history of fashion, with Brenda’s looks always representing the respective era’s beauty ideals and fashion trends, from the 1940s and ’50s’ fashion for hats worn on short, curled hair, to the 1970s’ voluminous blowout hairstyles, to a more doll-like appearance in the 1980s (in 1985, Brenda even does Jane-Fonda-style aerobics!).

having a child, but the romance never consumes the story (Robbins 2012: 15; Pietrzyk 2012: 125), while her on-off-relationship results in a more than unconventional family life for its time.

Brenda overcomes obstacles, including her male colleagues and their conservative gendered expectations of women at the workplace: Already in the very first episodes, she refuses offers for dates and marriage that she seems to receive left and right from her colleagues who believe that married women need not work (Messick 1940a: 96). Also, they unfairly undermine her capabilities. When Brenda sits down to write an exclusive story she has secured, a colleague reveals that he has already published the story instead of her because, as he tells her bluntly, he believed he needed to protect Brenda and that “it was too big a story for you to muff” (Messick 1940b: 95). The contemporary reader, who may have been a young working woman herself, must have felt the disappointment here: Brenda’s “first big chance” (95) may have been sabotaged, yet the reader was hooked: *Brenda Starr, Reporter* would be the most successful strip in the *Chicago Tribune* supplement. The strong-willed female protagonist must have resonated with the “atmosphere of patriotism and sisterhood” of the 1940s (Howell 1998). As Howell explains, “Her prosperity was, in part, a product of World War II’s strong female workforce. Like the affable Rosie the Riveter caricature, Brenda Starr was an exemplar of girl power – a white-collar analogue of the buxom factory gal.” After all, published on Sundays, the comic appeared on the only free day of working girls. Brenda herself was a career-girl through and through, and although Messick romanticized Brenda’s job, the comic artist and writer impacted on female readers’ (self-)imaginings and real lives: As Jackie Leger writes, “Brenda Starr became a role model for a generation of young female readers inspired to enter the newspaper field or pursue independent careers” (2000).

The trajectory from female illustrators’ visualizations of femininity in magazine illustrations and cartoons at the turn and the beginning of the twentieth century to this action comic strip of the 1940s is apparent in two ways. First, both formats share a comparable composition: The form of the comic, with its constellation of images and texts that jointly narrate a story, resembles the specifically visual-textual narrative mode of Golden-Age magazine illustrations and their accompanying texts, as presented in this study.²³⁹ This resemblance in visual-

²³⁹ Note that the format of comics in the first half of the twentieth century was, however, not based on the visual-textual format of Golden-Age magazine illustrations. Comics are a distinct format that goes back to the nineteenth century. Thus, comics have been in existence and evolving in parallel to the form of magazine illustrations during the turn of the twentieth century. Classical comic elements, including panels, have been around since at least Winsor McCay’s *Little Nemo*, which began in 1905, with the grid format even predating it (Kane 2019: 378).

textual composition is visible in Rose O'Neill's back covers or cartoons that have a small poem or caption by the side (see ch. 2), May Wilson Preston's and Nell Brinkley's illustrations for serials (see ch. 4), respectively columns (see ch. 3), or the relations between advertisement images and their accompanying copy texts (see ch. 5). As already seen in the *Pretty Polly* episode, however, image and text in comics work together to tell a story, much unlike, for example, magazine stories where illustrations only depict parts of the story or may even alter the meaning of the text, as demonstrated in this study. As a second common thread, *Brenda Starr, Reporter* shares with the previously mentioned magazine illustrations of femininity an emphasis on feminine visual appeal and fashion or self-fashioning, as evident in the creative and powerful possibilities of fashion in Brinkley's illustrations, to name just one example.

Particularly the colorful cut-out paper dolls, published during the 1940s and '50s, affirm Dale Messick's *Brenda Starr, Reporter* as an almost direct continuation in subject and style of Nell Brinkley's fashion-conscious serials, including her *Heroines of Today*. It is easy to imagine the daring reporter as one of the 'heroic' women that Brinkley portrayed in the 1930s. Conversely, Brinkley's 'heroines' could easily have been cut-out paper dolls themselves, as Brinkley often drew the women's slender bodies in their entirety, donning fashionable clothes, professional gear, or other props.

Albeit printed below the Sunday-edition comic strip, the *Brenda Starr* cut-out dolls did not directly relate to or add to the plot, let alone fit into the action genre, but foregrounded beauty and fashion. A cut-out called "Brenda goes to work," printed below the April 26, 1953, episode, depicts a selection of outfit options to play with: a cleaner's gear; a tight painter's outfit with a paint bucket and brush; and a gardener's outfit – none of which have anything to do with the events in the serial (Figure 6.4). And yet, the paper cut-out dolls fed into a predominantly female readership's imagination and self-fashioning. Similarly, Nell Brinkley's female fans already cut out and pasted drawings of her Brinkley Girls into scrapbooks and, as seen in chapter three, they could buy the corresponding fashion and accessories in department stores to customize their very own Brinkley Girl looks (and yes, there were also Brinkley Girl paper dolls).²⁴⁰

In addition to feminine visual appeal, *Brenda* also shares with her illustrated predecessors a focus on self-confidence and cleverness, as exemplified by Brinkley's or O'Neill's portrayals of smart young women, as well as Preston's visual

²⁴⁰ Even though they targeted a female readership of all ages, including children, at least the cut-out dolls from the early 1950s suggest that these sections also might have entertained a male readership: Many dresses and poses resemble the era's illustrations of pin-up girls, and, of course, there is always a *Brenda* in lingerie or bathing suit, who needs to be dressed.



Figure 6.4: Messick. 1953. *Brenda Starr, Reporter* [unnumbered episode with cut-out paper doll titled “Brenda Goes to Work”]. Cut-out dolls with matching outfit options invited fans to imagine and play through new storylines for Brenda beyond her action-packed reporter job. © Tribune Content Agency, LLC. All rights reserved. Distributed by Tribune Content Agency. Retrieved from *Newspapers.com*.

characterization of Portia as a self-assured woman, who elegantly navigates conflicts in the fight for women’s suffrage. And yet, particularly the depiction of conflict is where Messick sets her depiction of femininity apart from that of her illustration foresters, painting a more powerful, updated picture of female roles and expected behaviors, as we can also see in Brenda’s reactions.

Furious at her colleague for stealing her story, Brenda releases her anger with her entire body: She storms off, her dress billowing, throws objects at the traitorous colleague (in one panel she does not even appear to be wearing shoes, which she may have tossed through the room), shouts that she is definitely not going to marry him now, all while the panels close in on her angry face (Figure 6.5). Emanata like sweat drips or motion lines underscore the intensity of her emotion, as she seems to confront not only her colleague, but also the reader-viewer up close. Despite being hit by flying objects, with stars circling around their heads, her colleagues still have enough nerve to taunt her (“that’s the trouble with women – no sense of humor”; Messick 1940b: 95). Fulfilling the sexist cliché of making fun of female anger, her colleague refers to her as on a “war path” here. The times were difficult –

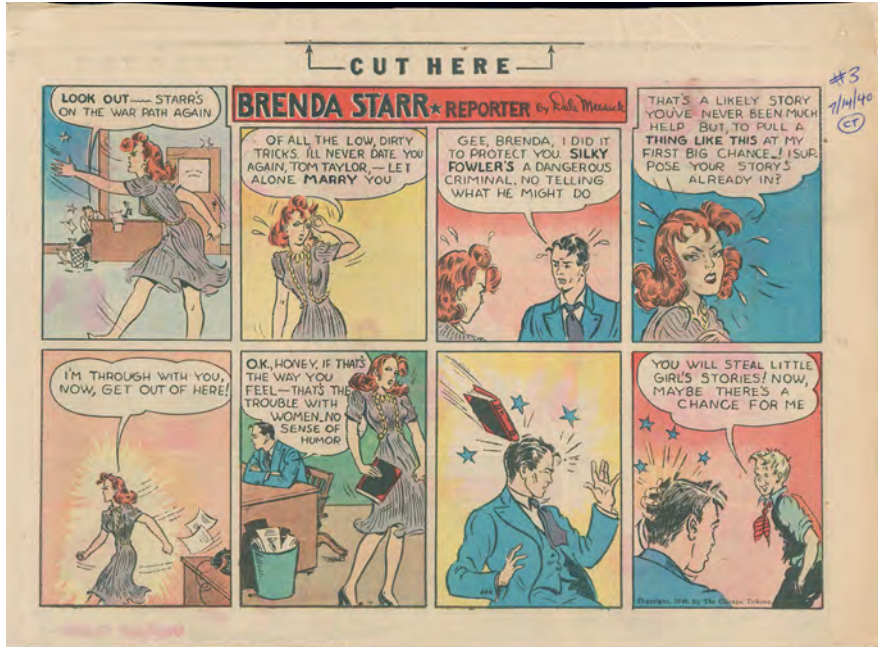


Figure 6.5: Messick. 1940b. *Brenda Starr, Reporter* [third episode]. Compared to earlier visualizations of women, Dale Messick does not shy away from depicting female rage in the face of women's unfair treatment in the workplace. © Tribune Content Agency, LLC. All rights reserved. Distributed by Tribune Content Agency. San Francisco Academy of Comic Art Collection, Billy Ireland Cartoon Library & Museum, The Ohio State University.

a veritable ‘war path’ – for early career women, who had to constantly prove themselves in chauvinistic work environments, and the artist (who had similar experiences) visualized these real-life struggles for her readers.

This scene, printed in the *Chicago Tribune* on July 14, 1940, harks back to, yet also decisively progresses from earlier visual conceptions of female roles and behavior: Of course, the angry Brenda is still beautiful, and even her rage comes across as gorgeous and charming, rather than frightening or confrontational. By presenting an aesthetically pleasing protagonist who, even when she loses her temper, is still nice to look at, Dale Messick feeds into the mode of presentation established by female illustrators since the 1890s. And yet, this detailed depiction of such a visually accentuated emotional outburst from a young woman in the face of her unfair treatment at work would have been unusual to witness in Rose O’Neill’s ‘sweet-girl graduates’ or the playful, yet always kind, Brinkley Girls presented in this study – simply because women’s emotional outburst, let alone rage, would not have been depicted in the first place. At the turn and beginning of the twentieth

century, women illustrators drew women into political influence and public presence, but they strategically left visualizations of female rage off the page: As seen in chapter four, May Wilson Preston's depiction of the suffragist Portia obscures her textually prevalent anger to emphasize suffrage's alignment with contemporary societal expectations of white, middle-class female modesty and reason, rather than feeding into narratives of radical activism and irrational 'furious suffragettes.' This detailed portrayal of female rage and strong emotions, once considered unusual and counterproductive for feminist messaging, was now presented as normal and even communicated in a visually powerful and appealing manner.

Messick further expands the norms and scope of acceptable subject matter and plotlines from those seen in preceding chapters. Although early women cartoonists had already drawn magazine or newspaper cartoons and comics featuring female characters in the 40 years before Messick,²⁴¹ they had restricted themselves to "comparatively light" and traditionally feminine subjects and characters, such as "cute animals and kids" or "pretty girls without a care in the world" (Robbins 2013: 64). As such, Brinkley's proto-comic serials, like *Pretty Polly*, from the 1920s adhered to stereotypically feminine themes and conservative ideological frameworks (see Meyer 2019a: 369), where the female characters try out different personalities and roles but get married in the last episode. Even Brinkley's fearless character Golden Eyes departs not too far from this logic, as she traveled to war-torn Europe for the sake of accompanying and rescuing her partner. And, finally, in her *Heroines of Today* episode, Brinkley makes sure to depict how her version of detective Mary A. Shanley safely returns home each night to slip under the covers and delve into the safe pages of her detective novels. Dale Messick and her generation of female comic artists (including Tarpé Mills, 1918–1988, who invented the action-heroine Miss Fury) were aware of these early plotlines – as a schoolgirl, Messick even created her own comic strip modelled after *Golden Eyes*, and Trina Robbins sees thematic and stylistic continuities between the action-packed scenes of *Golden Eyes* and *Brenda Starr* (2001: 135–136), not least because Messick's drawing style resembles Brinkley's "romantic and feminine" line-art (Robbins 2013: 64).²⁴² While the female character Golden Eyes may have served as a blueprint for Brenda's character, Messick wrote forth the depic-

241 Next to O'Neill's early cartoons of women or children, see also Grace Drayton's (1877–1936) famous 'Campbell Kids' cartoons (Kennedy 2018: 27–29). Some other famous female cartoonists and comic artists from the turn of the twentieth century were Fanny Young Cory (1877–1972), Frances Edwina Dumm (1893–1990), Kate Carew (1869–1961), Margaret G. Hays (1874–1925), and Mary A. Hays (1898–1968) (Robbins 2012: 11).

242 Dale Messick and Nell Brinkley also shared an interest in Hollywood actresses and the theater. As Richard Pietrzyk (2024) remembers and told me in a telephone conversation, Messick

tion of female heroines in her own unique way. Messick's Brenda ventures into traditionally masculine comic-plots and genres of action, adventure, and film-noir crime (Robbins 2012: 11).²⁴³ She is clearly an action heroine and an overall more grown-up woman with serious career aspirations. The creation of this new successful visual type progressed from earlier depictions of female characters in periodical media, while simultaneously pointing to Brenda's legacy as "the daughter of the Brinkley girl" (Robbins 2001: 136).

Without the female pioneers in illustration, none of what we have seen in this concluding chapter would have been possible. As Kennedy writes, "the illustrators of this era [the Golden Age of American Illustration, my addition] paved the way for later women to create work that was more daring in theme and visual impact" (2018: 26). As the Nell Brinkley-fan that she was (Pietrzyk 2024), Dale Messick thus provides a real-life example for the immense impact that early illustrators and cartoonists had in inspiring subsequent generations of women artists to creatively write forth the history of visual imaginations of femininity in periodical media.

This study focused on how women illustrators create images of female characters on the page and in the minds of their reader-viewers and thereby actively impact on (self-)imaginings about female roles and femininity. As seen in this concluding overview, the magazine market, the visual style that characterized illustration, and the way female characters were pictured changed after 1920, as well as across the formats of magazine illustration and newspaper comics. The media of articulation may evolve over time – from magazine illustrations to newspaper comics, from comics to animated films, and ultimately into the many digital channels of expression such as computer games or avatars – but certain formations of the female and feminist art of illustration from the beginning of the twentieth century remain discernible throughout, even when the lines of the artists' works explored in this study are slowly fading.

once showed him a comic book of about 20 pages that she had drawn when she was only 10 years old. It told the adventures of a character based on actress Gloria Swanson. Messick was also keenly interested in Broadway fashion designers of the 1920s.

243 This differs from early film serials, for example, where strong female characters were engaged in all sorts of thrilling action plots long before the same could be said about female comic characters. For an overview on strong female roles in early film serials, see, for example, Brasch (2018).

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Index

- 19th Amendment 7, 154, 202
“The Adventures of Fife” 162
advertisements
– advertising agencies 16n26, 101, 162n155, 214n196, 218, 222n205
– fashion 26, 101, 102, 120–124, 127, 131, 136, 148, 149, 158n149, 214, 215, 214n196, 269
– female addressees of 3, 4, 23, 101, 131, 158n149, 163, 202, 213–215, 219, 224, 225, 242, 243
– food 5, 43n56, 158n149, 163, 168, 251
– magazines’ reliance on 3, 4, 166–167, 215–219
– psychological tools in 218, 227
– sections in magazines 15, 39, 102n104, 127, 205, 211, 212, 215, 219
– soap 8, 26, 203–251
– torn out from magazines 15, 15n24, 39, 205, 215
– *see also* consumption
– *see also* fashion
– *see also* magazines
advice columns 12, 31, 36, 84n87, 94, 95–150, 223, 241, 252, 269
African Americans
– (lacking) depictions of 33, 34, 163, 163n156, 231, 232, 244, 253, 254
– female characters 33, 253, 254; *See also* ‘Crisis maids’
– female illustrators 7n10, 33, 34, 253, 254
– magazines 10, 10n13, 33, 34, 253
– stereotypes 33, 34, 83n84, 128n121, 154n143, 163, 163n156
– struggle for suffrage 163, 186n164, 191, 191n170, 194, 196, 201n180, 202, 202n182
– women’s magazines addressing 10n13
– *see also* Harlem Renaissance
– *see also* National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)
– *see also* race and racism
agency, illustrators’ 7, 18, 215–219
Allender, Nina Evans and the Allender Girl 149, 161, 163, 175
American Journal of Nursing 243
Americanization 241, 242
Ames, Blanche Ames 161
archives and archiving 2n4, 10, 11, 10n14, 15n23, 21n31, 33, 39, 205, 209, 215, 236
“Are the Fashions Ugly?” 119
Armory Show 37, 151n140
art
– clubs 7, 19, 27–31
– high-low divides in 4, 25n38, 215
– schools. *See* education
– studios. *See* studios
Art Deco 253
Art Nouveau 32, 53, 54, 56, 116, 117n112
“The Art of Staying at Home” 105, 106, 136–141
Art Students League of New York 25, 37, 151n140, 246; *See also* education
Arts and Crafts movement 32, 246n224
Ashcan School 37, 151n140, 182, 183
Atlantic Monthly 246n222
“Autumn Conquest” 57
avant-garde 10, 18, 25n38, 246n224
backwardness 228, 231, 254
Bailey, Edith 156–199
Barns, Cornelia Baxter 38, 160, 162, 194n174, 254
Barnum, Gertrude 189, 190
Barthes, Roland 12n18, 13n20, 111, 112, 117, 118, 120
Beard, Mary Ritter 158, 159, 166, 179, 189, 193, 197–201
beauty 58–68, 71, 72, 75, 77, 78, 81, 82n83, 83n84, 85, 88, 91n97, 95, 97, 101, 106, 109, 115–117, 119, 136–138, 143, 145, 224, 262, 263, 269
– columns 17, 57, 119, 252
– standards 54, 57, 81, 126, 133n124, 148, 267n238
“Begin the Day Right” 220, 221, 224, 228, 232
Benjamin, Walter 5n8
‘Better Baby’ campaigns 210, 211, 213
Big Six (of women’s magazines) 31
birth control 7, 38, 49n59, 162, 182, 195, 212, 229, 244, 246, 247, 254; *See also* Sanger
Birth Control Review 38, 160, 195

- body, female 56, 98, 99, 106–111, 115, 116, 120, 126–135, 223, 252, 262, 266n235, 267, 270
- Boston 24
- ‘Boston Marriages’ 28
- ‘Brandywine School’ 26
- “Breathe Deep” 108
- Brenda Starr, Reporter* 264–273
- Brinkley, Nell 6, 9, 23, 25, 30, 32, 36, 37, 37n49, 57, 90n96, 94, 95–150, 153n142, 155, 161, 163, 252, 253, 255–264, 267, 269, 272, 273, 272n242
- Brinkley Girl 32, 36, 55, 101, 102, 106, 110, 112–114, 117, 120–125, 132, 133, 135, 146, 146n137, 148, 149, 149n138, 163, 267, 269, 271, 273
- Brinkley Girl merchandise 36, 37, 97n101, 120–125, 122n115, 123n117, 135, 136, 135n126, 149, 258n230; *See also* merchandise
- style 32, 90n96, 100, 102, 110, 122n115, 133–135, 146, 148, 149, 149n138, 155, 253, 258–260, 269, 272, 273
- work for newspapers 32, 36, 37, 97, 97n102, 118, 125, 135, 136, 139–149, 153n142, 255–264, 269, 272
- “The Brood” 247
- Brooklyn Daily Eagle* 235, 236
- Brooklyn Life* 80
- Brown, Arthur Raymond and Gertrude Foster 155n144, 164, 165
- Bryn Mawr 30n45
- “A Business Girl” 141–148; *See also* working women and girls
- “The Call of Fashion” 105, 110, 113–118, 129
- captions 12, 14n22, 17, 48n58, 60n71, 88, 92, 95, 106, 109, 127, 133, 138, 144, 147, 178, 232, 246, 247, 249, 250, 269
- “Care and Precision” 206–208, 223
- Carew, Kate 272n241
- cartooning schools 21–24; *See also* education
- cartoonists 23, 37, 53, 72, 135, 145n134, 154, 155, 161, 246, 258, 259, 264, 265n234, 272n241
- cartoons 23n33, 31–34, 36, 37, 42–44, 48n58, 49, 52–56, 72, 74, 80–86, 88, 91, 92, 97n102, 141, 147–150, 153n142, 155, 159, 161, 168, 175, 214, 247n225, 258, 268, 269, 272n241; *See also* newspapers; suffrage
- Catt, Carrie Chapman 158n148, 161n154, 179, 193, 195, 200, 201
- celebrities 122, 123, 152, 113, 116
- illustrator as star 1, 2, 152
- centerfolds 80, 82, 83
- “A Chat about Corsets” 129–133
- Chicago 20, 265n234
- ‘Chicago female world of love and ritual’ 20; *See also* friendships
- Chicago (Sunday) Tribune* 265–268
- Chicago World’s Fair 1893 81; *See also* World’s Columbian Exposition
- children
- “The Child” 250
- child labor 158n148, 160, 180, 195, 212, 244, 246, 247
- childbirth 20, 49n59, 74, 175, 181, 182, 268
- childcare 95n99, 177, 211, 213, 223, 229, 247, 249, 250
- childhood as topic (for female illustrators) 4n7, 6n9, 30n45, 32, 34, 36, 38, 39, 181–184, 202, 203–251, 253, 254, 272n241
- childless female illustrators 29, 53
- child-rearing 95n99, 173, 175, 181, 182, 208, 209–213, 219, 222, 226, 229, 232, 241, 242, 248–251
- children as target audience 5, 19n28, 36, 163, 269n240
- “Children Frequently Suffer from Headaches” 233–236
- female illustrators referring to their art as children 5
- used in suffrage movement 94, 155, 158, 161–163, 168, 177n161, 179n162, 180, 183, 184, 190–192, 194–196; *See also* “Girl Baby”
- *see also* illustration
- citizenship, U.S.-American 194n173, 236, 241, 250
- civilization 203, 207, 210, 220, 223n207, 226, 230–232, 236, 237, 241, 242, 251
- Christy, Howard Chandler and the Christy Girl 6, 149, 163
- chromolithography 42, 80, 81

- class. *See* consumption; friendships; mothers; 'new woman'; suffrage
- cleanliness 143, 195, 196, 203–209, 209–213, 219–227, 229, 230, 232, 233, 236, 237, 241–244, 248, 250, 251; *See also* purity
- Clean-Living Movements 210, 211
- close-reading 9, 12, 13, 17, 39, 100, 252
- Colby, Gertrude K. 98–100, 102, 104–110, 112, 116, 118, 126–128, 131, 135, 140, 146, 148
- collaboration 16, 23, 30, 32–34, 267n236
- colleges and education 7, 20n30, 34, 41, 43, 47, 49, 62, 73–78, 89, 109, 128, 153, 156, 158, 167–175, 179, 181, 186, 187, 190, 192, 252; *See also* education; *specific colleges*
- Collier's* 156, 245, 246
- colonialism 230, 231
- color printing 3, 42, 62, 80, 81, 84, 86–88, 93, 193, 258, 259, 267
- comics and comic strips 33, 36, 84, 88, 136n127, 253, 258, 259, 261, 263–269, 272, 273; *See also* newspapers
- comics studies 12, 255
- Comstock Law 247
- consumption
- and class 125
 - consumer culture and consumer goods 3, 35, 57, 101, 115, 118, 120–122, 124, 125, 131, 212, 213, 219, 231, 242, 243
 - and femininity 3, 4, 31, 45, 46, 47, 111, 112, 213, 214n196, 219, 224, 225
 - *see also* advertisements
- Cooper Union 3, 21, 24n36; *See also* education
- corsets
- advertisements of 102n104, 122n115, 127, 128, 131–133, 158n149
 - debates around 129–135
- Cory, Fanny Young 272n241
- Cosmopolitan* 43, 66, 67, 77, 136, 215, 245, 246
- covers, magazine
- back covers 8, 15n23, 31, 35, 43, 45n57, 53–56, 60–62, 64, 75, 77–78, 80–83, 86, 154, 169, 269
 - cover girls 6, 8, 35, 56n67, 59, 81–83, 82n83, 88, 89, 89n95, 162, 163, 163n156, 253, 263
 - front covers 5, 12, 30n45, 32, 34–36, 38, 39, 41, 41n51, 43, 53–55, 62–64, 68–73, 80–83, 84n86, 85n88, 86, 89, 98, 102, 103, 146, 152, 154, 159, 161, 162, 168–170, 168n157, 175, 177n161, 192, 205n186, 214, 227–229, 227n210, 228n211, 244–246, 249, 250, 253, 255–257, 264
 - *see also* magazines
- Cozens, Henrietta 29, 31
- The Craftsman* 183
- The Crisis* 33, 34, 169, 253
- 'Crisis maids' 169
 - use of photography in 34, 169
- Cupid 77, 78n79, 106, 110, 129, 130, 133
- cuteness 225
- cut-out dolls 267, 269, 270
- debutantes 66, 128
- The Delineator* 237n216
- Denver Post* 36, 97
- department stores 26, 113, 120–122, 131, 269
- Dickens, Charles 177
- Dimock, Edith 28n44
- diphtheria 249
- "The Divinity of the Season" 60–63, 65, 70, 90
- divorce 29, 53, 70, 93, 173, 265n234
- Drayton, Grace G. 168, 272n241
- Dreiser, Theodore 47
- Drexel Institute of Arts and Sciences in Philadelphia 25, 28, 38; *See also* education
- Du Bois, W. E. B. 34, 253
- Du Bois, Yolande 253
- Dumm, Frances Edwina 272n241
- Eakins, Thomas 25, 27, 38; *See also* education
- Eastman, Max 152, 216n200, 245
- Ebin, Alexander B. 157n147
- 'educated motherhood,' ideology of 38, 209–213, 211n191, 219, 220, 223, 225–227, 229, 231, 248, 250, 251; *See also* mothers
- "The Educated Wife" 78n79
- education, arts
- at art schools 3, 19, 21–27, 31, 36, 37, 39, 52, 97, 151n140, 214, 246
 - at correspondence schools 4n7, 21–24
 - at European art schools 24n35
 - hindrances for women's 7, 21–27, 53
 - *see also* Art Students League; cartooning schools; Cooper Union; Drexel Institute; Federal School of Applied Cartooning;

- Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts (PAFA); Philadelphia School of Design for Women; St. Louis School of Fine Arts; University of Arts
- *see also* Eakins; Pyle
- elitism 115, 138, 146, 186, 188, 193, 196, 200, 201, 210, 246
- ethnicity 84, 154, 193, 194n174, 237
- eugenics movement 208, 211, 212, 230–232, 240; *See also* Progressive era; race and racism
- The Evening Star* 250
- The Evening World* 126n119
- fashion
- ‘democratization’ of 110–122, 124
 - designers 109n108, 113, 115, 120, 272n242
 - as emancipatory tool of self-fashioning 36, 37, 94, 99, 100, 108, 108n107, 110–112, 116, 120, 123, 124, 127–129, 132, 148, 252, 254, 259, 262, 263, 269
 - female body as 99, 108, 109, 127–129, 136
 - ideals and rules 57, 78, 109n108, 111–124, 127n120, 128, 129
 - illustrations and plates 4n7, 26, 102, 103, 108n107, 112, 113, 116, 124, 132, 147, 158n149, 177, 182, 183, 267n238
 - magazines 8, 32, 36, 37, 95–150, 155, 158n149, 215, 265
 - ‘school’ of 101, 107, 108
 - and smartness 103–106, 108, 113, 119, 120, 125, 126, 175
 - *see also* advertisements
- Father Time 40, 41, 51
- Fauset, Jessie Redmon 33
- Federal School of Applied Cartooning 21–24; *See also* education
- ‘female world of love and ritual’ 19, 20, 30; *See also* friendships
- feminism 20, 28, 30, 44, 50, 51, 55n65, 71, 73, 74, 79, 111, 112, 131, 145, 147, 155, 160, 187, 244, 260, 272, 273
- fin de siècle* 46, 58n69
- “First Anniversary Number” 249
- Fisher, Harrison and the Fisher Girl 6, 28, 149, 163, 169
- Fitzgerald, F. Scott 37, 151, 152, 255
- Fitzgerald, Portia Willis 157
- flappers 123, 124, 138, 163n156, 256–260
- “Flirting with Time” 40, 41
- flowers 53–63, 64–83, 92, 104, 117, 132, 143; *See also* nature imagery
- “For the Slender Only” 164
- Foucault, Michel 116
- Freud, Sigmund 203
- friendships
- and class 158, 164, 168, 180–185, 189–190, 195, 196, 199
 - female 19, 20, 28, 61, 153, 214
 - *see also* ‘female world of love and ritual’
- “Full Time” 51, 52
- gender norms 5, 6, 8, 19, 20, 29, 45, 57, 59, 88, 99, 100, 110, 124n118, 129, 146, 167, 173, 179, 201, 252, 260–262, 268
- Gibson, Charles Dana 6, 11, 28, 32, 151, 153, 154, 259n231
- Gibson Girl 6, 36, 48, 55, 98n102, 132, 149, 153–155, 160–163, 165, 175
- Gilman, Charlotte Perkins 74–77
- “Girl Baby” 161; *See also* children
- girlhood 49, 54, 60, 172
- Glackens, Louis M. 28
- Golden Age of American Illustration 1–9, 19, 38, 39, 149, 152, 154, 205, 214–216, 255, 264, 273
- Golden Eyes and Her Hero, Bill (Over There)* 146n137, 258, 260, 263–254, 272, 273
- Good Housekeeping* 32, 37, 38, 43, 119, 132, 136, 152, 164, 175n160, 205n186, 212n193, 215, 228, 250, 255, 256
- “Grandma’s Morning Task” 233, 234
- Green, Elizabeth Shippen 25n39, 28, 29, 214, 228, 236
- Greenwich Village 39, 187n165, 244
- Greville, Frances Evelyn. *See* Warwick, Countess of
- halftone 3n5, 151
- Harding, Charlotte 25n39, 28n44
- Harlem Renaissance 33, 34, 253, 254; *See also* African Americans
- Harper’s Bazar* 8, 32, 36, 57, 67, 94, 95–150
- Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* 95n99
- Harper’s Weekly* 95n99
- Hays, Margaret G. and Mary A. 273n241

- A Hazard of New Fortunes* 21
- “Headquarters for the Next Six Months” 161
- Hearst, William Randolph 36, 42, 97, 104, 123, 136, 141, 145–147, 255, 257n229, 260n233
- Hearst Corporation, Hearst syndicate 36, 95n99, 125, 126, 136, 138, 141, 147, 255
- Held, John, Jr. 259n231
- Henri, Robert 182
- The Heroines of Today* 260–264, 269, 272
- Herter, Albert 205, 231
- Heterodoxy Club 28, 187
- households, all-female 19, 20, 21, 27–31, 28n44, 30, 31; *See also* studios
- How it Feels to Be the Husband of a Suffragette* 155, 164–166
- “How One Woman Cleaned Her White Parasol” 203–205, 233
- “How Summer Comes” 61, 62
- “How to Prevent Colds” 250
- Howells, William Dean 21
- Hull House 20
- humor 32, 34, 35, 41–43, 50, 58, 59, 62, 67, 72, 75, 78–86, 88, 89, 92, 93, 119, 133, 155, 161, 164–166, 175n160, 177, 183, 223, 226, 270
- “I was Explaining” 240–243
- illustration
- ‘canon’ of 6n9, 11
 - children’s book illustration 30n45, 36, 97n102, 214, 227n210, 245–247; *See also* children
 - commissioning process and work practices in 17, 18, 21n31, 159, 217–219, 222n205, 241n217, 248, 249, 252
 - demand for 1, 2, 2n3, 24n37, 36, 86, 214, 215, 217
 - dates and definition of Golden Age of (American) 2, 2n3, 254–256
 - historiography of 6n9, 11, 33, 255n228
 - ownership and control of 76, 267n237
 - perception as low art 3, 4, 4n7, 5, 7, 21, 26n40
 - as profession 1, 2n3, 3–7, 16–31, 25n38, 155, 216n200, 267n236
- illustrators, female
- incomes of 3, 4, 4n7, 23n34, 38, 39, 70, 216, 216n201, 245, 246
 - networks of. *See* networks
 - prejudices against 5, 7n10, 21, 23, 79, 216, 265n234
 - professionalization strategies of 1, 3, 7, 11, 18–31, 21n31, 27n41, 34
- immigration 10, 154, 163n156, 179, 188, 191–196, 198, 199, 208, 210, 230, 237, 238, 241–244, 247, 248
- individuality and individualization 36, 50, 66, 71–73, 97n101, 99, 103–105, 110–112, 119, 125–127, 129, 131, 147, 148
- intertextuality 15, 17, 18, 91
- Ivory Soap 38, 39, 203–251
- James, Henry 50n61, 153
- Judge* 3n5, 42, 80, 80n82, 92
- Jugend* 244
- “Juneflowers” 64, 68–73
- Kathleen and the Great Secret* 264
- Kent, Rockwell 217
- Keppler, Joseph 42
- Kewpies 32, 34, 35n47, 43, 43n56, 76, 85n88, 155, 161, 259; *See also* merchandise; O’Neill
- labor rights 177, 182, 183, 194, 199
- Ladies’ Home Journal* 19n28, 21, 22, 26, 31, 38, 43, 169, 203–205, 207, 211, 212, 215, 236, 255
- leftist ideology 8, 162, 246–249
- lesbianism 20
- Life* 42, 42n55, 43, 80, 80n82, 85n88, 85n90, 92
- life-drawing classes 24, 52
- “Linked Together by the Law” 177n161
- lithography 3
- little magazines 6, 8, 32, 39, 160, 161
- advertisements in 215
 - editorial policies of 209, 215, 244, 245, 244n220, 254
 - illustrations in 161, 202, 214, 244–249, 251, 254
 - *see also* magazines
- Los Angeles Examiner* 149
- magazines
- competition among 42, 80, 81, 86, 87, 89n95, 101n103, 105
 - distribution of 5, 18, 36, 86, 87, 92, 147, 154, 216, 217

- editors of 4, 5, 17–19, 21, 34, 36, 38, 42, 53, 70, 75, 78, 79–92, 98, 100, 102n104, 117, 118, 151, 152, 158, 159, 166, 167, 179, 180, 189, 190, 193, 197, 200–202, 209, 212, 214n196, 216n200, 217, 228, 245, 246, 247n225, 249, 253, 254, 267n236
- female editors of 5, 19n28
- female readership of 3, 4, 5, 8, 8n11, 21–23, 36, 63, 82–85, 91n97, 95, 97, 98, 97n101, 100–107, 110, 112, 120, 125, 126, 131, 135–146, 158n149, 204, 214, 215, 219, 223–225, 223n208, 228, 229, 249, 252–254, 262, 263, 266n235, 268, 269, 271, 273
- fiction 8, 12, 14, 15, 26n40, 31, 57, 140, 141, 164, 165, 189, 211, 212, 216, 217, 246n222
- market 2, 5, 8, 10, 18, 19, 21, 26, 35–37, 43, 56, 67, 80–82, 84n85, 85–89, 91, 101n103, 103, 113, 124n118, 152, 154, 214, 216n200, 216n201, 217, 219, 244, 253, 256, 273
- publishers 39, 91, 95n99, 166, 216
- size of 11, 81
- smart 98, 103–106, 108, 113, 117, 119, 125, 126, 147
- see also advertisements
- see also covers
- see also little magazines
- see also specific publications
- marriage 20, 41, 43, 44, 49, 50n61, 51, 52, 61, 62, 65, 69–72, 74, 77, 78, 88, 90, 93, 153, 179, 252, 268
- female illustrators changing names after 3n4
- marriage bar 69
- mass culture 3, 4, 8, 104n105, 122, 213, 262
- The Masses* 8, 32, 38, 39, 152, 160, 195, 202, 216n200, 244–250, 244n220, 224n221, 247n225, 254
- McCall's* 31
- McClure's* 152, 212
- merchandise 34, 37, 120–123, 123n117, 135, 135n126, 149, 256; See also Brinkley; Kewpies
- Messick, Dale (Dalia) 253, 264–273
- style 272, 273
- middlebrow 100, 103–105, 154, 162
- Mills, Tarpé 272
- modernism 33, 45, 55, 107, 237
- modernity and modernization 1, 35, 44–47, 61, 62, 73, 86, 88, 107, 124n118, 174, 216n200
- Morse, Alice Cordelia 1, 2, 5, 21, 23
- mothers and motherhood
 - (changing) roles of motherhood 5, 6, 7, 38, 39, 41, 44, 47–49, 49n59, 51, 52, 60, 61, 63, 69, 74, 76–78, 88, 92, 153, 158, 172, 173, 175, 181, 213, 218, 228, 232, 241, 250, 251, 252, 254
 - ‘Mother Nature’ 51
 - ‘public motherhood’ 164, 188, 188n166, 190–192, 197, 200
 - and suffrage 43, 85n88, 149, 155, 161, 163, 181
 - working-class motherhood 160–162, 168, 182–184, 189, 197, 233–236, 243, 247, 248
 - see also ‘educated motherhood’
- Motor Magazine* 104
- movement, bodily 107, 108, 127–129, 132
- “My Birthday Wish! Protect Me from Diphtheria” 249
- Nankivell, Frank A. 42, 49, 50, 72, 92n98
- National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) 94, 159, 161, 161n154, 162n155, 164, 187, 190n169, 196, 196n176, 200–202, 200n178, 202n183
- National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) 33, 169, 253; See also African Americans
- National Woman’s Party (NWP) 159, 161, 161n154, 162, 164, 196, 196n176, 201n180
- nature imagery 35, 36, 43–45, 53–65, 70–73, 78, 107, 252; See also flowers
- Nesbitt, Evelyn 258n230
- networks 8, 17–21, 23–28, 24n37, 27n41, 31
- New Rochelle 30
- ‘new woman’
 - and class 179, 181
 - images of 6, 7, 55, 57, 57n68, 84, 89, 89n95, 179, 181, 185
 - and race 181
- New York City 24, 24n36, 28, 28n42, 28n44, 53, 153, 155n144, 179, 179n162, 196, 200, 200n178
- New York Evening Journal* 36, 97, 118, 123, 125, 135n125, 136
- New York Life* 80

- New York Times* 52n62, 153–155, 166, 170, 172, 179n162, 200n179, 216n201
- New York Tribune* 200n178, 250
- New York World* 28n42
- New Yorker* 104
- newness 54, 55, 59, 86, 89, 203
- newspapers 2, 10n13, 21, 24, 26, 36, 42, 84, 86, 87n94, 94, 118, 125, 135, 136, 138–142, 144–148, 151, 156, 159, 163, 168n157, 194, 255–260, 262–268, 272, 273
- comics in 12n18, 33, 36, 42, 86n92, 88, 97n102, 99, 136n127, 146n137, 147, 148, 253, 255–263, 258n230, 259n231, 264–273
 - syndicates, syndication 8, 32, 36, 37, 125, 135–148, 136n127, 141n130, 255, 265, 265n234, 266n235, 267n237
 - see also cartoons
 - see also comics and comic strips
- novelty. See newness
- Oakley, Violet 25n39, 28, 29, 214
- “The Old/The New” 54–59
- “The Old Subscriber Calls” 34, 35, 43
- Omaha (Daily) Bee* 138–141
- “Once More We Exchange Adieu” 33
- O’Neill, Rose 6, 15n23, 23, 25, 29, 34–36, 40–94, 119, 155, 160n151, 161, 163, 169, 252, 256, 259, 269, 271, 272n241
- Bonniebrook 35n47, 76
 - education 35n47, 43, 52, 53, 52n63
 - first comic strip by woman in the U.S. 35, 43
 - style 32, 53, 54, 56
 - see also Kewpies
- “On the Stage and in Real Life: The Stage Aeroplane Girl and the Real One” 146n137
- Opportunity: A Journal of Negro Life* 253
- Ormes, Jackie 33
- “Our Hat is in the Ring” 175n160
- panels 141, 143–146, 258, 259, 262, 263, 265, 268n239, 270
- Parker, Dorothy 119
- Parrish, Maxfield 11
- Paul, Alice 161, 163, 179n163, 190n169, 196, 201n180
- Peck, Clara Elsen 205, 236
- Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts (PAFA) 24–27, 24n37, 38; See also education
- periodical research, periodical studies 9–12, 15n23, 34, 160, 253
- periodicals. See magazines; newspapers; *specific publications*
- Philadelphia 3, 24, 24n37, 26–28, 28n44, 30, 214, 256
- The Philadelphia Record* 256
- Philadelphia School of Design for Women 3, 24; See also education
- photography 30, 34, 77, 113, 117, 140n128, 159, 169, 255
- Pickings from Puck* 42, 72, 92
- Pictorial Comedy* 92
- Pictorial Review* 31
- ‘pictorial turn’ 12, 13
- Pietrzyk, Richard 267
- Plastic Club 27, 29
- Poiret, Paul 116, 117, 134
- “Portia Politics” 37, 38, 151–202
- portrait painting 214, 246, 256
- postcards 74, 91, 92, 94, 155, 161, 162, 164, 177n161, 256
- posters 2, 29, 55, 94, 135n125, 155, 249
- Pre-Raphaelites 54n64, 133
- Preston, James Moore 151n140, 182, 183
- Preston, May Wilson 6, 9, 23, 28, 28n44, 32, 37, 52n62, 119, 149, 150, 151–202, 252, 254–256, 267, 269, 270, 272
- education 37
 - style 32, 37, 151n140, 182, 183
 - suffragist activism 27, 28, 37, 38, 37n49, 39
- Pretty Polly* 256–260, 262, 269, 272
- Printer’s Ink* 118
- “The Problem of Diet” 95–98
- Progressive era 38, 39, 47, 51, 108, 126, 177, 180, 188, 193, 200, 202, 208–213, 216, 218–231, 237, 242n218, 244, 248–251, 252, 254; See also reform movements
- Puck* 3n5, 8, 15n23, 34–36, 40–94, 161, 245
- Puck on Wheels* 42
- Puck Proofs* 91, 92
- Puck Quarterly* 91
- Puck Weekly* 91
- Puck’s Annual* 42

- Puck's Library* 42
Puck's Monthly Magazine and Almanac 42
 Pure Food and Drugs Act 212, 220n203
 purity 72, 203, 205, 208, 210n189, 212, 220, 220n203, 220n204, 223, 228–232, 236;
See also cleanliness
 “Puzzle: Find the Race-Problem” 244; *See also* race and racism
 Pyle, Howard 25–29, 38, 207; *See also* education
 “Quick-Trigger Woman” 260–264
 “Quit Cher Bellerin! Look What I Gotta Carry! Look What We All Gotta Carry!” 246, 247
- race and racism
 – in advertisements 33, 34, 230–232
 – commodity 230–232
 – in Progressive era 209, 210; *See also* eugenics movement
 – in suffrage movement 163, 186, 186n164, 191, 191n170, 194–196, 194n173, 194n174, 198, 201n180, 202, 202n182
 – *see also* African Americans
 – *see also* “Puzzle: Find the Race-Problem”
 – *see also* whiteness
 reader-viewer, definition of the 16
 reading options 17, 218, 252, 262, 263
Red Book Magazine 220n202
 Red Rose Girls and Red Rose Inn 28–31; *See also* studios
 reform movements. 42, 47, 52, 84, 115, 129–131, 156, 158n148, 164, 177, 179, 180, 186, 188, 189, 192–194, 197, 199–202, 207–237, 241, 242n218, 246–251; *See also* Progressive era
 Republican Motherhood 188n166
 Rinehart, Mary Roberts 37, 151, 152
 Robbins, Trina 36, 97n102, 132, 260, 272
 Rockwell, Norman 11, 217, 246
 Rodin, Auguste 35n47, 43, 117
 Rogers, Lou 27, 160n151
 romance 28, 30, 41n51, 54n64, 105–107, 149, 257, 259, 260, 265, 268, 272
- Sabin, Edwin Legrand 60, 61, 75, 76
Salt Lake Tribune 260
San Francisco Call 36, 136, 141
San Francisco Chronicle 43
- Sanger, Margaret H. 7, 195; *See also* birth control
 Sartain, Emily 27
Saturday Evening Post 37, 152, 179n162, 241n217, 255
 “Saturday Night is ‘Tub Night’” 213n194, 232–251
 ‘scientific motherhood.’ *See* ‘educated motherhood’
 scrapbooks 39n50, 269
Scribner's 152, 207, 246
 seasons and seasonality
 – seasons in fashion, seasons in nature 36, 37, 43–46, 53–63, 69, 70, 78, 90, 136
 – (London) social season 36, 60, 60n72, 61, 61n73, 65–67
 separate spheres, concept of 1–3, 5, 7, 10, 19–21, 30, 31, 35, 36, 45, 45n57, 54, 59, 75, 82, 84, 85, 88, 141, 143–145, 145n134, 157, 164, 166, 169, 172, 185, 188, 189, 188n166, 198, 213n195, 242
 seriality and serialization
 – definition of 86n91, 92, 222
 – process of serialization 92, 218, 219, 222–224, 251
 – serialized cartoons 86n92
 – serialized fiction 8, 12, 14, 15, 31, 116n111, 140, 154, 156, 157, 176, 229
 – temporal and spatial dimension of 87n94
 ‘Seven Sisters’ 32n46
 sexism 25n39, 28, 186n164, 270
 sexuality 75, 107
 Seyme, Lou 28n44
 “She Graduates” 74–78, 169
 Sherwood Sisters 28n44
 Shinn, Florence Scovel 28
 Simmel, Georg 45–47, 111, 112
Simplicissimus 82n83, 244
Sister Carrie 47
 “Sister Susie” 118
 sketching 32, 151, 182, 183, 209, 236–238
 Sloan, John 155, 246n224
The Smart Set 43
 Smith, Jessie Willcox 6, 9, 26n40, 28–30, 30n45, 32, 38, 39, 168, 202, 203–251, 252, 254–256
 – education 25, 25n39, 26, 38, 39
 – income 4n7, 34
 – style 26, 32, 228, 229

- Smith-Rosenberg, Carroll 19, 20, 30, 45
- socialism 8, 32, 38, 39, 152, 160, 161, 177–179, 180–187, 188, 189, 193, 195, 197, 200, 201, 208–210, 244–247, 250, 251
- Society of Illustrators 28, 37, 152
- “Spring” 253
- St. Louis School of Fine Arts 246; *See also* education
- St. Nicholas* 5, 19n28, 26
- Stephens, Alice Barber 217
- studios 19–21, 27–31, 28n44, 155; *See also* Red Rose Girls and Red Rose Inn; households
- style, artistic 17, 26, 32, 37, 53, 54n64, 62, 68, 82n83, 122n115, 133, 144, 149n138, 151n140, 218, 246n224, 253, 258, 260–262, 264, 266n235, 269, 272, 273; *See also specific illustrators*
- subscribers and subscriptions 4, 34, 35, 43, 83, 95n99, 97n101, 136n127, 138, 141, 141n130, 147, 158, 212
- suffrage, suffragist
- advertisements 43n56, 158n149
 - campaigns for 85n88, 155n144, 158n148, 158n149, 179n162, 190n169, 191, 193, 194, 196n176, 199, 208
 - cartoons 37, 37n49, 38, 39, 43, 43n56, 84n86, 145n134, 154, 160–163, 164–166, 168, 174, 175, 254, 272
 - and class 38, 160, 163n156, 164, 179, 186, 187, 189, 189n167, 191, 191n170, 192, 194–198, 194n174, 195n175, 196n176, 200, 201n180
 - dolls 158n149, 215
 - magazines and bulletins 8, 37, 39, 85n89, 149, 155, 156, 158–160, 163, 192, 193, 214, 215, 246
 - movement 7, 27, 150, 153, 161, 186, 187, 189n168, 191, 196, 197, 199n177, 202, 244, 252
 - parades 94, 155n144, 156, 159, 161–164, 168, 179n162, 190, 190n169, 194, 201n180
 - picketing 153, 161, 163, 190n169
 - political parties 156, 158, 158n148, 159, 161–164, 161n154, 179n163, 196, 202
 - posters 94, 155
 - *Puck’s* Woman Suffrage Number 35, 43, 80, 82, 84, 85, 85n88, 85n89, 94
 - and types. *See* types
 - *see also* children
 - *see also* race and racism
- The Suffragist* 149, 159, 161, 201n180
- supplements 32, 36, 56n67, 81, 86n92, 136, 148, 255, 257n229, 259n231, 260, 268
- tableaux 97n102, 102, 117, 145, 159, 258, 263
- Taylor, C. J. 84n86
- temporality and time
- Father Time 41, 51
 - (changing) perceptions of 9, 29, 35, 36, 40–94, 133n124, 134, 153, 223, 228, 252
 - underlying mechanisms of 9, 10, 18, 35–37, 40–94, 107, 134, 136, 141n131, 144, 216, 217, 252
 - reading 9, 16, 16n26
 - women’s atemporality 44, 45, 62, 70
- text and image, theory of 12–18
- “Though the Children Sometimes Wash Each Other” 225, 226
- “To Vain Roses and Ladies” 63–67
- toolbox approach 12
- True Womanhood, Cult of 5, 31, 57, 163n156, 228, 254
- “Trust a Child” 226, 227
- Truth* 35, 41–43, 55, 63, 80
- “’Twas a High-Brow Battle, Won, as Usual, by Jim” 256–260
- Twentieth Century Home* 77
- types, visual 32, 37, 55, 124n118, 148–150, 151–174, 154n143
- “Uncle Sam’s Girl Shower” 147, 149
- University of Arts 24n37; *See also* education
- “The Use and Abuse of Jewelry” 105
- Vanity Fair* 37, 104, 119, 152, 153
- Veblen, Thorstein B. 45–47, 76, 77, 134, 140n128, 145n135, 185
- visual culture 12, 33
- visual-textual narration 10, 11–18
- Vogue* 119, 128n122
- Waring, Laura Wheeler 33
- Warwick, Countess of 95–99, 101–110, 112–118, 126, 129–137, 140, 146, 148
- Washington, D.C. 147

- “Watching Ye New Woman’s Progress” 89n95
 “We Accuse Society!” 38
 weddings. *See* marriage
 “The Well Built Girl” 106–110, 131
 Wells, Carolyn 258
 whiteness
 – in advertisements 203–205, 208, 220n204, 228–233, 236
 – as visual norm, opposed to Blackness 33, 180, 181, 208, 230–232, 236
 – *see also* race and racism
 “Why Must I Work?” 244–246
 Winter, Alice Beach 6, 9, 21n31, 29, 32, 37n49, 38, 39, 160, 160n151, 160n152, 202, 203–251, 252, 256
 – education 25, 246
 – style 32, 160, 235, 236, 246n224
 Winter, Charles Allan 39, 245
The Woman Citizen 159, 202
 “No title (woman refusing money and crown)” 170, 171
 Woman Suffrage Party (WSP), New York City 158, 161, 164, 179–202
The Woman Voter 8, 37, 39, 151–202, 246, 254
The Woman’s Home Companion 19n28, 31, 207, 211, 215, 245
The Woman’s Journal 159, 161, 200n178
 “Woman’s Tact” 48–51
Woman’s World 220, 225
 working women and girls 3, 31, 47, 52, 52n62, 59, 61, 62, 132, 141–146, 144n132, 144n133, 145n135, 146n136, 153, 153n142, 158, 161, 171–173, 182, 185, 188, 193, 197, 213n195, 230n213, 231, 232, 262, 263; *See also* “A Business Girl”
 “A World Within a World” 138–141
 World’s Columbian Exposition 1; *See also* Chicago World’s Fair 1893
 “Worship and Treachery” 146n136
 “Ye New Woman Celebrates Ye Glorious Fourth” 89n95
 “Ye Sweet Girl-Graduate” 89n95
 Young, Art 42, 247n225
 Ziegfeld Follies 97n102, 122n115, 258n230