

**(Per)Forming Female Politics: The Making of the 'Modern Woman'  
in London, 1890-1914**

By

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## Table of Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	iv
<i>List of Abbreviations</i>	v
INTRODUCTION	
‘Forward! But not too fast’: The Making of the ‘Modern Woman’	1
CHAPTER ONE	
The Life of a ‘Modern Woman’: Kitty Marion’s Performative Politics on the London Stage and on the Stage of London	36
CHAPTER TWO	
The New Woman Made Old: The Ugly Face of Modernity on the London Stage	72
CHAPTER THREE	
Renegotiating the New Woman: The London Music Halls and Variety Theatres and the Genesis of the ‘Angel-in-the-City’	131
CHAPTER FOUR	
Politicizing the Female Experience: Forging a Modern, Middle-Class and Female Politics	177
CHAPTER FIVE	
Performing Female Politics: Staging the ‘Modern Woman’	245
EPILOGUE	
The Aftershocks of War: Maintaining the ‘Modern Woman’	316
<i>Appendices</i>	325
<i>Bibliography</i>	330

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## List of Abbreviations

AFL	Actresses' Franchise League
ILP	Independent Labour Party
LCC	London County Council
NUWSS	National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies
NVA	National Vigilance Association
VAF	Variety Artists' Federation
WFL	Women's Freedom League
WSPU	Women's Social and Political Union
WTRL	Women's Tax Resistance League
WWSL	Women Writers' Suffrage League

## Introduction

### ‘Forward! But not too fast’: The Making of the ‘Modern Woman’

On Friday, January 3, 1890, the newspaper, *Woman*, released its first issue. According to the female editors, their mission was to reach a broader audience than current women’s newspapers and magazines by providing an “all-round penny periodical for women.”

We shall appeal not only to the student of fashion plates, and cosmetic recipes, the “blue-stocking,” the political fanatic, the housewife, or the advocate of “Woman’s Rights,” but to all classes of women who want something more than the “lady’s” or “society” paper or cookery book, and something less than the ponderous daily “leader” and parliamentary reports, or the academic weekly or monthly review. Our *raison d’être* is... simply to inform and entertain modern woman—not as she might be, but as we find her.<sup>1</sup>

What the editors and readers of the paper found between 1890 and 1914 was that middle-class women’s identity went through many stages of transition due to the effects of modern life. As *Woman’s* subtitle “Forward! But not too fast” suggests, middle-class women’s attempts to define themselves amidst a changing world caused significant tension amongst Londoners who were anxious about the encroachment of modernity upon established notions, beliefs, institutions, and ways of life. As increasing numbers of middle-class women began to participate in the public life of

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<sup>1</sup> *Woman*, 3 January 1890. Published in London, *Woman: Forward! But not too fast* was a penny weekly catering to middle-class “intelligent but womanly women,” which ran from 1890-1910. There are no records that account for its exact circulation, although the editor claimed to have a large circulation already after one year of publication. See *Woman*, 2 January 1891. It is also not clear as to why the circulation ended in September 1910. What distinguished *Woman* from other women’s newspapers and magazines of the period was that it claimed to be a progressive or advanced paper, but separated itself from feminist papers, i.e. those focused on the early suffrage campaign. In its second issue, it claimed it would address “women who do not fight for rights but are womanly without being dolls.” See *Woman*, 11 January 1890.

London more frequently between 1890 and 1914, middle-class women's identity shifted from the "Angel-in-the-House," to the "New Woman," to the "Angel-in-the-City," to ultimately the "Modern Woman." My dissertation, "(Per)Forming Female Politics: The Making of the 'Modern Woman' in London, 1890-1914," explores these stages of transition and contemporaries' reactions as middle-class women redefined themselves within the modern city. I argue that their experiences working and living within the cultural milieu of London shaped a modern femininity that incorporated a political consciousness. More specifically, the role that middle-class actresses played in creating this modern femininity illustrates the power and significance of the theatre (as a cultural and performing art form) in raising consciousness and forming a gendered and political identity. Furthermore, as middle-class women became "Modern Women," they created a unique politics that attempted to re-imagine Britain's public, social, political, and cultural institutions as middle-class, woman-centered and feminist spaces. Although the women's suffrage movement became riddled with divisiveness due to contradictory visions amongst suffrage societies by 1914, it was the Actresses' Franchise League (AFL) who succeeded in consciously resolving the disunity in the movement by creating this middle-class, woman-centered, political, and feminist space in the design of the Woman's Theatre.

In order to understand the making of the "Modern Woman," one needs to examine the previous established model of womanhood from whom she diverged. This woman, the "Angel-in-the-House," was defined by the Victorian, middle-class ideology of "separate spheres" for men and women that prevailed in nineteenth-

century Britain. The original belief was that women's sphere was confined to the private home, with domestic and childrearing duties, while men's sphere was outside the home in the public sphere of education, politics, business, military, law, and medicine. Martha Vicinus' classic work, *Suffer and Be Still: Women in the Victorian Age* chronicled the life of an average "Angel-in-the-House." She led a sheltered life, deprived of economic independence and "worldly knowledge" to maintain her sexual innocence and purity.<sup>2</sup> The "Angel-in-the-House" was stifled by custom, etiquette, and corsets, often represented as a naïve, delicate creature dependent on male protection.<sup>3</sup> While disagreeing with this passive image of the Victorian middle-class woman, Patricia Branca still concluded that the "Angel-in-the-House," was seen as the "guardian of morality" and the "citadel of respectability," which was maintained by her seclusion within the domestic home.<sup>4</sup> Leonore Davidoff argued that by preventing middle-class women from participating in public life, Victorians believed they were providing social stability in a time of economic and political instability.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> "Worldly knowledge" will be used throughout this dissertation to denote an education that is urban, public, and sexual. This knowledge was particularly significant for middle-class women who had been sheltered from working, sex, corruption, crime, etc. and all the repercussions of the "real" world versus the ideals embodied in "separate spheres ideology" that they were expected to uphold and not question. I argued that this education plays a vital role in shifting ideas of femininity from the "Angel-in-the-House," to the "New Woman," to the "Angel-in-the-City," to the "Modern Woman."

<sup>3</sup> Martha Vicinus, ed., *Suffer and Be Still: Women in the Victorian Age* (Bloomington, IN, 1972); See also Amanda Vickery, "Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women's History," *The Historical Journal* 36, no. 2 (1993), 383-414.

<sup>4</sup> Patricia Branca, *Silent Sisterhood: Middle Class Women in the Victorian Home* (London: Croom Helm, 1975), 6-7. Branca argues that although middle-class women's sphere was in the home, they did have a lot of work and responsibility in managing the housekeeping, the servants, the children, etc., which made them active agents within a restrictive sphere.

<sup>5</sup> Leonore Davidoff, *The Best Circles: Society Etiquette and the Season* (London: Croom Helm, 1973), 16.

Most historians agree, however, that the middle-class ideology of “separate spheres” that permeated British society throughout the nineteenth century did not provide such rigid boundaries for men and women in historical reality. Frank Prochaska and Dorice Elliott have shown the agency afforded to middle-class women through their public philanthropic activities.<sup>6</sup> In addition, in *Shopping for Pleasure: Women in the Making of London’s West End*, Erika Rappaport illustrated how the development of the department store in London in the 1860s created a freedom of movement and a new female urban culture for middle-class women that extended into the early twentieth century.<sup>7</sup> Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall argued, however, that the ideology of “separate spheres” had a powerful hold over Victorians’ imagination and thus was a guiding principle in their lives.<sup>8</sup> I concur with Davidoff and Hall. Although separate spheres for men and women may not have been as rigid in practice as the ideology dictated, contemporaries embraced the idea of distinct areas of social and cultural life for women and men. It is therefore still meaningful in understanding middle-class women’s lives, particularly the shift in women’s

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<sup>6</sup> Frank K. Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century England* (Oxford, 1980); Dorice Elliott, *The Angel out of the House: Philanthropy and Gender in Nineteenth-Century England* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2002). “Agency” is defined as being in action or exerting a power. Agency as “lived subjectivity” is produced within social and cultural discourse. It is an effect of one’s identity, which is constituted by “expressions of gender” that are performed repeatedly through discursive means. Although meanings of the material world are produced within discourse, one’s identity is not a passive consequence of discourse, excluding agency, but is an ongoing site of political struggle. By embracing forms of subjectivity, which include the dimension of agency, one can think, act, and communicate in the world. See Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 163-180; hereafter cited as *Gender Trouble*; Chris Weedon, *Feminism, Theory and the Politics of Difference* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 102-04, 110.

<sup>7</sup> Erika Diane Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure: Women in the Making of London’s West End* (Princeton, 2000).

<sup>8</sup> Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850* (London: Hutchinson, 1987); See also Vickery, “Golden Age to Separate Spheres,” 389, 399-400.

femininity, agency, and consciousness as more middle-class women participated in public life between 1890 and 1914.

The ideology of “separate spheres” is also crucial to understanding the nature of middle-class values in the nineteenth century and the challenges to these values brought on by modern life. Catherine Hall claimed it was this ideology of separate gendered spheres which defined the “middle” in the middle class. By separating the sexes at every level of society, the middle class separated itself from other classes and from disparate groups within its own class.<sup>9</sup> “Middle-class,” therefore, is defined throughout my dissertation on the basis of shared values and beliefs, rather than economic status. In addition to the shared interest in property, bureaucracy, parliamentary and constitutional processes argued by Mike Savage, et. al., “middle-class values” also included a focus on social and moral progress, philanthropy, and Pierre Bourdieu’s notion of “cultural capital.”<sup>10</sup> For Bourdieu, “to attempt to map taste purely in terms of income is to miss the dual principles in operation, for cultural capital has its own structure of value, which amounts to convertibility into social power, independent of income or money.”<sup>11</sup> “Cultural capital” included cultural goods or artifacts—books, furniture, paintings, houses—as well as values, etiquette and knowledge acquired from a liberal education. “Cultural capital” thus was an

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<sup>9</sup> Catherine Hall, ed., *White, Male and Middle Class: Explorations in Feminism and History* (Oxford, 1992).

<sup>10</sup> See Mike Savage, James Barlow, Peter Dickens, and Tony Fielding, *Property, Bureaucracy and Culture: Middle-Class Formation in Contemporary Britain* (London: Routledge, 1992). See also Brian Harrison, *Peaceable Kingdom: Stability and Change in Modern Britain* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982); Gertrude Himmelfarb, *Poverty and Compassion: The Moral Imagination of the Late Victorians* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991).

<sup>11</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (London: Routledge, 1984), 62.

essential part of a family legacy. Simon Gunn asserted that middle-class women embodied “cultural capital.” Their dress, deportment, behavior, talents, as well as their responsibility for educating children, were the evidence of middle-class status and distinction.<sup>12</sup> Likewise, Elizabeth Langland argued that middle-class women were consumers of culture (fashion, novels, lectures, newspapers, plays, music, art, etc.). They could appreciate such culture because of their education that centered on “feminine pursuits” (foreign languages, music, drawing, needlework, etiquette, etc.) to complement men.<sup>13</sup> Janet Wolff similarly claimed that this education was designed to make women better daughters, sisters, wives, and mothers.<sup>14</sup> With an emphasis on their sexual purity, nurturing caretaking, charity, refined etiquette, and angelic innocence, middle-class women thus became what Branca terms as “guardians of morality” and the “citadels of respectability.”<sup>15</sup> I maintain that these middle-class values and patterns of behavior were intertwined with the ideology of “separate spheres,” which represented middle-class women as “Angels-in-the-House”, protected from the knowledge of the world outside the home (crime, disease, corruption, sex, etc.) and put them in positions of social and financial dependency upon men.

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<sup>12</sup> Simon Gunn, “Translating Bourdieu: Cultural Capital and the English Middle Class in Historical Perspective,” *The British Journal of Sociology*, 56, no. 1 (March 2005): 49-64.

<sup>13</sup> Elizabeth Langland, *Nobody's Angels: Middle-Class Women and Domestic Ideology in Victorian Culture* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995).

<sup>14</sup> Janet Wolff, “The Culture of Separate Spheres: The Role of Culture in Nineteenth-Century Public and Private Life,” in *The Culture of Capital: Art, Power and the Nineteenth-Century Middle Class*, eds. Janet Wolff and John Seed (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), 117-134.

<sup>15</sup> Branca, *Silent Sisterhood*, 6-7. “Angel-in-the-House,” “Victorian femininity,” and “conventional femininity” will be used interchangeably as synonyms throughout the dissertation to describe middle-class femininity as defined by the Victorian ideology of “separate spheres.”

When examining the influence of the ideology of “separate spheres,” what has not been addressed is the perception of its collapse and how this was an important part in the making of the “Modern Woman” and modern Britain. By 1890, middle-class women had a greater degree of independence than earlier in the century. They had limited access to higher education and more opportunities to work outside the home. In addition, the city offered more public spaces like department stores and theatres to middle-class women to enjoy. Furthermore, there was an ongoing, vigorous discussion about equal rights for women in education, employment, law and politics. As the ideology of “separate spheres” disintegrated due to these changes, a liminal period or an “in betweenness” emerged, allowing for social and cultural change.<sup>16</sup> The ideal of Victorian womanhood (the “Angel-in-the-House”) rooted in the material conditions of the nineteenth century, which defined ideas about feminine moral purity and superiority, began to shift. As middle-class women began to assert their independence, there also was a backlash and pull to maintain certain conventions in the midst of this instability. Out of this tug of war emerged new images of femininity in the “New Woman,” the “Angel-in-the-City,” and ultimately, the “Modern Woman.” Furthermore, the theatre was a principal space and the performances were the primary medium that allowed this shift and contributed to it. As a result, the theatre as a whole (the physical space, the stage, the performances, the actresses, the playwrights, the directors, the managers, and the audience) changed and

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<sup>16</sup> For more on “liminality,” see Jon McKenzie, “The Liminal-Norm,” in *The Performance Studies Reader*, ed. Henry Bial (London: Routledge, 2004), 26-31; Victor Turner, “Liminality and Communitas,” in *The Performance Studies Reader*, ed. Henry Bial (London: Routledge, 2004), 79-87.

became not only an agent of modernity, but an institution of modernity. It was within the theatre through the introduction of “Suffrage Drama” and the formation of the AFL that the first consciously woman-centered, feminist, middle-class, political and performative space emerged.

What constituted “modernity” for Londoners between 1890 and 1914, and how did it shape new notions of femininity that allowed an increased agency for middle-class women? Modernity has often been associated with industrialization, mass communication, transportation, and commercialization within the urban metropolis.<sup>17</sup> Connected with this urbanization was a significant rise in wages and employment, and reforms in higher education and marriage laws, all of which had a dramatic effect upon middle-class women’s social and economic position. For example, Patricia Hollis noted that there was a significant rise in the number of women in the workforce in the latter half of the nineteenth century.<sup>18</sup> Middle-class women who worked mainly in professional positions (teachers, nurses, clerks) rose from 106,000 in 1861 to 429,000 in 1901. In 1901, out of 230,000 teachers, 172,000 were women. In 1881, the census recorded 6000 female clerks; by the 1901 census, there were nearly 60,000 employed in private firms, and 25,000 in the public sector, primarily in the Post Office.<sup>19</sup> Universities also began to admit women in the late nineteenth century. Girton College, Cambridge admitted women in 1869. Lady

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<sup>17</sup> Martin Daunton, ed., *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain* (Cambridge, 2001); Neil McKendrick, John Brewer, and J.H. Plumb, *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England* (Hutchinson, 1982).

<sup>18</sup> The total number of women in the workforce rose from 2,832,000 to 4,751,000 between 1851 and 1901. See Patricia Hollis, *Women in Public, 1850-1900: Documents of the Victorian Women’s Movement* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1979), 53.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 45-53.

Margaret Hall, the first women's college at Oxford opened in 1878, and in the same year, the University of London admitted women on the same basis as men.<sup>20</sup>

Moreover, the passage of the Married Women's Property Acts of 1870 and 1882 ultimately gave married women the right to own their own property, which broke the Victorian notion that kept an "Angel-in-the-House" and all her possessions subordinate to her husband's authority and dependent upon his degree of generosity.<sup>21</sup> All of these changes opened up opportunities for middle-class women to participate in the public sphere, thus causing the erosion of separate spheres for men and women.

More recently, modernity has become synonymous with aspects of consumer culture such as the purchasing and display of commodities or the institution of the department store itself.<sup>22</sup> I am not concerned with the purchasing of material goods, shopping per se or the economic side of supply and demand. In order to understand the emergence of the "Modern Woman" and a modern, middle-class, and female politics, however, consumer culture, as it is associated with modern, urban life, becomes the setting or backdrop, particularly that "desire...for that which is new, modern, exciting and fashionable."<sup>23</sup> I agree with Mica Nava when she wrote, "modernity...highlights the complexity and danger, as well as richness and excitement, of everyday life in the modern city." More importantly, however, "there

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<sup>20</sup> Angelique Richardson and Chris Willis, *The New Woman in Fiction and Fact: Fin-de-Siècle Feminisms* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), 6-7.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>22</sup> John Benson, *The Rise of Consumer Society in Britain, 1880-1980* (London: Longman Group UK Limited, 1994); Thomas Richards, *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England: Advertising and Spectacle, 1851-1914* (Stanford, 1990); Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure*.

<sup>23</sup> See Mica Nava, "Women, the City and the Department Store," in *The Shopping Experience*, Pasi Falk and Colin Campbell, eds. (London: Sage Publications, 1997): p. 56.

is a new stress on display and the visual—on looking. Modern urban existence, with its transience and uncertainty, demands new morals as well as new fashions.”<sup>24</sup>

Similar to Nava, I argue that modernity is not only about invention or renewal, but also disintegration and fragmentation. As Martin Daunton and Bernhard Rieger concluded, Britons in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries utilized the semantics and languages of modernity to come to grips with social, political, and cultural changes that sometimes were viewed as fundamental breaks with the past, and at other times as continuity or gradual adaptation of tradition within a modern setting.<sup>25</sup>

For example, novels, magazines, newspapers, and plays of the 1890s that heralded the decade as a “New Age” depict an acute tension between those who looked forward to the new century as a new age of progress versus those who saw it as a degenerate age of destruction.<sup>26</sup> The educational and political reforms, technological advances, new sciences, and “new” social and cultural inventions like the “New Woman” and the “New Drama” were approached by some with fear and anxiety and others with an exhilarating sense of possibility and excitement. Much of the uncertainty caused by this whirlwind of change was diffused through the discourses and representations of the “New Woman,” who became the prominent symbol for the collapse of “separate spheres” ideology and the old order.

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 56-7.

<sup>25</sup> Martin Daunton and Bernhard Rieger, eds., *Meanings of Modernity: Britain from the Late-Victorian era to World War II* (Oxford: Berg, 2001), p. 12-15.

<sup>26</sup> See Vivien Gardner and Susan Rutherford, eds., *The New Woman and Her Sisters: Feminism and Theatre 1850-1914* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1992); Sally Ledger and Roger Luckhurst, *The Fin de Siècle: A Reader in Cultural History, c. 1880-1900* (Oxford, 2000); Elaine Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle* (London: Bloomsbury, 1991).

The discourses of femininity thus are crucial to examining the emergence of the “Modern Woman.” “Discourse” is defined throughout this dissertation as language that produces meaning. Michel Foucault argued that meanings are produced within a variety of institutional discourses (religion, psychology, politics, fashion, literature, arts, etc.), and as a result, meanings ascribed to bodies are plural, culturally produced, and ever changing. Language, therefore, does not reflect reality, but gives it meaning. For Chris Weedon, “the meanings of different bodies at particular moments in history are thus sites of struggle....These meanings are constituted within a wide range of often competing and conflicting discourses and are effects of both power and resistance....Ideas of true femininity and masculinity are replaced by competing discursive constructions of gender.”<sup>27</sup> The “discourses of modernity” then are sites of struggle as contemporaries debated and negotiated new ideas of gender and class in a new century. Discourses define what is good or bad, advanced or backward, harmless or dangerous, feminine or masculine. Discourses of femininity within “separate spheres” ideology formed the subjectivity of women that told them they were physically and mentally inferior to men, but simultaneously morally superior to men. So the discourse about modernity—Is the new age one of progress or destruction?—centered on the “New Woman” marks a discursive shift, and thus begins a shift in the subjectivity of middle-class women. As more middle-class women participated in public life more often, popular newspapers, magazines, novels, and plays labeled middle-class educated, athletic, financially independent, and/or

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<sup>27</sup> Weedon, *Feminism, Theory and the Politics of Difference*, 102.

politically-active women as “New Women.” They characterized them as wearing masculine clothing, rejecting marriage and thus promoting sexual promiscuity, and engaging in non-traditional activities for women such as higher education, professional employment, politics, and sport.<sup>28</sup> As a result, Londoner’s expectations or fears about the new century were imposed upon the “New Woman,” as the nature of her femininity and sexuality became a titillating subject of discourse.

Supplementing the historiography on “modernity,” I therefore offer a new definition. In London between 1890 and 1914, “modernity” was the anxiety produced by the perceived collapse of “separate spheres” for men and women. Coinciding with cultural, social, economic and technological changes in the city in the late nineteenth century, this anxiety resulting from the tension between old and new, public and private, man and woman, and progress and destruction was centered on middle-class women’s femininity and sexuality as Londoners grappled with what the new century might bring. The discourses and representations about the changing patterns of behavior and values among classes and between the sexes produced this tug of war between what was viewed as advancement or devastation. Modernity was defined between 1890 and 1914 through the urban space of the city of London, within the setting of a consumer culture, and through the performances of these shifting values, behavior, and ideologies often portrayed in literary, art, and dramatic forms.

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<sup>28</sup> Language also produces images which carry meanings; images that are also plural, historically and culturally produced and in flux. Representations are the visual displays of the discourses that produce meanings, and thus add to the individual’s embodied subjectivity (that site of struggle defined and redefined by competing discourses and representations). See Weedon, *Feminism, Theory and the Politics of Difference*.

Whether these narratives and images took the form of advertisements, plays, musical comedies, newspaper articles, social criticism, or demonstrations in the street, they provided the arena for the public performance of modernity, and thus constructed new gendered and political identities for middle-class women.

These discourses and performances of gender, in particular, played a significant role in the creation of the “Modern Woman,” and thus a modern, middle-class and female politics. As the ideology of “separate spheres” began to disintegrate when more middle-class women were seen in public as workers, consumers, and suffragists, anxiety was produced and disseminated through representations of women’s femininity. Judith Butler argued that gender is “a corporeal style, an ‘act,’” that is both “intentional and performative.” She claimed that gender is constituted through acts that are performed repeatedly. As a result of this continuous performance, a gendered identity is constructed and believed to be normal. Gender, however, is not a stable identity, but constituted in time through this “stylized repetition of acts.” It is through these acts, Butler argued, that “the possibilities of gender transformation are to be found.”<sup>29</sup> A new femininity was constituted through repeated acts that were performed by middle-class women as they contributed to the discourses and performances of this new, modern woman, who participated in all realms of public, urban life and thus challenged the Victorian ideology of separate gendered spheres.

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<sup>29</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 177-9. The word “performative” is used to describe a performance without the artificial connotation of “theatrical.” In addition, “performative” also refers to the meanings produced by language where saying something is actually doing something (performing an action). See Henry Bial, ed., *The Performance Studies Reader* (London: Routledge, 2004).

Applying Butler's theory, therefore, shows that when middle-class women defied what was perceived as the model or the norm through their participation in public, urban life, it allowed for a gendered transformation. The repetition of this new, modern femininity (public, independent, political, and feminine) ultimately made it become normative. Moreover, this new gender ideology was *modern* for as Janet Wolff argued, "modernity" was "uniquely associated with the city and public life."<sup>30</sup> Similarly, Erika Rappaport also argued that by analyzing emerging discourses that were based on the idea of the big city as a site of pleasure, "such discourses altered the way many Victorians viewed their city, produced new notions of desire, and rewrote gender ideals, producing a bourgeois femininity that was born in the public realm."<sup>31</sup> Rappaport's "new femininity," however, falls short of being modern. Her notion of femininity is the increased independence and leisure in the public sphere afforded to middle-class women by the rise of the department store. I call this woman the "Angel-in-the-City."<sup>32</sup> She was a young, single, and independent woman who took part in city life as a worker and consumer. Employed in the new professions opened to middle-class women—teachers, nurses, clerks, journalists, shop assistants, actresses—and consuming the material delights and entertainment offered in department stores and theatres, she was a transitional figure of femininity in London between 1890 and 1914. Embodying the modern tug of war between old and new, she was also sexually alluring yet chaste, and still aspired to be an "angelic"

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<sup>30</sup> Janet Wolff, "The Invisible Flâneuse: Women in the Literature of Modernity," *Theory, Culture and Society* 2(3) (1985): 37-46.

<sup>31</sup> Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure*, 5.

<sup>32</sup> The "Angel-in-the-City" is an original term that I have coined for this dissertation.

wife and mother.<sup>33</sup> Rappaport failed, however, to explore how these “Angels-in-the-City,” became politically conscious. I argue that this political awareness, combined with financial independence, self-reliance, and conventional notions of femininity and sexuality created the most significant outcome of public, urban life: the “Modern Woman.”<sup>34</sup> Unlike the “Angel-in-the-City,” the “Modern Woman” could be young or old, single or married, but all these middle-class women were financially independent and politically conscious. Their political cognizance arose out of their experiences and “worldly knowledge” attained as “Angels-in-the-City.” Although many remained single, those who married kept their financial independence by working, and their marriages often were grounded in the idea of an equal partnership.<sup>35</sup>

In other words, it was not just a new gendered identity that was constituted through the public space of the city, but also a gendered political identity. Rita Felski argued that when historians focus on the experiences of women, standard definitions of modernity are not applicable and must therefore be changed. Although Felski

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<sup>33</sup> Unlike Rappaport, however, I will not focus on the rise of a consumer society or the department store as the foundation of this new femininity for middle-class women. Although the urban and consumer culture of London provided a setting for more middle-class women to enter public life, like Mica Nava, I incorporate this setting within a wider definition of modernity. Participation in urban life is inherent, therefore, in my definition of modernity, but my definition is focused more on the discourses and representations of changing patterns of gendered, social, and political behavior, values, and ideologies that promoted anxiety and ultimately change in London between 1890 and 1914. The result, therefore, of this modern discourse was a new middle-class femininity and the emergence of an organized female politics embodied in the “Modern Woman.”

<sup>34</sup> The “Modern Woman” is an original term that I have coined for this dissertation.

<sup>35</sup> For example, Teresa Billington, a middle-class teacher, was involved with the suffrage movement before marrying her husband, Frederick Greig in 1907. Due to her political beliefs, she and her husband agreed to adopt Billington-Greig as their joint name. In addition, actress and theatrical manager, Lena Ashwell, joined the suffrage movement around the same time she married Henry Simpson in 1908. Due to her established career as an actress, as well as the egalitarian nature of their marriage, she kept her name. See Lena Ashwell, *Myself A Player* (London: Michael Joseph Ltd., 1936), 161; Carole McPhee and Ann Fitzgerald, eds., *The Nonviolent Militant: Selected Writings of Teresa Billington Greig* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987), 7.

linked women's emancipation with the processes of modernization, like Rappaport, she did not focus on the development of women's political awareness.<sup>36</sup> I, on the other hand, argue that the most significant part of middle-class women's emancipation in Britain in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was the emergence of their political consciousnesses. Furthermore, these women deliberately linked Victorian ideas of femininity with their new public roles and political cognizance. The middle-class, female, and performative politics that resulted was modern because it combined old and new notions of "the feminine" and thus embodied the tension felt by Londoners between an old and new way of life.

Joan Scott supports examining the fluidity of gender (and I would argue the larger concept of "modernity" as I have defined it) as a tool for historical analysis, especially its relationship with politics. Scott argues "when historians look for the ways in which the concept of gender legitimizes and constructs social relationships, they develop insight into the reciprocal nature of gender and society and into the particular and contextually specific ways in which politics constructs gender and gender constructs politics."<sup>37</sup> For Scott, "political history has...been enacted on the field of gender", and this "field" constantly ebbs and flows because its meanings are contested continuously.<sup>38</sup> It was the contested meanings about middle-class femininity that rose to the forefront between 1890 and 1914 as more middle-class

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<sup>36</sup> Rita Felski, *The Gender of Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995). Although Felski did examine women's politics and how early feminists positioned themselves within the historical narrative, she did not explore what led to shaping their individual and collective political awareness.

<sup>37</sup> Joan Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History, Revised Edition* (Columbia, 1999), 46.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

women participated in the public sphere of the city. This anxiety and fascination about middle-class women's femininity shaped women's experiences, identities, and political consciousnesses. Nava and Rappaport argued that the department store is a key icon of modern urban society, but I argue that the most significant icon of modernity is the "Modern Woman." My dissertation, therefore, demonstrates that between 1890 and 1914 in London modernity equaled a public femininity and a political consciousness for middle-class women, which can be seen in the performance of a modern, middle-class and female politics.

By using ideal types of femininity like the "Angel-in-the-House," the "New Woman," the "Angel-in-the-City" and the "Modern Woman" as a method of historical analysis, one can begin to explore the shaping of modern London between 1890 and 1914. I assert that ideal types provide description and explanation to facilitate an empirical analysis of concrete historical questions or phenomena. I do not claim that these ideal types represented all women living in London nor do I ignore the possibility of other gendered identities to emerge in this period. For the purposes of examining and understanding the emergence and effects of modernity upon women's individual and collective identities, however, these categorizations provide a useful tool to gaining a snapshot of daily life for a majority of middle-class women living in London between 1890 and 1914.

It was not just gender, but also class, modernity, politics, and the cultural forms of drama and musical theatre that were being performed and contributed to the making of the "Modern Woman." Henry Bial argued that in its most general terms,

“performance” can be understood as “any activity that involves the presentation of rehearsed or pre-established sequences of words or actions.” Even more than that, however, performance for Bial is also a way of comprehending “all types of phenomenon.”<sup>39</sup> It is both aspects of performance that are examined in this my dissertation. Although the performances of plays and musical comedies on stage are examined as vehicles of modernity (particularly shifting ideas of middle-class femininity and female sexuality within an urban culture), I also employ William Shakespeare’s observation that “all the world’s a stage.”<sup>40</sup> In other words, performance is not only pretending to be someone other than oneself through acting, singing, dancing, and wearing costumes on stage, but it also is removed from the theatricalized stage, i.e. “playing a role” in the social situations of everyday life.

But how does one distinguish between actually “doing” an action with “performing” an action? Marvin Carlson argued that the difference is founded in consciousness.

The recognition that our lives are structured according to repeated and socially sanctioned modes of behavior raises the possibility that all human activity could potentially be considered as ‘performance’ . . . . The difference between doing and performing . . . would seem to be not in the frame of theatre versus real life but in an attitude—we may do actions unthinkingly, but when we think about them this introduces a consciousness that gives them the quality of performance.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Bial, *The Performance Studies Reader*, p. 57.

<sup>40</sup> “All the world’s a stage/And all the men and women merely players/They have their exits and their entrances/And one man in his time plays many parts/His acts being seven ages.” William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, in *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare* (Roslyn, N.Y.: Walter J. Black, Inc., 1937): 262.

<sup>41</sup> Marvin Carlson, “What is Performance?” in *The Performance Studies Reader*, Henry Bial, ed. (London: Routledge, 2004), 70.

When middle-class women consciously participated in the urban environment of London as workers, consumers, and political activists, they were performing ideologies and models of gender, class, and politics, or in other words, modernity. Since by its nature modernity is defined in this period by the anxiety resulting from the struggle between old and new, public and private, man and woman, and progress and destruction, it offered a liminal space for middle-class women to assert their own agency. Jon McKenzie argued that “liminality” is a “mode of activity whose spatial, temporal and symbolic ‘in betweenness’ allows for social norms to be suspended, challenged, played with, and perhaps even transformed.”<sup>42</sup> As middle-class women performed *through consciousness* new ideologies of gendered and class behavior that challenged separate gendered spheres, they transformed ideas of femininity and roles for women. Suffragists deliberately tapped into a consumer culture and discourses about femininity to perform a new politics that was specifically feminine. When female actresses performed new roles for women on the stage that defied traditional notions of femininity, they not only gave a theatrical performance, but a modern performance on the London stage. Furthermore, actresses consciously transformed their art by making drama and performance political both within the theatre and on the streets of London. The “performance of modernity” thus illustrates a consciousness of this struggle between binary visions, and the anxiety caused by the perceived collapse of “separate spheres” as Londoners negotiated new roles for

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<sup>42</sup> McKenzie, “The Liminal-Norm,” 27.

middle-class women in public with older notions of gendered behavior between the sexes.

In addition, Richard Bauman argued, “all performance involves a consciousness of doubleness” through which the execution of an action is compared with a remembered, ideal, or potential original model of the action. For Bauman, “Performance is always performance *for* someone, some audience that recognizes and validates it as performance even when...that audience is the self.”<sup>43</sup> In other words, the break between “performing” and “doing” is consciousness. It is the cognizance of a duality between the audience and the performer, and between the performance of an action and the model or ideal of the action. Between 1890 and 1914, there was an increased consciousness in middle-class women that permitted them to perform femininity, perform class, perform on the stage of the theatre, and perform politics. The setting of modern London and its urban culture laid the foundation for a political awareness in middle-class women that also constituted a modern gendered identity manifested through performance. Moreover, these performances of gender and politics were recognized and validated by both the performers (middle-class women), as well as their audience (society).

The role of actresses and the theatre in shaping the “Modern Woman” and a modern, middle-class and female politics is tied to the double-consciousness and liminality of actresses who performed conventional notions of gender on stage, but often challenged established gendered notions off the stage because they were public,

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<sup>43</sup> Carlson, “What is Performance?”, 71.

working women. They used their experiences as performers to raise the consciousness of other women through their drama and through using performance as a medium for an organized middle-class, female politics. Marvin Carlson has illustrated the relevance of performance in engaging and transforming individual and cultural identities.

[Performance] is a specific event with its liminoid nature foregrounded, almost invariably clearly separated from the rest of life, presented by performers and attended by audiences both of whom regard the experience as made up of material to be interpreted, to be reflected upon, to be engaged in—emotionally, mentally and perhaps even physically. This particular sense of occasion and focus as well as the overarching social envelope combine with the physicality of theatrical performance to make it one of the most powerful and efficacious procedures that human society has developed for the endlessly fascinating process of cultural and personal self-reflexion and experimentation.<sup>44</sup>

This reciprocal relationship between actresses on stage and audience members in negotiating a new femininity is symbolic of the liminal nature of modernity in London between 1890 and 1914. As contemporaries struggled with new inventions and new ideas at the dawn of a new century, women's engagement in politics through the suffrage movement and the reactions of the public indicate this "in betweenness" as Londoners interpreted, reflected, engaged upon, and ultimately transformed their society.<sup>45</sup>

But how did the performance of modernity then influence political consciousness for middle-class women in London between 1890 and 1914? The

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<sup>44</sup> Marvin Carlson, *Performance: A Critical Introduction* (London: Routledge, 1996), 198-9.

<sup>45</sup> For example, Peter Bailey, Jacqueline S. Bratton, Tracy C. Davis, Dennis Kennedy, Dave Russell, and Sheila Stowell have shown this dramatic transformation in architecture, audience, performances and gender roles within the Edwardian theatre in London. See Michael R. Booth and Joel H. Kaplan, eds., *Edwardian Theatre: Essays on Performance and the Stage* (Cambridge, 1996).

current historiography on women's suffrage in Britain does not address this question. Jill Liddington's and Jill Norris's classic account, *One Hand Tied Behind Us: The Rise of the Women's Suffrage Movement*, examined the organized political movement of women, but this study focused on working-class women in Manchester.<sup>46</sup> Susan Kent cast a wider net with her study, *Sex and Suffrage in Britain, 1860-1914* where she argued that the women's suffrage campaign was not a narrowly-defined political movement, but was an effort to abolish the double standard of morality. She claimed that the vote was the symbol of this sexual autonomy, but simultaneously, she overshadowed the significance of women's political awareness.<sup>47</sup> Although Sandra Holton portrayed the women's suffrage campaign as a rational political movement in *Feminism and Democracy: Women's Suffrage and Reform Politics in Britain, 1900-1918*, she did not explore how ordinary women understood their cultural environment. She did not explain how middle-class women became politically conscious or when they did, how the campaign affected individual and group conflicts or networks of solidarity, i.e. the ordinary middle-class woman's daily life.<sup>48</sup>

I, on the other hand, explore how the modern city, with its excitement and danger, increased employment opportunities, consumer and theatrical culture, and its ongoing debate about middle-class women participating in this urban sphere contributed to the making of the "Modern Woman." For some middle-class women

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<sup>46</sup> Jill Liddington and Jill Norris, *One Hand Tied Behind Us: The Rise of the Women's Suffrage Movement* (London: Virago, 1978).

<sup>47</sup> Susan Kingsley Kent, *Sex and Suffrage in Britain, 1860-1914* (Princeton, 1987).

<sup>48</sup> Sandra Stanley Holton, *Feminism and Democracy: Women's Suffrage and Reform Politics in Britain, 1900-1918* (Cambridge, 1986).

like Katherine Roberts, their political awareness was shaped by the consumer culture of London, which suffragists deliberately utilized.

While I was out this morning doing some shopping, I met a Suffragette! It is the first time that I have seen one, owing to the fact that I have been living abroad; but, of course, I have read about them in the papers....Obviously a lady, and most becomingly dressed in a white costume with a green hat, and wearing a large bunch of violets at her waist, she was standing at a corner of the street in the busiest part of the town endeavouring to sell papers to the passers-by....Being greatly impressed by her cheerful indifference alike to the state of the weather and the attitude of the public, and marvelling much that any woman should have so much moral courage, I paused for a moment to look at her.<sup>49</sup>

Being interested in the Suffragette on the street corner, Katherine bought an issue of the newspaper, *Votes for Women*, and realized she had been a militant Suffragette all her life, but only now was conscious of it.<sup>50</sup> As Katherine's recollection illustrates, suffragists in early twentieth-century Britain made extraordinary use of the arts, advertising, and consumerism. Lisa Tickner argued that the women's suffrage movement was the first political agitation to use the arts to help campaign for the cause. Suffragists were attracted to female artists by their independence, skill, and creativity in a period which still saw these qualities as unconventional for middle-class women. Moreover, women's "cultural creativity" was constantly raised as a reason to deny women the vote because women had not produced such artistic geniuses as Michelangelo, and thus the female artist was of great interest to suffragists.<sup>51</sup> Like Tickner, I want to contribute to the cultural significance of the

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<sup>49</sup> Katherine Roberts, *Pages from the Diary of a Militant Suffragette* (Letchworth & London: Garden City Press, Ltd, 1910), 1.

<sup>50</sup> Roberts, *Pages from the Diary of a Militant Suffragette*, 3-4.

<sup>51</sup> Lisa Tickner, *The Spectacle of Women: Imagery of the Suffrage Campaign, 1907-1914* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1987).

women's suffrage movement, which has just begun to be acknowledged by historians. Female writers and performers, as well as artists contributed to this visual, creative political agitation and the making of a modern, middle-class and female politics in Britain.

Although some women happened upon politics like Katherine Roberts during a day of shopping, most middle-class women who became involved in the movement lived and worked in London. Many of these middle-class women were female performers in the traditional theatres, music halls and variety theatres. In their autobiographies, these women often cite their experiences of working in a predominately male profession and against the middle-class ideology of separate gendered spheres as the foundation of their awareness for social and political justice. For example, Eva Moore had similar experiences as many female performers in marking her path towards her involvement in politics. Bored with teaching dance in Brighton, she yearned for the excitement of the stage in spite of her father's stern disapproval. Moving to London, she established a solid acting career on the dramatic stage, while also dabbling on the variety stage.<sup>52</sup> Eva writes in her autobiography that it was her experience as a working woman that prompted her to join the suffrage movement.

Why did I become a Suffragist? Because all my life I had been a working woman; I had, and still have, a passionate love for England; I believed that I

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<sup>52</sup> Eva came in contact with such famous female performers and suffragists, Ellen Terry, Winifred Emery, Amy Roselle, Lena Ashwell, Marie Lloyd, and Cissie Loftus throughout her career on the stage. She followed Ada Reeve in the lead of the musical comedy, *The Shop Girl* (1894) at the Gaiety Theatre, and performed in numerous plays including Sir Arthur Pinero's, *The Cabinet Minister* (1890) and Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1901). An ardent suffragist, she also was Vice President of the AFL. See Eva Moore, *Exits and Entrances* (London: Chapman & Hall, Ltd., 1923).

ought to be able to have a voice in the government of that country; and believed, too, that simply because I was a woman, there were certain very vital questions on which my opinion, and the opinion of my sister-women, might be of value—questions which affected “us” as women, and “us” as mothers.<sup>53</sup>

Although perhaps seen as unconventional women due to their profession, actresses and suffragists as a whole were intent on arguing for women’s suffrage based on the experience of their sex. For these women, the “personal was political” and this recognition became the driving force behind the women’s suffrage movement in early twentieth-century Britain.<sup>54</sup> As apparent in Moore’s words, they did not want to deny their femininity, but wanted to use their gender as a basis for political rights, and ultimately for a re-imagining of the social and political system to one that was woman-centered.

When looking at the historiography of actresses and the theatre, however, there is a gap in the intersection of class, gender, politics and performance. Although Tracy C. Davis and Peter Bailey have examined the shifting nature of class, gender and sexuality within the dramatic and variety theatres, their studies focus mostly on working-class women on the stage.<sup>55</sup> Although Sheila Stowell has examined middle-class female playwrights and their conscious endeavor to create a woman’s drama to campaign for women’s rights, her work was based on selective case-studies and did

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<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.

<sup>54</sup> The “personal is political” is an idea that came out of the second wave feminist movement in the 1960s and 1970s. The argument behind the slogan claims that power relationships structure women’s personal and private lives. Therefore, feminist politics must confront personal issues in public through political activism to seek change.

<sup>55</sup> Peter Bailey, *Popular Culture and Performance in the Victorian City* (Cambridge, 1998); Tracy C. Davis, *Actresses as Working Women: Their Social Identity in Victorian Culture* (London: Routledge, 1991).

not explore how their experiences as actresses on stage shaped their writing of political drama.<sup>56</sup> The most influential work on actresses and their involvement in the women's suffrage movement is Julie Holledge's *Innocent Flowers: Women in the Edwardian Theatre*. Holledge examined the experiences of middle-class actresses on the dramatic stage as leading them into the women's suffrage movement. Although she portrayed these women to be pioneers for women's rights, she did not, however, focus on their contribution to shifting notions of femininity. She did not investigate any connections between the conventional femininity of the Victorian period and the rise of a modern, female politics, which actresses and suffragists consciously attempted to intertwine. Furthermore, she obscured the significance of the Woman's Theatre as creating a modern, middle-class, female-centered, political, feminist, and performative space in line with the vision of suffragists.

In contrast to Holledge, I argue that the experiences of middle-class female performers (on both the dramatic and variety stages), in particular, reveal how the anxiety resulting from the collapse of "separate spheres" led to women's political awareness. Both Londoners living between 1890 and 1914 and historians today view femininity and politics as diametrically opposed. The autobiographies of female performers and suffragists in this period show this to be untrue, and I assert that a key element of modernity was the fusion of femininity and politics. It was the experiences of actresses who were "New Women" and "Angels-in-the-City" off stage, but often played "Angels-in-the-House" on stage that led to their political

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<sup>56</sup> Sheila Stowell, *A Stage of Their Own: Feminist Playwrights of the Suffrage Era* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1992).

consciousness, making them “Modern Women.” Furthermore, they used their individual experiences to create a collective consciousness among not only female performers, but also among all middle-class women by using their dramatic and performance art. Within the Woman’s Theatre, the AFL not only created a modern, middle-class, political, feminist and woman-centered space, but also resolved the schisms within the suffrage movement that had developed in the years leading to the First World War. The autobiographies of female performers in London between 1890 and 1914 thus illustrate the cultural significance of the theatre in raising consciousness and imagining a future of a woman-centered society.

Throughout my dissertation, I use a cross-section of autobiographical texts to provide a useful and representative portrayal of middle-class women’s transition from “Angels-in-the-House,” to “New Women,” to “Angels-in-the-City” to “Modern Women.” I combine texts from “great women” like actresses Elizabeth Robins and Ellen Terry and suffragists Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst with those of “ordinary women” like female performers Kitty Marion and Eva Moore, and suffragists Evelyn Sharp and Mary Richardson to provide a more complete picture of how modern, urban life shaped middle-class women’s identities. These texts incorporate middle-class women from various regions of Britain, from different professions, of all ages, and of various marital statuses to illustrate the breadth of the “Modern Woman.” These sources allow women to speak for themselves and share the experiences that shaped their identities as women and as suffragists. Such personal accounts not only offer several individual identities, but also a shared

collective experience and thus provide a valuable source for understanding middle class women's gendered political consciousness. By highlighting similarities among narratives by women from the same class background and/or same professions, I demonstrate that autobiographies and personal accounts are not merely products of a unique experience or a unique individual. The shared experience of oppression is what women have in common, defining them as a social group, who then can act to resist gender oppression and develop a feminist politics. Throughout my dissertation, I use bell hooks' assertion that "feminism defined in political terms that stress collective as well as individual experience challenges women to enter a new domain—to leave behind the apolitical stance decrees is our lot and develop political consciousness."<sup>57</sup> Reading memoirs by Katherine Roberts, Eva Moore, Kitty Marion, Cicely Hamilton, Evelyn Sharp, etc. thus illustrates that the "personal was political" for these early feminists. Although these women did not use the term "feminist," their first-person narratives indicate a feminist standpoint, namely that the vote would enable them to achieve other social and political reforms. In this sense, they were progressive and engaged in "feminism" as defined by bell hooks as "a struggle to end sexist oppression."<sup>58</sup>

The evidence of "experience" provided by autobiographies is significant to examining the formation of one's identity, subjectivity, agency, and thus history. Joan Scott argued that there can be no separation between experience and language.

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<sup>57</sup> See bell hooks, "Feminism: A Movement to End Sexist Oppression," in *Feminist Theory Reader: Local and Global Perspectives*, eds. Carole R. McCann and Seung-Yung Kim (New York: Routledge, 2003), 52.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 51-2.

Subjects are constituted discursively, experience is a linguistic event (it doesn't happen outside established meanings), but neither is it confined to a fixed order of meaning. Since discourse is by definition shared, experience is collective as well as individual. Experience is a subject's history. Language is the site of history's enactment. Historical explanation cannot, therefore, separate the two.<sup>59</sup>

For Scott, then, since "experience" is discursively produced and "discourse" is language that produces meanings, which are always in flux, the notion of "experience" is "already an interpretation and in need of interpretation."<sup>60</sup> Since a culture shares its discourse and the meanings it produces, the experience of one person becomes a shared collective experience that gives the history of not only the individual, but also of that culture within a moment of time. Furthermore, Mary Jean Corbett argued that suffrage autobiographies, in particular, "position themselves... as individual account and collective story. It is through this grid, at the intersection of private and public experience, that we should read them."<sup>61</sup>

Both Scott and Corbett would agree, however, that although one's identity is discursively produced, the subject still has agency. These middle-class women were not subject *to*, but subjects *of* institutions, ideologies, situations, etc. that were bestowed upon them. It was the Women's Social and Political Union's (WSPU) militant campaign for women's suffrage that made the issue of female politics and specifically the franchise more visible and helped to raise women's political awareness. Through the dramatic spectacle of direct, organized action to gain the

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<sup>59</sup> Joan W. Scott, "Experience" in *Feminists Theorize the Political*, eds. Judith Butler and Joan W. Scott (New York: Routledge, 1992), 34.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>61</sup> Mary Jean Corbett, *Representing Femininity: Middle-Class Subjectivity in Victorian and Edwardian Women's Autobiographies* (Oxford, 1992), 179.

vote, this colorful, visual display of a political consciousness was also an aspect of that “worldly knowledge” disseminated by modern, urban life. By already living, working, traveling, and consuming the various pleasures of the city, middle-class women could not help but be exposed to a political awareness through their urban experiences, which the WSPU furthered by advertising the movement on sidewalks, in papers, shops, through dress, and through their tactics.

This spectacle created by middle-class women’s participation in public and by the WSPU’s militant politics played a key role in the emergence of the “Modern Woman.” Barbara Green claimed that “autobiography opens spectacle to a discussion of the concept of experience, and to the possibility of resistance within spectaclarity. Spectacle opens autobiography, the singular speech-act of an individual woman, to collectivity, group-action, and intersubjectivity.”<sup>62</sup> After finally being included as an active participant in the public sphere, many middle-class women with this newfound independence wanted further emancipation within the male sphere of politics as illustrated in their personal accounts. With a growth in the political consciousness of women, there came the growth of an active, spectacular, organized female politics. Although the theatre influenced the spectacular nature of a modern, middle-class and female politics, the theatre itself could also be seen as a form of spectacle, as well as a form of politics in London between 1890 and 1914. I argue that the role of female performers and the theatre in raising both a collective consciousness among women and contributing to the performance of a modern, middle-class and female politics

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<sup>62</sup> Barbara Green, *Spectacular Confessions: Autobiography, Performative Activism, and the Sites of Suffrage 1905-1938* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997).

demonstrates the significance of art in fostering change and fashioning a new gendered and political identity. The five chapters of my dissertation explore this intersection among modernity, class, femininity, politics, theatre, and performance in making the “Modern Woman” in London between 1890 and 1914.

Chapter One, “The Life of a ‘Modern Woman’: Kitty Marion’s Performative Politics on the London Stage and on the Stage of London,” is a case-study of variety-stage performer and militant Suffragette, Kitty Marion. A middle-class girl, born in Germany, who moved to England at age fifteen, she taught herself English and set her sights on being a stage performer. Through her experience of working in the music halls and variety theatres, traveling throughout Britain, and dealing with the sexual double standard set against women on the stage, she became involved in the women’s suffrage movement. Her personal story is the embodiment of the themes of modernity, performance, middle-class values and femininity, female politics, and feminism that are weaved throughout my dissertation, and is thus a useful and poignant example of the development of the “Modern Woman.”

Chapter Two, “The New Woman Made Old: The Ugly Face of Modernity on the London Stage,” examines the New Drama of the 1890s as evidence of the anxiety caused by the perceived collapse of “separate spheres.” The “New Women” characters in these plays were viewed as symbols of the century gone awry and they are punished for their emancipated ways. Although these plays attempt to maintain the gendered status quo during a time of instability and uncertainty, they also expand historians’ current notions of the “New Woman.” In these plays, the “New Woman”

is represented as not only political, educated, athletic, plain, masculine, and sexually frigid, but also as manipulative, nonsensical, sexually promiscuous, and desiring male protection.

Whereas the dramatic theatres rejected the expanding roles and opportunities offered to middle-class women that contributed to the disintegration of the “separate spheres,” the music halls and variety theatres, on the other hand, contributed to changing notions of femininity. Chapter Three, “Renegotiating the New Woman: The London Music Halls and Variety Theatres and the Genesis of the ‘Angel-in-the-City,’” examines the modern shift to make the music hall a middle-class institution. With reforms in architecture and performance came an increase in a middle-class audience. As a result, musical comedies set in public, urban spaces like department stores that highlighted a new female urban culture helped to shape a new femininity for middle-class women embodied in the “Angel-in-the-City.” Whereas the dramatic theatres rejected middle-class women in public as seen in the New Drama, the music halls and variety theatres developed a public, independent, sexually alluring, but chaste femininity that accepted middle-class women’s participation in the public sphere while continuing Victorian beliefs that women’s ultimate duties were wifhood and motherhood.

The experiences of these “Angels-in-the-City” (actresses, teachers, writers, and shoppers) shaped their political consciousnesses. Chapter Four, “Politicizing the Female Experience: Forging a Modern, Middle-Class and Female Politics,” draws on personal narratives of middle-class women to demonstrate how their urban

experiences made them “Modern Women.” I also examine how the women’s suffrage movement, especially the militancy of the WSPU, created a particular modern, middle-class, and female politics. I trace the complex nature of suffragists’ deliberate action to combine middle-class values, conventional ideas of femininity, and a modern politics, which ultimately led to competing visions, causing the movement to splinter into various factions.

Chapter Five, “Performing Female Politics: Staging the ‘Modern Woman,’” brings all of the themes of my dissertation together and resolves the divisiveness within the suffrage movement that had been building in the years before the First World War. One vision that all suffrage societies shared was the re-imagining of the social and political sphere to one that was woman-centered. With the creation of the AFL and the design of the Woman’s Theatre, actress-suffragists were successful in creating a modern, middle-class, feminist, political, performative, and woman-centered space. As such, they also resolved the disunity among suffrage societies by using their art to raise a collective political consciousness among women. In contrast to the New Drama of the 1890s, the AFL’s “Suffrage Drama” celebrated the “Modern Woman,” and envisioned broader avenues for women’s agency, femininity, and identity in the twentieth century.

Since much of my evidence comes from autobiographies, personal papers, newspaper articles, musical comedies, and plays from the period, British spellings used in quotations are original and unchanged. In addition, I refer to these women by the way they referred to themselves. For example, it was customary for married

women to be known by their husband's names. When talking about actress Stella Campbell, for example, I use the form of address used by contemporaries and used by herself, which was Mrs. Patrick Campbell or "Mrs. Pat." In the same fashion, Mrs. Emmeline Pankhurst was often referred to as "Mrs. Pankhurst," which she also regularly utilized as seen in her published works. On the other hand, young, single women like Kitty Marion, Cicely Hamilton, Mary Richardson, and Evelyn Sharp are referred to by their first names as they were known to their contemporaries. The only exception is in Chapter Five where I use the last names of female playwrights when discussing their works, i.e. "Hamilton's play *Diana of Dobson's*," but use their first names when discussing their personal experiences, i.e. "Cicely's experience as an actress shaped her work as a playwright." Since these women's personal narratives form the foundation of my dissertation, I also believe that using their first names personalizes my own narrative. By its nature, the dissertation is a personal process of excitement, frustration, anxiety, challenges, and all the ups and downs in between. My perseverance through all of this has been motivated by the inspiring narratives of these "Modern Women." Reading their individual and collective experiences has raised my consciousness about my own gendered identity as a middle-class woman, historian, teacher, and stage performer living in the postmodern world.

In writing, "(Per)Forming Female Politics: The Making of the 'Modern Woman' in London, 1890-1914," I offer a new definition of "modernity" in Britain and illustrate the deliberate and inextricable intersection of femininity and politics. Moreover, I provide a wider understanding of the lives of female performers by

highlighting the experiences of middle-class women on the stage. Through this exploration, I demonstrate the power of the theatre in shaping consciousness and envisioning a hope for a different kind of society. Female performers were pioneers of modernity who used their art and their talents to create a new gendered and political identity among women. My dissertation, therefore, illustrates the tremendous impact that the cultural milieu of London had in shaping the “Modern Woman” and a modern, middle-class, female, and performative politics between 1890 and 1914.

**Chapter One**  
**The Life of a ‘Modern Woman’: Kitty Marion’s Performative Politics on the London Stage and on the Stage of London**

Kitty Marion, born Katherina Maria Schafer in 1871 in Westphalia, Germany, came to England in 1886 to stay with her Aunt Dora. Intent on going on the stage, she taught herself English, took dancing lessons, and by 1889 was contracted for the pantomime season in Glasgow.<sup>63</sup> She toured up and down Britain, working in music halls and variety theatres, billed as a “Refined Vocal Comedienne.” In June 1908, Kitty Marion joined the WSPU, and shortly thereafter in 1909 joined the AFL. She sold the suffrage newspaper, *Votes for Women*, took part in WSPU demonstrations including “Black Friday,”<sup>64</sup> as well as the more violent campaigns of smashing windows of government offices and London’s West End shops and committing arson for the cause.

Complementing her commitment to suffrage was her involvement with the Variety Artists’ Federation (VAF) agitation against the unjust and corrupt action of theatrical agents, especially towards female *artistes*. Through all these campaigns,

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<sup>63</sup> Pantomime is a British theatrical entertainment performed during the Christmas season that is usually based on a nursery tale and features songs, dances, and tableaux.

<sup>64</sup> “Black Friday” was a militant suffragist reaction against the government’s inability to pass the 1910 Conciliation Bill. The Conciliation Bill did not give women the vote on the same terms as men, but had support from both Liberals and Conservatives. Although not a bill created by female suffragists, both constitutional and militant suffragists came together to campaign for it because it was the best hope for women since the 1884 Reform Act. When it appeared the Bill would not pass, the WSPU argued that this confirmed the “absolute necessity of militancy.” On November 18, 1910, approximately 300 women proceeded to the House of Commons in separate intervals, rushed the House, and repeatedly were pushed back by police. The brutality and violence directed towards the women by the police was unprecedented, and led to suspicions that the government had authorized it. See Antonia Raeburn, *The Militant Suffragettes* (London: Michael Joseph, Ltd., 1973); Andrew Rosen, *Rise Up Women! The Militant Campaign of the Women’s Social and Political Union 1903-1914* (London: Routledge, 1974); van Wingerden, *The Women’s Suffrage Movement in Britain*; see also Chapter 4.

she was arrested and sent to prison numerous times, participated in the suffragist method of hunger strikes, and as a result was forcibly fed 232 times.<sup>65</sup> When the First World War began, her German nationality compounded by her militant actions as a suffragist forced her to flee England. She went to the United States and spent the rest of her life working for Margaret Sanger and the birth-control movement. She wrote her autobiography in 1933, which was never published, and died in the Margaret Sanger Home in New York in 1944.<sup>66</sup>

Kitty Marion's life provides an excellent example of the intersection of modernity, performance, gender, class, and politics to reveal how the performance of modernity shapes and genders political identity.<sup>67</sup> I argue that between 1890 and 1914, this network of elements created for middle-class women a politics that was public, performative, feminine, middle-class, feminist, but also modern. This interplay among modernity, performance, gender, class, and politics illustrates the

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<sup>65</sup> When militant suffragists were put in prison, they claimed special status as political prisoners. When the government refused to accept them as such, they embarked on a strategy of hunger striking for their duration in prison. Fearing these women would die, the government stepped in and authorized forced feeding, which required the insertion of a nasal tube with a funnel at the end to provide nourishment. Forced feeding caused more health problems for women than the hunger strike, and was seen as an outrageous and cruel method. See Raeburn, *The Militant Suffragettes*; Rosen, *Rise Up Women!*; van Wingerden, *The Women's Suffrage Movement in Britain*; see also Chapter 4 for more details.

<sup>66</sup> Kitty Marion, Typescript Autobiography, 1933, Kitty Marion Papers, Box 639, Women's Library, London; hereafter cited as the Kitty Marion Papers. Margaret Sanger was an American nurse who set up the first birth control clinic in the United States in 1916 and founded the American Birth Control League in 1921.

<sup>67</sup> Throughout this dissertation, "performance" is defined as any activity that involves the rehearsed sequences of words and actions such as in plays and musical comedies, but also to denote actions that are performed off the stage with consciousness. "Modernity" is defined throughout this dissertation as the anxiety produced by the perceived disintegration of separate spheres for men and women. The "performance of modernity" thus illustrates a consciousness of this struggle between old and new, public and private, and man and woman as Londoners negotiated new roles for middle-class women in public with older notions of gendered behavior between the sexes. See the Introduction for a more thorough discussion of performance and modernity.

cultural priorities and concerns about what contemporaries deemed important to their lives. Against the backdrop of urban and commercial life in the city, the performances of gender, class, and politics either on the London stage or on the stage of London depict *modern* notions of femininity, class values, and a shift in political ideology and practice that included middle-class women. For example, Kitty Marion performed many roles throughout her life. She was a worker, a performer, a Suffragette and a *flâneuse* in the city.<sup>68</sup> More importantly, she reflected upon each of these roles. She commented on women's sexualized relationship to the city; it was a space where both men and women bought for pleasure. The city incorporated a space for the commerce of sex, as well as a space for the commerce of the department store and the commerce of theatrical entertainment. She also reflected upon the sexual exploitation of female performers on stage and attempted to improve the working conditions for women in the theatre. It was this experience that shaped her political consciousness and guided her to join the militant suffrage movement to obtain political power in order to affect real change. Within the suffrage movement, the nexus of modernity, performance, gender, class, and politics also reveals the effort made by female suffragists and performers like Kitty to produce a woman-centered

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<sup>68</sup> The *flâneuse* is the female version of the *flâneur*—the observer, the walker, the spectator—seen in literature of the nineteenth-century city. Deborah Nord argues that when one examines the female character that walked the streets in nineteenth-century literature, the portrait of the city changes. Nord claims that the urban vision of the female observer or *flâneuse* “derives from her consciousness of transgression and trespassing, from the vexed sexuality her position implies, and from her struggle to escape the status of spectacle and become a spectator.” As middle-class women frequently participated in the public, urban sphere between 1890 and 1914, they had to come to terms with conventional notions of a woman's place (Angel-in-the-House), as well as with their relationship to working women, prostitutes, and men of other classes who they encountered in their rambles. See Deborah Epstein Nord, *Walking the Victorian Streets: Women, Representation, and the City* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995), 1-15.

and feminist society. The web weaved by these threads, therefore, provide a glimpse into the middle-class society and culture of London as it made itself modern between 1890 and 1914.

Particularly in light of this postmodern age where the glorification of celebrity performers and urban culture produces a highly commercialized and superficial individualism, it becomes increasingly important to understand how the performance of modernity helped to shape and unify a vast-reaching political awareness and gendered identity. As seen through Kitty's life, the discourses and representations of modernity created a dynamic reaction to further women's agency and contribution to society in London.<sup>69</sup> Between 1890 and 1914, middle-class women proved that participation in urban life as performers, consumers and workers shaped political consciousness, and also offered a new role for them: political activist. By actively engaging in the public, urban, and commercial space of the city, middle-class women created their autonomy through the performance of modernity. This performance transformed representations of femininity and female agency, which in turn stimulated women's political consciousnesses, creating the Modern Woman.<sup>70</sup>

Kitty Marion's entire life embodied the intersection of modernity, performance, gender, class and politics. Her decision to go on the stage started at a very young age when some theatrical friends of her mother's came to visit. This visit

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<sup>69</sup> Throughout this dissertation, "discourse" is defined as language that produces meaning. The "discourses of modernity" are sites of struggle as contemporaries debated and negotiated new ideas of gender and class in a new century. See the Introduction for a more thorough discussion of discourse.

<sup>70</sup> This is an original term that I have coined for this dissertation. The Modern Woman could be young or old, single or married, but was public, independent, conventionally feminine, and politically conscious. See the Introduction and Chapter 4 for more details.

seemed magical for Kitty, who felt quite stifled under her father's strict and disciplined care. "I entered a new, strange and magnificent world,—hinter den Kulissen<sup>71</sup>—of gorgeously dressed, lovely, kind people, who took my heart and soul by storm. There were flowers, bon-bons, perfumes, the like I had never seen before...."<sup>72</sup> Kitty's decision to go on stage was as much a product of this lovely experience as it was to spite her father, and to prove wrong his claim and popular opinion that everyone on stage was "bad".<sup>73</sup> When Kitty declared that she would go on the stage and become a great actress, he replied that he would rather see her dead than on the stage. Death was clearly better than having a daughter with the reputation of being an actress, who by nature of this work must be immoral. According to Kitty, "I was all the more determined to go on the stage and prove that one could be as good there as in other walks of life."<sup>74</sup> Therefore it was a product of her first experience with actors, as well as perhaps being a forerunner of modern discourse (in her determination to change ideas about gendered behavior) that prompted Kitty to a career and a life on stage. Her first opportunity to perform was the pantomime season in Glasgow, and she recalls that for her "opening night was the grand crisis of my life. Although lost in the crowd, I was *on* the stage, in paradise."<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> "hinter den Kulissen" translates to "behind the scenes."

<sup>72</sup> The Kitty Marion Papers, 4.

<sup>73</sup> Kitty's father stated, "Die sind alle schlecht auf der Bühne," which translates to "They are all bad on the stage." See the Kitty Marion Papers, 22.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 41. Marie Loftus, who was from Glasgow, played the lead in this pantomime of *Robinson Crusoe*. She was an internationally famous music hall star in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, known affectionately as "The Sarah Bernhardt of the Halls."

Kitty's middle-class values often informed her observations and actions, and she was determined to maintain these ideals even while participating in a working-class business that had different values and expectations.<sup>76</sup> While performing in Glasgow, her Aunt Dora made an acquaintance with a songwriter who had a daughter performing in the music halls and variety theatres. He encouraged Kitty to try her luck there because salaries were higher than in the theatre. Kitty wrote, "I had never been to a Music Hall, so was taken to the old 'Cambridge' where the great Charles Godfrey and Jenny Hill were appearing. I was disappointed in some respects. It was not nearly so 'grand' as the theatre and some of the artists in some of their songs were distinctly coarse and vulgar, and I had no wish to associate with such."<sup>77</sup> This reaction clearly illustrates Kitty's middle-class upbringing that emphasized decorum, politeness, and innocence, particularly with regard to the respectability of women.<sup>78</sup>

However, after being vocally coached and feeling her English was proficient enough, she presented herself to an agency and performed for the first time at the "Star" in the borough of Bermondsey in London. According to Kitty, "my future, fortune, fame, life, everything depending on this moment." Walking to center stage, she heard jocular shouts and applause challenging her to give a worthy performance. "With all the fight and defiance in me I 'threw' it at them, 'A Glorious Life on the

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<sup>76</sup> "Middle class" is defined throughout this dissertation on the basis of shared values and beliefs, rather than economic status. In addition to shared interest in property, bureaucracy, parliamentary and constitutional processes, "middle-class values" also included a focus on social and moral progress, philanthropy, and cultural capital. Middle-class values also intertwined with the ideology of separate spheres for men and women, which represented middle-class women as Angels-in-the-House. See the Introduction for a more thorough discussion.

<sup>77</sup> The Kitty Marion Papers, 43. Charles Godfrey was successful in portraying the old soldier "down on his luck" in the music halls. Jenny Hill was also well known for her working-class characters and her lively spirit onstage giving her the nickname of "The Vital Spark."

<sup>78</sup> See Branca, *Silent Sisterhood*; Langland, *Nobody's Angels*.

Ocean!’...and ‘took a call’ to genuine applause.”<sup>79</sup> Although fearing she could never do it again, simultaneously she relished the excitement of being on stage. Vowing to stay true to her middle-class values by always being “morally good,” this engagement began her successful music hall and variety theatre career.

One of the highlights of Kitty’s career on stage was starring in one of George Edwardes’ productions in London, the musical comedy, *Kitty Grey* in 1901.<sup>80</sup> This musical glorified the life of a female stage performer in modern London and her dazzling appeal to male suitors from a poor, lovesick boy to the high ranks of the King of Illyria. The first verse of one of Kitty’s solos, “When I’m on the Stage,” seems to echo her own delight, as well as the power of being a performer, and captivating an audience with such intensity as to make them hang onto every word and gesture.

When I am on the stage at nights,  
 And dancing!  
*And dancing!*  
 I give a look across the lights,  
 Entrancing!  
*Entrancing!*  
 I throw a kiss to each and all,  
 From gallery to box and stall,  
 And then, oh, don’t they make a noise,  
 My own dear boys!  
 There’s Eddie, and Freddie, and Montague Moss, M.P.,  
 A Yankee who’s lanky, a dozen Japs, and one Don, Q.C.,  
 Just you see, they’re all of them after me

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<sup>79</sup> The Kitty Marion Papers, 44.

<sup>80</sup> George Edwardes was a famous producer of musical comedies in the West End during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In addition to *Kitty Grey*, he produced such famous productions as *The Gaiety Girl* (1894), *The Shop Girl* (1895), and *Our Miss Gibbs* (1909) which transformed ideas of femininity by incorporating middle-class women in the public sphere as workers and consumers and commodifying their femininity and sexuality. I describe this phenomenon as the Angel-in-the-City, and a further discussion of it can be found in Chapter 3.

For I'm the girl that's captivating London.<sup>81</sup>

Much like its title, "When I'm on Stage," for Kitty, the stage had become not just the performances in theatres, but also the exciting part of modernity—the independence and richness of urban life and entertaining an audience to their delight and hers.<sup>82</sup>

Furthermore, it later becomes a means to promote change as this power and independence on the stage instigates the desire for political power and protection off the stage. Ultimately her experiences as a female performer influenced her consciousness of middle-class values, femininity, and politics throughout her life, as she actively contributed to the performance of modernity.

Kitty Marion's life is a striking display of the complex nature of modernity embodied in urban life, resulting in shifting gender and class values, and the birth of a female politics. Particularly in the early days of her career, Kitty often experienced the danger and debauchery of the modern city in her role as a *flâneuse*. Judith Walkowitz argues that the prostitute was the quintessential female figure of the modern metropolis portrayed in literature and theatre. She states that the prostitute represented a division within modern London. She appeared in two guises:

“elegantly attired streetwalkers who perambulated around the fashionable shopping districts, to the impoverished women...committing ‘acts of indecency’ in the ill-lit

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<sup>81</sup> Augustus Barratt and Howard Talbot, with two additional numbers by Lionel Monckton, *Kitty Grey. A Musical Comedy in 3 Acts*, lyrics by Adrian Ross (London: E. Ascherberg & Co., 1901), 125-131, British Library, London.

<sup>82</sup> For more on the vitality and excitement of modern, urban life, see Nava, “Women, the City and the Department Store.”

back alleys and courts of the city's slums...."<sup>83</sup> Judith Walkowitz and Erika Rappaport both show the anxiety created by more middle-class women entering the public, urban sphere more often, unaccompanied by men, instigating a shift in class and gender values.<sup>84</sup> The question became if "respectable" women were to be interacting with men by walking past them in the streets, as well as intermingling in theatres, music halls, department stores, and restaurants (i.e. modern, urban life) then how were they to be distinguished from prostitutes who traditionally were defined as "public" women?

A naïve Kitty was confronted with this dilemma one Sunday afternoon in London. Crossing the Westminster Bridge, "a lady, to all appearance" asked her for directions to Waterloo Station. Going in that direction herself, Kitty offered to show the woman the way. Upon reaching the station a few minutes late, the woman's [male] friend was absent so instead of taking the bus to West Kensington, Kitty accepted the woman's invitation to stay the night at her "cosy flat she had in Greys Inn Road." According to Kitty, "she liked me and we could be very good friends." Near Temple Bar and Chancery Lane, the woman collided with two men walking in the opposite direction. Mutual apologies were exchanged and one of the men took Kitty aside and told her the lady was not a good companion, quickly hailing Kitty a bus. Years later, Kitty reflected on that day in the city and the ambiguity of established notions of gender and class behavior in the modern world. "I had no idea

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<sup>83</sup> Judith Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* (Chicago, 1992), 21.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*; see also Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure*.

that women had ‘evil designs’ on others. This one was so ‘ladylike’ too and apparently ‘respectable.’ I discovered it was most essential in England to be both....”<sup>85</sup>

Along with the dangers, however, Kitty also experienced the richness and vitality of city life through her independence and transience as a performer, exposing her to an array of “worldly knowledge.”<sup>86</sup>

In many ways life seemed all that could be desired. I was travelling far and wide and making friends, to say nothing of improving my education in many directions, geographically by travel and visiting local places of interest, by reading with the aid of a Nuttall dictionary, and certainly by attending a series of Physiology lectures with lantern slides, for ‘women only’, given by an American medicine woman, Dr. Mary Longshore Potts, several afternoons at the theatre we played at in the evening.<sup>87</sup>

This sex education was complemented by the sexual harassment she experienced in the music halls, and speaks to the middle-class values that formed her initial ideas about behavior between the sexes. After her first music-hall engagement, the manager, Mr. Dreck, called her to his office to sign her contract, and proceeded to throw his arms around her, declaring his love and affection for her. Taken by surprise and refusing to kiss him, she struggled to become free. According to the manager, “most girls liked to be made love to and kissed and [Kitty] would never succeed on the halls if [she] didn’t.”<sup>88</sup> The manager’s attitude reflected common views about women on stage. Because many female performers were from the working classes

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<sup>85</sup> The Kitty Marion Papers, 53-4.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 60. Using Kitty’s phrase, “worldly knowledge” will be used throughout this dissertation to denote an education that is urban, public, and sexual. I argued that this education plays a vital role in shifting ideas of femininity from the Angel-in-the-House, to the New Woman, to the Angel-in-the-City, to the Modern Woman. See the Introduction and Chapters 3 and 4 for more details.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 45.

and exhibited themselves in the public space of the theatre or music hall, they were often aligned with the immoral behavior of prostitutes, who previously had been the only “public” women up until the late nineteenth century. Walking across Waterloo Bridge to catch a bus in the Strand, Kitty reflected on the scene in the manager’s office, demonstrating her consciousness of her middle-class values.<sup>89</sup>

My whole being revolted against even the possibility of such an outrage happening in a world in which I had been taught to trust everybody....A man never kissed a woman outside of his own family unless he became engaged to her and no self-respecting woman would permit any man except her fiancé to kiss her....Sex, except as a distinction between boys and girls, was a closed book to me. It was taken for granted as a mixture of something very private, personal, mysterious, sacred, and nasty, not to be openly discussed.<sup>90</sup>

The enlightenment, therefore, from Dr. Mary Potts, as well as the “worldly knowledge” gathered from dressing-room conversation and incidents of sexual harassment backstage incited Kitty to promote change especially for middle-class women who had been sheltered because of Victorian ideas about female sexuality. Illustrating a shift in the behavior between the sexes as more middle-class women participated in the urban culture alongside men, Kitty contributed to this modern discourse by claiming that “physiological sex facts” should be taught to *all* children, instead of “theological sex mysteries.”<sup>91</sup> Simultaneously, Kitty argued that just because such knowledge was taught did not mean that women were going to start having sex earlier, more often, or out of marriage. Although Kitty vowed to maintain

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<sup>89</sup> As Marvin Carlson argues, a performance is the consciousness of an action. Kitty’s consciousness of middle-class values was thus also a performance of these values. See Carlson, “What is Performance?” and the Introduction.

<sup>90</sup> The Kitty Marion Papers, 46.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

her self-reliance and financial independence through remaining single and celibate,<sup>92</sup> she also believed it was entirely possible for women on stage to lead morally good lives and careers, despite prevailing attitudes to the contrary. “I had been there long enough to learn that one could be just as ‘good’ on the stage as in the world at large...but there seemed to be a tacit understanding among the ‘powers that be’ that mere ‘talent’ minus money, influence, or ‘easy virtue’ was not to be encouraged unless absolutely necessary and useful.”<sup>93</sup> This consciousness of leading a “good life” on and off the stage was a performance of middle-class ideas of femininity and female sexuality, and contributed to the modern discourse about the New Woman as a symbol of an age of progress or an age gone awry.<sup>94</sup>

This performance of modernity also marked the beginning of her political consciousness. Kitty claimed to lose many jobs for refusing to engage in relations with various managers or talent agents. These circumstances were not uncommon in

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<sup>92</sup> It appears that Kitty may have remained a virgin throughout her life. After her father claimed she was a “burden” and wished she had never been born, she decided early on not to marry. She did not want another man to tell her she was a burden. As she began her stage career, she also made a deliberate decision to be morally “good on stage.” Throughout her autobiography, there are multiple incidents of her being propositioned by men or physically assaulted by men (in the form of kissing or groping), but Kitty refuses and repels every advance. She is also known by her fellow female friends and performers to be chaste and steadfast in “never giving in” to a man. Although she developed female friendships with her fellow performers and suffragettes (all of which appear to be platonic), I argue that she still appears as a solitary and independent figure. She claims that in childhood, she never had any “sworn lifelong friendship” with other girls, and as an adult, her constant traveling around as a performer and Suffragette yielded a continuation of this independence and intimate detachment.

<sup>93</sup> The Kitty Marion Papers, 100-101.

<sup>94</sup> The New Woman appeared in modern discourse during the 1890s as the label for any middle-class woman in public, participating in growing opportunities in education, employment, politics and sport. There were many competing representations of the New Woman that portrayed her as a bookworm, a political activist, an athlete, a “fallen” woman, and appearing mannish, plain, aesthetic, but also sexual, manipulative, ridiculous, etc. Much of the anxiety about the new century as being an age of progress or degeneration was placed on the femininity and sexuality of the New Woman. For a more in depth discussion about the New Woman, see Chapter 2.

the theatrical profession. Actress Cicely Hamilton also complained of being “thrown out of work to make room for a manager’s mistress” twice during her stage career regardless of the quality of her performance.<sup>95</sup> As Kitty became aware of this sexual double standard in the theatrical world, she contributed to modern discourse through statements and “letters to the editor” about “morals on the stage” and “latent talent.” For example, in response to a letter published in the *Era* by talent agent Will Dalton, who complained of *artistes* appearing under different agencies than the ones who had founded such artists, Kitty replied by illustrating the bad business of music hall management. Based on her own experience, she described the corruption, prejudice, as well as the sexual double standard towards *artistes* in maintaining bookings. As a result, they were often forced to find jobs under any agency that would book them instead of remaining loyal to one agent.

If, in engaging and encouraging artists, managers and agents would be guided by the public’s approval and appreciation of artists, instead of by their own fancy or prejudice, (especially where women are concerned) there would be less talk of ‘latent talent’ and ‘bad business’. This applies to theatres as well as music halls...I have, with others almost given up hope for a woman who wants to earn her own living, and at the same time rise in the profession on her merits only, without influence of any sort.<sup>96</sup>

Over the next six weeks, many female performers replied to Kitty’s letter in the newspaper, supporting her argument with similar experiences of their own. For example, Amy Clyde of the comedic-instrumentalist group, The Clydes, concurred, “Sometimes you cannot get a return because your manager does not like you, and

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<sup>95</sup> Cicely Hamilton, *Life Errant* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1935), 47. Cicely Hamilton was an actress, playwright and suffragist. She became a member of the AFL and wrote Suffrage Drama, including the successful plays, *Diana of Dobson’s*, *How the Vote Was Won*, and *A Pageant of Great Women*.

<sup>96</sup> *Era*, 24 February 1906; See also the Kitty Marion Papers, 159-60.

sometimes you cannot accept the offer because he likes you too well.” *Artiste* Ethel Lloyd wrote, “I am pleased to see that a lady has had the pluck to take up the cudgels on behalf of her sister artists of the smaller fry.” Such injustices seemed to carry over to the dramatic stage as one female performer claimed, “With regard to the article by Miss Marion, although not on the music hall stage myself (but I have been nine years on the dramatic and comedy stage) I quite agree with her statement that her remarks apply to the theatrical as well as the music hall side of the profession.”<sup>97</sup> This social criticism of the entertainment business by Kitty and other female *artistes* furthered the shift of gender ideals and expectations within the modern city. With accounts like these, Kitty often wondered why life was so much more difficult for women. For Kitty, the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries might have been an age of progress, but for whom? Determined to “fight this vile, economic and sex domination over women which has no right to be”, she promised herself to improve life for women on stage and make the modern discourse of “progress” a reality for middle-class women.<sup>98</sup>

In response to all these injustices, Kitty joined the VAF in 1906, whose first fight was for an equitable contract rather than the prevailing contractual attitude of “take it or leave it, if you wont [sic] sign it there are plenty who will.”<sup>99</sup> Negotiation between the VAF and music hall managers proceeded until 1907 when the Great Music Hall Strike broke out, lasting six weeks and involving some of the major stars

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<sup>97</sup> *Era*, 3 March 1906; See also the Kitty Marion Papers, 160-61. It is not clear who all these *artistes* were except that they were female performers in the music halls, variety and dramatic theatres.

<sup>98</sup> The Kitty Marion Papers, 144.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 162.

of the halls.<sup>100</sup> During the strike, Kitty worked in London's suburban halls, but contributed five percent of her salary to the VAF's strike fund, and eventually was affected by the strike as well. When she was not asked back by any halls in London after successful performances the year before, the replies from these managers repeatedly were that they did not want "any bloody V.A.F."<sup>101</sup> According to Kitty, "many of my friends blamed me for becoming involved in all these fights and losing work through them. Why couldn't I be satisfied with anything I got, and let other[s] fight their own battles?—Why?"<sup>102</sup> Her experience as a female performer within the modern, urban life of London informed her that it was time to promote the advancement of women, if they were ever going to compete on an equal footing with men who now accepted their presence in the public sphere. And with this desire for justice and progress, Kitty's participation in attaining rights for music hall and variety theatre performers stimulated her political consciousness, and propelled her into the women's suffrage movement.

For Kitty and other working women of the period, becoming a complete Modern Woman—one who was feminine, financially independent, and politically conscious—meant engaging not only in urban life as a worker, consumer, or

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<sup>100</sup> Renowned music hall performer, Marie Lloyd, took part in the picketing. Although famous stars such as Marie were not as affected by managers' manipulation due to their notoriety, they joined with lesser known artists to fight for a fair contract for all. One of the chief complaints by performers was the altering of contracts after they had been signed, forcing many artists to perform several matinées for nothing. Beginning on January 1, 1907, the London Pavilion, the Holborn Empire, the Oxford, and other music halls had no musicians, stagehands, or artists. The strike lasted for six weeks, and at the end, an equitable contract was negotiated between managers and artists, stage employees, and musicians. See *Era*, January 1907; 5 June 1907; see also Daniel Farson, *Marie Lloyd and Music Hall* (London: Tom Stacey Ltd., 1972); for more on Marie Lloyd, see Chapter 3.

<sup>101</sup> The Kitty Marion Papers, 163.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 164.

performer, but also as a political activist. Led by and constituted mostly of middle-class women, the women's suffrage movement illustrated the performance of modernity, particularly a new femininity and a new middle-class, female, and performative politics. It was through the women's suffrage movement that the intersection of modernity, performance, gender, class, and politics came to fruition as London came to accept the Modern Woman.

The role of the theatre (in its various forms) and the experience of performers was a consistent guide in developing the political consciousnesses of many middle-class women in the movement. For example, in 1909, the AFL was formed. Like many *artistes*, Kitty Marion was a member of both the WSPU and the AFL, while also continuing to perform on stage and keeping commitments to her profession like her membership in the VAF. Kitty Marion becomes a pivotal example of how the experience of living and working in a modern, urban, and consumer culture influenced the political awareness of many middle-class women, especially female stage performers. Working to be financially independent, attempting to uphold class and gender ideologies that were constantly in flux both in the roles performed on the stage and those performed in urban life, and managing the injustices and sexual double standards of the entertainment business, prompted these middle-class, female performers like Kitty to want political power to protect themselves. The power and control felt on the stage when their performance captivated an audience led to wanting that power and control to protect themselves and their rights in their lives off the stage.

Kitty's first introduction to the WSPU was by accident. She had only heard about the negative attitudes toward the Suffragettes<sup>103</sup> in the news—declarations that they were “hooligans”—so when her friends called her a “Suffragette,” she defiantly replied, “I am not a suffragette!” Laughing, they responded, “Oh yes you are! We know your views on things and conditions and from the way you complain about them, you're a Suffragette right enough.”<sup>104</sup> Clearly it was Kitty's experience as a music hall and variety theatre *artiste*, as well as the injustices that she witnessed and spoke out against that informed her political consciousness. In addition, it was one that fit in well with the militant suffrage movement as her friends recognized and as she soon discovered.

So [o]n the following Sunday, June 21 [1908], I joined the ranks and the stirring music of the “Marseillaise”, mostly, marched along Oakley St., Kings Road, Sloane Street and Knightsbridge into Hyde Park. I had thought it quite funny, like a pantomime Grand March, but when I listened to the speakers, I became serious. I heard my own ideas and ideals expressed much better than I could ever express them. I heard of the injustice to women in being deprived of a voice in the government to which they were subservient; of having to pay taxes in the expenditure of which they had no voice, the inequality between the sexes before the law regarding divorce, the ownership of legitimate and so-called illegitimate children, the difference between the sexes regarding conditions and payment in the labor market, the differences in punishment for similar crimes committed, and so forth. The scales were falling from my eyes and I recognised the other “mad women”, the women who had actually been demanding changes in conditions of which I had practically only been “talking in my dreams.” Well, now I was awake, I was one of them and would do all I could to help and make our dream a better world come true.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> The term “suffragist” refers to those who were supporters of the women's suffrage movement, whether constitutional or militant. The label “Suffragette,” however, refers only to those engaged in the militant campaign of the WSPU. Initially dubbed the “Suffragettes” by the *Daily Mail* on January 10, 1906 to differentiate (and denigrate) them from constitutional suffragists, the WSPU in return decided to embrace the label as a source of pride in the movement and their tactics.

<sup>104</sup> The Kitty Marion Papers, 168.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 169. This march took suffragists directly through the West End of London. See Appendix 1 for words to “The Women's Marseillaise.” Much of the suffrage arguments in this excerpt draw on the

Fighting for the rights of female performers within the entertainment business directly related to fighting for women's rights generally in society. Kitty herself recognized that "as a member of the Actor's Association and the Variety Artists' Federation, I voted for the executives, then why should not women vote for members of Parliament?"<sup>106</sup> As a result, she joined the WSPU, wore their signature colors of purple, white, and green, and absorbed the ideology and rhetoric of "Votes for Women" and "Deeds Not Words." Moreover, one year later when the AFL was formed, Kitty joined and held the AFL's banner in a march from Marble Arch, Hyde Park to a meeting and reception at the Aldwych Theatre to celebrate WSPU leader, Mrs. Pethick-Lawrence's release from Holloway prison.<sup>107</sup>

Within the movement, middle-class women tapped into the urban, consumer culture of London and the debate about modernity. Advertising through suffrage colors, pins, sashes, ribbons, newspapers, banners, and street demonstrations became an effective tool to recruit members and make headlines. This advertising spectacle was a performance for female suffragists because they were conscious of their

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sexual double standard experience by women when it came to political, legal, or economic rights. Although advocating for political and legal equality, the WSPU and other suffrage societies often employed "difference" arguments as the foundation for this equality. Kitty's emphasis on women's moral superiority, for example, was a frequent argument for women's political power. Women were seen as the moral authority of the nation through their roles as wives and mothers, and therefore, their different experiences and perspectives would enhance the country if given the power of the vote. See Chapter 4 for more details.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 170.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 180. The AFL's march went through London's West End to the theatre district. Mrs. Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence was one of the leaders of the WSPU and editor of *Votes for Women*. Holloway Prison in London was the most notorious prison that held the largest number of Suffragettes and practiced forced feeding extensively.

actions, their message, and their desire to promote change.<sup>108</sup> For example, Kitty notes that one of the first things she learned was to sell the WSPU paper, *Votes for Women*, on the streets of London. Advertising the cause by standing on the streets and holding up the paper (even if they did not sell any) was the “best test” of all new recruits who wanted to “do something” and show their commitment to women’s suffrage. Standing in the middle of Piccadilly Circus, London, near the flower sellers, Kitty recalls, “what a lesson in self-denial, self abnegation, self disciplin[e]!...I felt as if every eye that looked at me was a dagger piercing me through and I wished the ground would open and swallow me.”<sup>109</sup> Suffragette Mary Richardson similarly recalled the hardships involved in selling the newspaper at the corner of Tottenham Court Road and Oxford Street in London. “The sex filth which elderly men in particular seemed determined to inflict on us was the most hateful part of my daily experience....Months of filthy remarks and rotten fruits and vegetables reduced me to a state of depression....”<sup>110</sup> After recovering from their conspicuousness as every passerby eyed and insulted them, both Kitty and Mary became quite the advertisers for the cause, successfully selling *Votes for Women* and carrying sandwich boards that advertised meetings and important events. Their experiences, however, also depict a particularly gendered and modern response to political, middle-class women. As Londoners struggled with the disintegration of separate spheres, their anxiety about the new century as an age of progress or

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<sup>108</sup> See Chapter 4 for more details about the role of advertising and consumerism in the cause.

<sup>109</sup> The Kitty Marion Papers, 173.

<sup>110</sup> Mary Richardson, *Laugh a Defiance* (London: George Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1953), 12. Mary Richardson was a writer and suffragist who joined the WSPU in 1910.

destruction was placed upon middle-class women and their growing opportunities and roles within the city.

As Kitty became more involved in the women's suffrage movement, she also continued to fight for the rights of female performers in the variety profession. On September 25, 1908, the VAF held a meeting to abolish the unjust commission clauses of agents. Under the law, an artist paid ten percent commission of his or her salary on the first engagement procured by an agent and ten percent on all re-engagements with the same management, even if those re-engagements were booked by other agents. The VAF wanted to abolish the re-engagement clause and reduce the commission of the first engagement to five percent. The VAF also supported the London County Council's (LCC) proposal for an Act of Parliament to license all employment agencies, some of which were suspected of white slave traffic.<sup>111</sup>

Although the meeting was "most enthusiastic, and showers of telegrams, expressing loyalty and adherence, from members all over the country, were read and applauded," the meeting began to end without mention of what Kitty claimed was "the worst, unwritten, unmentionable clause concerning women artists." "Inwardly chafing and fuming," she blurted out "'and they won't give me work because I won't kiss them!' The meeting exploded with laughter, applause, and shouts of 'bravo' and support of

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<sup>111</sup> "White slavery" or white slave traffic was the organized attempt to force girls and young women into prostitution. The National Vigilance Association (NVA) and suffragists like Millicent Garrett Fawcett worked to pass legislation to prevent such traffic. Kitty Marion was almost a victim of white slavery at the beginning of her career on the music hall stage. An elderly couple "looking for talent" proposed to take her to Paris to become a star. Her Aunt Dora would not allow her to go primarily due to a lack of finances. Later on, Kitty realized that this nice and generous couple was in the prostitution trade. See David Rubinstein, *A Different World for Women: The Life of Millicent Garrett Fawcett* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1991); the Kitty Marion Papers, 48, 201.

my statement. ‘Kiss your agent!’ was the daily catch phrase [in the newspapers], full of meaning as how to get work.” As a result, Kitty was asked to go to the LCC with other representatives of the VAF to make a statement. A deputation of nine female *artistes* gave evidence about the double injustice experienced by female performers. According to Kitty, “the members of the LCC who had received and listened to the deputation, were deeply impressed, surprised, shocked and sympathetic. So far, so good, and we anticipated a great clean up by the Government and the LCC.”<sup>112</sup>

The performance of not only female politics, but also of modernity took place in the WSPU’s window-breaking and hunger-striking campaigns. Using militant methods and political resistance through the experience of their physical bodies was a particular gendered and modern form of politics created by the WSPU.<sup>113</sup> As part of its militant campaign to force the government to provide a bill for women’s suffrage, in 1908, Suffragettes, Edith New and Mary Leigh, threw stones through the windows of 10 Downing Street. The WSPU claimed that destruction of government property was a time-honored tactic by those to whom the government failed to listen.<sup>114</sup> By 1909, Suffragettes who were imprisoned for their militant tactics began to hunger-strike as a protest for not being treated as political prisoners.<sup>115</sup> The consequence of

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<sup>112</sup> The Kitty Marion Papers, 176-8. Here Kitty employs one of many “difference” arguments used by suffragists, namely that if women had the vote, they would “clean up” the moral problems within the nation. This idea was built upon the middle-class, Victorian notion that women were “guardians of morality.” See the Introduction and Chapter 4 for more details.

<sup>113</sup> Green, *Spectacular Confessions*.

<sup>114</sup> Christabel Pankhurst, “Broken Windows,” 1912, Suffragette Fellowship, Norlin Library, University of Colorado-Boulder.

<sup>115</sup> Since they were engaging in a political campaign, Suffragettes claimed they should be treated as political prisoners. Political prisoners were placed in the First Division, which allowed privileges such as books, newspapers, letters, frequent visits, and a more comfortable cell. Since women were still excluded from political power, however, the courts did not see them as political prisoners and placed

hunger-striking was that many Suffragettes became very weak and thus shortened their imprisonment. As a result, the government began to induce forced feeding as a way to prevent militants from avoiding their full prison sentence.

Like many others involved in the cause, Kitty participated in breaking windows, which led to her first arrest and forcible feeding. On October 9, 1909, David Lloyd George, Chancellor of the Exchequer, planned to speak about the national budget in Newcastle, but barred women taxpayers from this meeting. Kitty Marion and Dorothy Pethick, sister of Mrs. Pethick-Lawrence, were instructed to throw stones at the General Post Office in protest. Caught in the act, Kitty was arrested and pleaded guilty, adding that “I only practiced what Mr. Lloyd-George preached, as quoted in the Sunday paper, ‘revolt is the only weapon to carry on a cause. The realm of politics is like the kingdom of Heaven, it suffereth violence and it is the violent that take it by storm.’” Kitty was sentenced to one month’s hard labor.<sup>116</sup>

At Holloway prison in London, Kitty met up with Lady Constance Lytton, Emily Wilding Davison and other Suffragettes, who also had been sentenced for breaking windows.<sup>117</sup> For the first two weeks, Kitty protested her prison treatment.

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them in the Second Division, which required women to wear prison dress, eat prison food, be denied letters, newspapers, and visits, and be placed in solitary confinement for twenty-three hours a day. See Raeburn, *The Militant Suffragettes*; Rosen, *Rise Up Women!*; and van Wingerden, *The Women’s Suffrage Movement in Britain*.

<sup>116</sup> The Kitty Marion Papers, 183-5.

<sup>117</sup> Lady Constance Lytton was one of the few aristocratic women involved in the militant movement. She was famous within the movement for denying the privileges of her class. For example, the first time she went on hunger-strike in prison, she was released instead of forcibly fed because of her status. In order to expose this differential treatment, she then campaigned for the cause in disguise as a working-class girl, Jane Wharton. As a result, she was forcibly fed (until her true identity was

She barricaded her first cell, which resulted in her being dressed in prison clothes and taken to another cell, all the while refusing to eat. After three days of resistance, she was given her first forced feeding.

In the evening two wardresses asked me to come with them, I refused, and struggling all the time...they surrounded me and took me to the doctor's room, where three doctors...awaited me. One asked me to drink some milk, I refused and was seized and overpowered by several wardresses, forced into an arm chair...each arm held to the arm of the chair by a wardress, two others holding my shoulders back, two more holding my knees down, a doctor holding my head back. I struggled and screamed all the time. Not knowing the procedure of forcible feeding and thinking it was done through the mouth, I clenched my teeth when they had me in position and helpless, when suddenly I felt something penetrate my right nostril which seemed to cause my head to burst and eyes to bulge. Choking and [r]etching as the tube was forced down to the stomach and the liquid food poured in, most of which was vomited back especially when the tube was withdrawn. There are no words to describe the horrible revolting sensations. I must have lost consciousness for I found myself flat on the floor, not knowing how I got there....<sup>118</sup>

Kitty's account is similar to many other Suffragettes' experiences of being forcibly fed and illustrates a gendered violence upon women's bodies.<sup>119</sup> I argue that this reaction to middle-class women who desired political equality with men was part of that anxiety caused by the collapse of separate spheres and the resulting modern struggle between old and new, man and woman, and progress and destruction. The violence perpetrated upon these women seems to indicate the uncertainty about middle-class women engaging in such uncharacteristic behavior. Political protests

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discovered), which left her weak and ill for the rest of her life. Emily Wilding Davison became the first martyr for the cause when she threw herself in front of the King's horse at Epsom Derby in 1913.

<sup>118</sup> The Kitty Marion Papers, 190-1. See also *Votes for Women*, 12 November 1909, 106.

<sup>119</sup> For similar accounts, see Richardson's *Laugh a Defiance*; Lady Constance Lytton, "A Speech by Lady Constance Lytton," January 31, 1910 in *Speeches and Trials of the Militant Suffragettes: The Women's Social and Political Union, 1903-1918*, ed. Cheryl R. Jorgensen-Earp (Cranbury, NJ: Associated Universities Press, 1999), 107-113; Mary Leigh, "Fed by Force: How the Government Treats Political Opponents in Prison," 1909 in *The Militants: Suffragette Activism*, ed. Marie Mulvey Roberts and Tamae Mizuta (London: Routledge/Thoemmes Press, 1994), 2-3; see also *Votes for Women*, 15 October 1909.

using militant methods and physical resistance were not considered the proper recourse for respectable, middle-class women. The confusion caused by the militants' image added to this anxiety and modern response. While claiming to be conventionally feminine through their purifying white dresses and picture hats decorated in the society's colors, at the same time, the WSPU saw itself as a "suffrage army in the field" waging a battle with the government and anti-suffragists to achieve political power for women "on the same terms as men."<sup>120</sup>

Although many Suffragettes had this fighting spirit in their campaign for women's suffrage and in their resistance against government pressure, Kitty Marion had an unusually strong physical and mental stamina. For example, after this first forced feeding, Kitty decided to fight back in another protest in prison. "As I lay there wondering...what was to be my next move...my eye fell upon the gas jet in a square in the wall, protected on the inside by a thick square of glass. Men had set fire to prisons in their fight with the government, why shouldn't women?" Tearing stuffing out of her pillow and leaves out of the Bible, she broke the glass of the gas-jet and set fire to pile. When smoke overcame her, she regained consciousness as she was dragged out into the corridor by the wardresses and finally put into a padded cell. Being told that all her comrades had "given in" and she was the "only one to continue to give so much trouble and was doing the cause more harm than good," Kitty still refused to eat. She was fed by a feeding cup, however, instead of the feeding tube,

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<sup>120</sup> Emmeline Pankhurst, *My Own Story* (London: Virago, 1979), 59; for more details about the paradoxical image of the WSPU, see Chapter 4.

for the remaining two weeks until she was released.<sup>121</sup> And yet all together, Kitty endured being forcibly fed 232 times and still survived—an incredible feat considering some women were in poor health for the rest of their lives after only one forced feeding.<sup>122</sup>

As the WSPU's political tactics evolved, so did Kitty's political consciousness. Understanding clearly the connection between political power embodied in the vote and improving the working conditions of female performers, Kitty used the militant politics she learned in the WSPU to protest against the injustices within the theatrical profession, especially the sexual double standard. When no progress was being made in Parliament or the LCC with regard to licensing theatrical agents, Kitty decided to “take a leaf out of the Suffragettes’ book in drawing public attention to stage grievances by getting arrested and making a statement in court.” In January 1910, she “set forth, armed with a couple of half-brick...to break a window at the Moss Empires’ office in Cranbourn St....”<sup>123</sup> When arrested and brought before the magistrate, Kitty stated that she had no specific grievance against Moss Empires, but wanted to draw public attention to the “disgraceful state” of the theatrical profession and its assault on the morality of working women.

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<sup>121</sup> The Kitty Marion Papers, 192-6; see also *Votes for Women*, 12 November 1909.

<sup>122</sup> One woman who was ill for the rest of her life after only one forced feeding was Lady Constance Lytton. In December 1909, Kitty Marion along with Constance Lytton received WSPU Hungerstrike medals “For Valor.” See the Kitty Marion Papers, 196-7.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 197. Moss Empires was a company formed in 1898 by the merger of theatres owned by Sir Edward Moss and Sir Oswald Stoll. The company controlled thirty-three musical halls and variety theatres across Britain.

It was almost impossible for a woman to earn an honest living on the stage. Invariably when she asked for work she was grossly insulted by agents and managers, and if she resented the insults she got no work...I have come to the conclusion that it is impossible to bring one's grievances before the public without coming into contact with the police. I have written to the papers and given evidence to the London County Council but nothing is being done and things are getting worse.<sup>124</sup>

Her actions once again sparked debate in the VAF's newspaper, the *Performer*, on the sexual double standard within the theatre and the possibility of maintaining one's morals on stage. Kitty argued that her opinions were formed not only from her own experience on the music hall and variety stage, but also from her numerous discussions with other women in the profession. Drawing from suffrage arguments, Kitty wanted to demonstrate the unique experiences of women on stage and the need to address these particular circumstances through reform.

Women faced with economic difficulties and temptations unknown to those who live in the shelter of a father's or husband's home, they are not only as good as, but relatively better than, any off the stage. They resent and resist the attempted sex exploitation as I do, but are not imbued with the same fighting spirit to protest publicly. It is not a 'nice' subject to discuss, which to me is all the more reason to discuss it publicly out of existence.<sup>125</sup>

The result of her actions and this discourse was a request to appear again before the chairman of the LCC committee to confirm her statements because the previous case against theatrical agents had been dropped. Ultimately, a Parliamentary Committee granted the LCC with the power to license all theatrical and music-hall agents to take

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 198.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 200-01.

effect in 1911. Whether this provided any improvement, Kitty was unsure since her involvement in the women's suffrage movement took her in other directions.<sup>126</sup>

In response to the failure of two Conciliation Bills to grant women's suffrage in 1910 and 1911, the Suffragettes acted violently, this time by breaking windows of private businesses. The WSPU argued that the issue of women's suffrage was not just a concern of the government, but a matter for all citizens. Since the government had failed to provide a bill for women's enfranchisement, Suffragettes believed they must spark the attention of businessmen, who possessed the vote and also relied on women's economic support. A mass consumer culture was part of a modern, urban life in London, but the breaking of store windows also was a contribution to the discourse of modernity. Although the rise of the department store was a modern phenomenon of the city, the notion that this was the *only* acceptable public space and activity for middle-class women (to maintain conventional ideas of femininity) was based on antiquated ideas that shopping was inherently feminine.<sup>127</sup> I argue that by smashing the windows of these icons of consumerism, Suffragettes declared that there was more to modern life for middle-class women than shopping. In addition to being consumers, middle-class women could still be feminine even if they had jobs and were political activists. This act was a reminder to West End retailers that since they depended upon women's patronage to be successful, they in turn must use their voting rights to support women.

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<sup>126</sup> Like many other Suffragettes who worked before entering the movement, Kitty ultimately gave up her career on stage for the cause due to her frequent imprisonment. It appears that this happened at some point during 1911.

<sup>127</sup> See Brewer and Porter, *Consumption and the World of Goods*; Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure*.

The WSPU argued that retailers were voters, and therefore, “the Members of the Government are your servants, and if they do wrong, you are really responsible for it. That is why your windows have been broken....”<sup>128</sup> Suffragettes claimed that retailers were “citizens, and, as such the masters and employers of Cabinet Ministers. They have allowed their servants to deal in disgraceful fashion with the question of women’s enfranchisement. Are they not, therefore, to be held responsible? We think they are.”<sup>129</sup> Therefore, if modernity was perceived to be a tug of war between progress and destruction, then middle-class Suffragettes argued through their actions that it was the destruction of separate spheres for the sexes and the progress of women’s rights and opportunities that should be highlighted. In other words, it was the emergence of an organized middle-class, female politics that outperformed the department store as the pinnacle symbol of modernity in London between 1890 and 1914.

Kitty took part in this modern, political performance on March 1, 1912 by smashing the windows of the Silversmiths’ Association and Sainsbury’s (supermarket) on Regent Street in London. Just before 6:00pm, Kitty, along with countless other Suffragettes in the West End, took out her hammer and “hit low” so that glass would not be falling from above. “The glass was shattered as simultaneously, the sound of breaking glass filled the vicinity and electrified everybody. I rushed to the other oval, broke that, then next door, Sainsbury’s window

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<sup>128</sup> WSPU, “Window Breaking: To One Who Has Suffered,” March 1, 1912, Suffragette Fellowship, Norlin Library, University of Colorado-Boulder.

<sup>129</sup> C. Pankhurst, “Broken Windows.”

filled with beautiful boxes of chocolates, etc., then on to the next window...”<sup>130</sup> This organized protest resulted in 124 women arrested in Regent Street, Oxford Street, Piccadilly, Bond Street, the Strand and other principal shopping centers in London’s West End. After being arrested and sentenced to seven days solitary confinement, Kitty spoke on behalf of her actions in police court. Like so many suffragists, she cited her unique experience as a working woman, struggling against society’s sexual double standard, to be the foundation of her politics and a justification for demanding the vote.

I want you to thoroughly understand that I broke those windows deliberately, as a protest against the Government for not dealing in a fair and straightforward manner with Woman Suffrage....From time to time members of the Government have taunted the women with not being as militant nor doing as much damage as the men did when *they* fought for the vote, thereby inciting the women to further and stronger militancy....Women desire to obey the law..., but they also desire a voice in the making of the law....[I]s it right that when a woman asks a man for employment he should suggest immorality to her as the only way of her being successful, and on her resenting the insult that he should refuse her employment?...Speaking from my own personal experience of the stage, it is high time that women were protected against men of that sort and such conditions....What is glass...that we have broken as a political protest, and which can be replaced, compared to the bodies and souls of women...that vicious men have irretrievably broken and ruined for their own unrestrained lust?...I know that “God is with us for our Cause is just!”<sup>131</sup>

The WSPU’s escalation to violent militancy through “window-breaking” and arson was due to its frustration with the government’s failure to produce an approved bill for women’s suffrage. It was also a consciously gendered and modern action. The Suffragettes argued that violence done unto their own bodies through hunger-

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<sup>130</sup> The Kitty Marion Papers, 214. For more details about the window-smashing in the West End on March 1, 1912, see Chapter 4.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 215-18.

striking, forcible feedings, and police brutality during demonstrations had not been successful in securing women's enfranchisement. The "argument of the broken pane of glass," however, was the "most valuable argument in modern politics" because "there is something that governments care far more for than human life, and that is the security of property, and so it is through property that we shall strike the enemy."<sup>132</sup> The goal was to cause as much destruction as possible to both the government and the general public in order to incite citizens to make votes for women a reality. The WSPU insisted, however, that violence would only be perpetrated upon property, not people. The Suffragettes asserted that bloodshed was the action of men. Women, more than men, understood the value of human life since women brought children into the world and raised them.

Although this course of action caused further fissions within the suffrage movement, Kitty Marion took up this cause. She set fires to various properties, including the Grand Stand at the Hurst Park race course in June 1913. On this fifth arson attempt, she was arrested, imprisoned, went on hunger-strike, was released under the "Cat and Mouse Act," and continuously evaded recapture.<sup>133</sup> Her devotion to the WSPU's violent militancy, however, was not without reflection. She confirmed the militaristic nature of the WSPU as a "suffrage army in the field."

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<sup>132</sup> Emmeline Pankhurst, "The Argument of the Broken Pane," [1912] in *Speeches and Trials of the Militant Suffragettes: The Women's Social and Political Union, 1903-1918*, ed. Cheryl R. Jorgensen-Earp (Cranbury, NJ: Associated Universities Press, 1999), 144; E. Pankhurst, *My Own Story*, 265-6.

<sup>133</sup> The Prisoners' Temporary Discharge for Ill-Health Bill or the "Cat and Mouse Act" of 1913 temporarily discharged Suffragettes who went on hunger-strike in prison until they were well enough to return and finish their sentence. This was the alternative provided by the government after the harsh criticism of forcible feeding. The result was a chase of "cat" and "mouse" as Suffragettes attempted to elude being taken back to prison. See Raeburn, *The Militant Suffragettes*; Rosen, *Rise Up Women!*; van Wingerden, *The Women's Suffrage Movement in Britain*; and Chapter 4.

Regarding the arson campaign, she wrote, “I hated the whole wretched business; we all did, and would much rather have had the vote than do this sort of thing to get it, but we did our ‘duty’ as we saw it, much like soldiers on the principle of ‘Theirs not to reason why.’”<sup>134</sup> Ultimately it was the paradoxical nature of the WSPU along with the escalation of violent militancy that caused the suffrage movement to splinter and turn public opinion against votes for women by 1914.

The interplay among modernity, performance, gender, class, and politics took place not only in the women’s suffrage movement, but also on the music hall and theatrical stage. Politics was not only being performed on the stage of London, but also on the London stage by the AFL. Although not involved in the dramatic theatre and its new genre, Suffrage Drama,<sup>135</sup> Kitty Marion did contribute to the performance of female politics within some music hall and variety theatres amidst losing engagements in others. After first joining the WSPU in 1908, Kitty was ridiculed by music-hall agents for attempting to wear the Suffragette colors while performing on stage and for engaging in the women’s suffrage movement at all. Many music halls did not want any “bloody Suffragettes” on the stage for fear it might turn away patrons. Kitty remained steadfast and defiant in her commitment to the cause, and what she saw as a necessary and important part of her identity as a Modern Woman. When one agent in London propositioned, “If you’ll take off those colors, I’ll see that

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<sup>134</sup> The Kitty Marion Papers, 232.

<sup>135</sup> Suffrage Drama was written, performed, and directed by members of the AFL between 1907 and 1914. These plays emphasize the growing social, economic, and political roles of middle-class women, the quality of relationships between the sexes, and choices about marriage for middle-class women who were educated or financially independent. Most importantly, these plays insisted that women had the right to define themselves within a re-imagined political and social system that included women as equal participants and contributors. See Chapter 5 for a more thorough discussion.

you get booked up for life,” Kitty retorted, “No, you should have booked me before I put them on; it’s too late to take them off now....”<sup>136</sup>

As the WSPU created more spectacle and made more headlines, however, a recognition and acceptance (albeit slow) of a middle-class, female politics invading all aspects of the public sphere began to appear. For example, in March 1911, Kitty was billed as the “Music Hall Artist and Militant Suffragette”, which she remarks was “fine advertising for the cause in conservative Colchester.” In addition to singing “The Trumpeter,” she was asked to recite “Woman This, and Woman That”, written by Lawrence Houseman, which recounts the struggle of Modern Women living, working, and campaigning for social and political reform in London.<sup>137</sup> In the poem, middle-class suffragists try to obtain justice for women who are victims of domestic violence, inequitable wages and poor working conditions, prostitution, and no political power. As illustrated in the last verse and refrain, the poem also portrays modern life as suffragists struggle to change ideas of femininity and roles for middle-class women who now participate in public life.

You talk of sanitation, and temperance, and schools,  
And you send your male inspectors to impose your man-made rules;  
‘The woman’s sphere’s the home,’ you say. Then prove it to our face;  
Give us the vote that we may make the home a happier place!

For it’s woman this, and woman that, and ‘Woman, say your say!’  
But it’s ‘What’s the woman up to?’ when she tried to show the way;

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<sup>136</sup> The Kitty Marion Papers, 174-5.

<sup>137</sup> “Woman This, and Woman That” was a popular poem performed by members of the AFL at meetings of various suffrage societies. Performers in the AFL, like Kitty Marion, were often asked to sing songs or recite poems as entertainment during suffrage meetings. In the first few years of its existence, members of the AFL also were asked to give speeches at suffrage meetings since most middle-class women had no experience speaking in public. Lawrence Houseman was a well known illustrator and writer. He was also an ardent supporter of the women’s suffrage movement.

When she tries to show the way, my friends, when she tries to show the way—  
 And the woman means to show it—that is why she’s out to-day!”<sup>138</sup>

After her performance, the press noted, “some sensation was caused by the appearance of Miss Kitty Marion, described as a Militant Suffragette. The awe experienced by the audience was quickly succeeded by delight, for the lady proved a charming vocalist....”<sup>139</sup> This recitation itself adds another layer to the discourse, representation, and performance of modernity and female politics upon the stage. As a female *artiste*, Kitty created a performance, but her performance was not just how she recited and acted “Woman This, and Woman That!” The words performed contributed to the discourse and representation of modernity, namely a new woman who was middle-class, public, feminine, independent, but yet also political (i.e. a Modern Woman). In addition, the performance of this poem itself illustrated the ongoing transformation of middle-class femininity and the emergence of a female politics that defined modernity in Britain between 1890 and 1914.

At our most fundamental level, historians are storytellers. Kitty Marion’s life provides another significant story to add to the historical narrative. She is both an atypical and typical case study of middle-class women’s life in modern London. She is atypical because she was German by birth and a middle-class woman in a predominately working-class profession. She was a woman alone in the city. Her foreign birth and estrangement from her family meant that she had no family ties to

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<sup>138</sup> As quoted by Kitty in her autobiography, see the Kitty Marion Papers, 207-08; See Appendix 2 for the entire poem.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 206.

hinder or support her. Although not known by historians until now, her contemporaries knew her as a successful music hall *artiste* and militant Suffragette. In addition, many music-hall performers did not become active in the suffrage movement because the commitment made it difficult for them to keep their theatrical engagements. Kitty is atypical, therefore, because she not only was highly involved, but also eventually gave up her career on stage for the cause.

She is also typical, however, because she had similar experiences as her British, middle-class and working-class colleagues on the stage, as presented by the grievances and actions of the VAF. She did not have the status of such music hall stars as Marie Lloyd nor of such Suffragettes as Christabel Pankhurst, and thus represents ordinary women who lived, worked, and campaigned in the city. Moreover, many British female stage performers, especially of middle-class origins also became estranged from their families since the stage was not viewed as an appropriate middle-class calling for young women. Most of these *artistes*, however, created a new family and support system through their participation in the women's suffrage movement. Kitty's life, therefore, adds a fresh perspective about middle-class women's experiences on the stage, their lives within the modern city, and the development of their political consciousnesses.

Through her experience as a stage performer working in music halls and variety theatres around Britain, Kitty Marion broadened her horizons about the injustices of the entertainment industry, shifting class and gender values and behavior, and the sexual double standard that perpetuated a more difficult life for

women, especially those who attempted to earn their own living. This educational and political maturation was a direct product of her experience as a middle-class woman in a working-class business of entertainment on the stage. Her story is a coming-of-age narrative about the modern world seen through the lens of a young, middle-class woman's experience on stage and in the city; a life that recognized a disparity between society's class and gendered values *behind* those performed in public, and the realization that something must change in order to promote the rights of both sexes that England as a nation advertised itself to uphold. Reflecting on her trip to Paris to visit Christabel Pankhurst in 1914, Kitty wrote:

There, as in London, I saw women in the evening, some mere children, accosting men, often to be contemptuously flung aside. When first I witnessed such incidents in London I felt shocked, sick and indignant at a state of civilization in which women subjected themselves to such treatment for economic or any other reasons, in the face of so much *talk* of morality, man's chivalry, woman's honour and chastity. Those terms seemed but a trap in which to catch the unwary.<sup>140</sup>

Kitty Marion's story thus is a significant and poignant one to demonstrate the role of a modern city in shaping political consciousness among middle-class women. The intricate layers of gender, class, and performance that defined modernity formed a specifically middle-class, female and performative politics in London between 1890 and 1914 and a new femininity personified in the Modern Woman.

Since it was Kitty's experience on stage that shaped her political consciousness off stage, as it did for many other female performers, it becomes necessary to examine notions of modernity performed within the theatre. As

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<sup>140</sup> The Kitty Marion Papers, 268.

Londoners confronted the disintegration of separate spheres for men and women outside the theatre, their resulting anxiety was diffused through the New Drama of the 1890s performed within the theatre.<sup>141</sup> Contending with competing concerns about whether the new century would be an age of progress or a degenerate age of destruction, Londoners placed their expectations and fears upon women's femininity and sexuality. The result was an attempt to maintain gendered conventions in order to alleviate this anxiety. Female characters in the New Drama who stepped outside the boundaries of conventional femininity based on separate spheres ideology (as women were doing in the public sphere of the city) were punished and forced back into the limiting role of the Angel-in-the-House.<sup>142</sup> Simultaneously, however, the actresses playing such conventional roles found themselves in an ironic position since they were unconventional because they worked outside these boundaries and thus contributed to the collapse of separate spheres. The New Drama of the 1890s, therefore, provides a significant contribution to the discourse and performance of modernity as Londoners negotiated the tug of war between old and new, public, and private, man and woman, and progress and destruction.

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<sup>141</sup> It appears that the various social, cultural, economic, and political changes taking place in *fin-de-siècle* England were viewed as "progressive" or part of a movement towards "modernity", and thus labeled "New" in this period. An article in volume 182 of *The Quarterly Review* in 1895 began, "Novelty is the keynote of the dying century. With the 'New Woman' and the 'New Humour' we also have 'New Drama'." See explanatory notes for Sidney Grundy's *The New Woman* in *The New Woman and Other Emancipated Woman Plays*, ed. Jean Chothia (Oxford, 1998), 269; hereafter cited as *The New Woman*; for an explanation of separate spheres ideology, see the Introduction.

<sup>142</sup> For an explanation of Angel-in-the-House, see the Introduction.

## Chapter Two

### The New Woman Made Old: The Ugly Face of Modernity on the London Stage

The 1890s, or the *fin-de-siècle*, was heralded as the “New Age” or a “New Dawn,” by novels, magazines, newspapers, and plays, but such declarations also betray a dialectic between those who looked forward to the new century as a new age of progress versus those who saw it as a decadent and degenerate age of destruction.<sup>143</sup> The decade was defined by the conflict between old and new or as Sally Ledger claims, “a time when British cultural politics were caught between two ages, the Victorian and the Modern; a time fraught with anxiety and with an exhilarating sense of possibility.” In this decade, Britain experienced educational and political reforms, technological advances and “new” inventions: the New Woman, the New Drama, the New Journalism, the New Imperialism, as well as “new” sciences like psychology and eugenics. The notion of progress, grounded in Victorians’ faith in their social and economic institutions, was further supported by Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution, which reinforced Victorians’ belief of their society as the pinnacle of civilized human development.<sup>144</sup>

At the same time, however, an economic recession in the 1880s in contrast to the economic growth in Germany and America, along with the fear that the “Age of Empire” was fleeting, caused beliefs in progress to be accompanied by fears of

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<sup>143</sup> See Daunton and Rieger, *Meanings of Modernity*; Gardner and Rutherford, *The New Woman and Her Sisters*; Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy*.

<sup>144</sup> Ledger and Luckhurst, *The Fin De Siècle*, xiii-xxiii.

cultural decline.<sup>145</sup> As a result, both men's and women's expectations and fears about the new century, which coincided with the collapse of separate spheres, increasingly were imposed upon the New Woman, as the nature of her femininity became a titillating subject of modern discourse.<sup>146</sup> One such typical response was that of female journalist, Mrs. Roy Devereaux, who wrote in 1895, "Life has taken on a strange unloveliness, and the least beautiful thing therein is 'the New Woman.'"<sup>147</sup>

This focus upon the New Woman as the embodiment of modernity, however, led to multiple contradictory representations. A female journalist for the magazine, *Woman*, remarked that the term "New Woman...seems almost as comprehensive and elastic as that of 'lady'."<sup>148</sup> For example, feminists emphasized the traditional femininity of New Women as providing a different perspective for social and political activism, therefore justifying the campaign for female suffrage. On the other hand, the popular press ridiculed New Women engaging in sport, higher education, employment or political activism as being unfeminine because this violated the middle-class ideology of separate spheres.<sup>149</sup> These women were often portrayed as

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<sup>145</sup> Ibid., xiii-xxiii.

<sup>146</sup> Rita Felski argues that the New Woman was "a resonant symbol of emancipation, whose modernity signaled not an endorsement of an existing present but rather a bold imagining of an alternative future....In this imagining of the future, femininity played a central part. The changing economic, legal, and cultural status of women encouraged a sense among many that it was they, above all, who epitomized the changing nature of modern life and the spirit of the new." See Felski, *The Gender of Modernity*, 14, 146.

<sup>147</sup> Mrs. Roy Devereaux, "The Feminine Potential," *Saturday Review*, 22 June 1895. Mrs. Roy Devereaux was known for uniting journalism with literary style. She had a weekly article in the *Pall Mall Budget* and was a regular contributor to the *Star* and the *Saturday Review*. See *Woman*, 19 February 1896.

<sup>148</sup> *Woman*, 12 September 1894. *Woman* began publication on January 3, 1890 with a subtitle, "Forward! But not too fast" indicating its position about middle-class women's increased opportunities, roles, and rights within the public sphere.

<sup>149</sup> "Traditional," "conventional," and "Victorian femininity" will be used interchangeably as synonyms throughout this dissertation. "Feminine" or "femininity" during the nineteenth century was

unfashionable because they dressed “plainly” and “manly” because they engaged in physical activity like riding bicycles, playing golf or tennis. In addition, they were depicted as nonsensical because no matter the level of their education, they never could fully understand arguments for women’s rights because they would always be intellectually inferior to men.

New Women’s sexuality also was a cause for concern since they now participated in public life alongside men to whom they were not related. Some writers portrayed New Women as sexually frigid due to their masculine clothing and involvement in the movement for women’s rights, which countered traditional feminine roles as wives and mothers. Others focused on the sexual depravity that now invaded the middle-class home due to the disintegration of separate spheres. With increased opportunities that allowed women to become financially independent, many middle-class women were not intent on waiting until marriage to seek relationships with men. There appeared to be a significant anxiety about working-class values polluting the middle class as more middle-class women participated in public, urban life more often. As a result, the figures of the “fallen woman” or “woman-with-a-past”, previously associated with working-class women or

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both biologically and socially constructed. Women were seen as weaker physically and mentally, and therefore, separate spheres ideology dictated that women should remain in the private sphere of the home in order to protect their sexual innocence or naïveté. Intertwined with this was an emphasis on physical beauty and etiquette, particularly “angelic” qualities and manners, which often were conveyed through fashion. With men in the public sphere (outside the home), middle-class women were socially and financially dependent on their closest male relative, which perpetuated a femininity that prescribed women to remain children.

prostitutes, were now connected with the overarching image of the middle-class New Woman.<sup>150</sup>

Contributing to this discourse in the press, the New Drama<sup>151</sup> of the 1890s also reflected the anxieties surrounding the growing number of middle-class women in public (i.e. New Women). The concern caused by the gradual collapse of separate spheres for men and women—illustrating the tug of war about whether the new century was an age of progress or degeneration—can be seen in the New Drama where the agency given to these emancipated women<sup>152</sup> is displaced with a denunciation of their femininity and sexuality. I argue that these plays, written by men, used the discourses and images of modernity to portray emancipated women as deeply confused, ridiculously naïve, selfishly manipulative, vulnerable to the needs of the flesh, driven by a hidden desire for male protection, and corrupting gender norms. As a result of this susceptibility to lust and male protection, female transgressions ensue. The solution for these transgressions is always an attempt to return to polite society or be accepted as respectable by polite society. Oscar Wilde's *Lady*

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<sup>150</sup> See Juliet Gardner, ed., *The New Woman* (London: Collins & Brown, Ltd., 1993); Ann Heilmann, "The 'New Woman' Fiction and *Fin-de-Siècle* Feminism," *Women's Writing* 3, no. 3 (1996): 197-216; Richardson and Willis, *The New Woman in Fiction and In Fact*; Michelle Elizabeth Tusan, "Inventing the New Woman: Print Culture and Identity Politics during the Fin-de-Siècle," *Victorian Periodicals Review* 31:2 (Summer 1998): 169-182.

<sup>151</sup> Playwright, George Bernard Shaw also wrote in the preface to *Plays Unpleasant* (1898), "We called everything advanced 'the New' at that time...." See explanatory notes for Grundy's *The New Woman*, 269.

<sup>152</sup> "Emancipated" or "liberated" women will be used as synonyms for the New Woman. Because the discourse of modernity in the 1890s produced multiple representations of the New Woman, this term will be defined broadly. These women use the growing educational, financial, and commercial opportunities in the public urban sphere to acquire knowledge and provide agency for themselves. They may be single or married, consumers, workers (writers, actresses, teachers, businesswomen, etc.) and/or political activists. They are represented contradictorily throughout the decade as amazons, bookworms, "shrieking" spinsters, "fallen women", masculine, physically unattractive, manipulative, nonsensical, sexually alluring, selfish, and/or susceptible to sexual desire and male protection.

*Windermere's Fan*, Sydney Grundy's *The New Woman*, and Sir Arthur Wing Pinero's *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* and *The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith* offer four different yet prominent characterizations of the New Woman during the 1890s. These plays were widely popular and became exemplars to which other New Drama during the decade was compared and contrasted. In other words, during the 1890s, the theatre offered a refuge to assuage concerns about changes taking place outside its doors. New Drama, as established by Wilde, Grundy, and Pinero, attempted to maintain the gendered status quo on stage by tapping into fears that the new century was an age of destruction personified in the New Woman. All New Woman characters in these plays realize the folly of their emancipated ways, and attempt to return to polite society by returning to patterns of gendered behavior defined by the middle-class ideology of separate spheres. The *fin-de-siècle* theatre, therefore, became a space where social anxiety was performed and resolved by reaffirming established, Victorian ideas of femininity and female sexuality in the midst of an unstable modern world.<sup>153</sup>

### A Sign of the Times: The New Woman in the Press

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<sup>153</sup> New Drama and the theatre of the 1890s are a stark contrast to Suffrage Drama and the Woman's Theatre in the early twentieth century. As discussed in Chapter 5, Suffrage Drama was written, performed and directed by women and explored the growing social, economic and political roles of middle-class women in the modern world. Unlike New Drama that attempted to maintain the status quo, Suffrage Drama was progressive and visionary. The AFL used drama to resolve conflicts within the women's suffrage movement. Furthermore, unlike the *fin-de-siècle* theatre, the Woman's Theatre provided a space to re-imagine society as feminist and woman-centered. The shifting, liminal space of the theatre (as a cultural and performing art form), therefore, had a significant role in shaping modernity in London between 1890 and 1914.

On August 17, 1893, the feminist journal, the *Woman's Herald*, declared that “without warning, woman suddenly appears on the scene of man's activities, as a sort of new creation, and demands a share in the struggles, the responsibilities and the honours of the world, in which, until now, she has been a cipher.”<sup>154</sup> This article entitled, “The Social Standing of the New Woman,” was the first time that the New Woman label was used. Although the *Woman's Herald* was the first journal to use the New Woman label, her precursor in the guise of the “Woman Question” appeared in the 1860s-1880s. Throughout this period, popular magazines, novels, and journals ridiculed politically-active women as the “shrieking sisterhood,” and characterized them as wearing masculine clothing, rejecting marriage, and engaging in non-traditional activities for women such as education, politics, and sport. In the 1890s, the intensification of the New Woman debate, however, was due to several legislative reforms. For example, the Married Women's Property Acts of 1870 and 1882 eventually gave all married women the right to own property. By 1892, a bill granting women the franchise, although defeated, did gather a significant amount of support in Parliament. Moreover, there was a significant rise in the employment of middle-class women in the late nineteenth century.<sup>155</sup> All of these changes contributed to a public, independent self-awareness and a nascent political consciousness for middle-class women embodied in the New Woman.

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<sup>154</sup> “The Social Standing of the New Woman,” *Woman's Herald*, 17 August 1893.

<sup>155</sup> Between 1881 and 1911, the number of middle-class women in the total female workforce in the United Kingdom increased from 12.6% to 23.7%. Vivien Gardner argues, “By 1890 there was a generation of reasonably educated young women who looked for some continuing fulfillment through work.” See Gardner and Rutherford, *The New Woman and Her Sisters*, 6.

Ann Ardis argues that once the New Woman was named, the nature of the debate changed. In the 1860s and 1870s, the “Woman Question” had been a social debate, but by the 1890s, the media had made the debate a literary affair. Critics began condemning fictional characters (and caricatures) in novels, plays, and newspapers instead of real women in society.<sup>156</sup> The popular presses and feminist presses illustrated this modern tug of war between old and new, man and woman, public and private, and progress and destruction throughout the 1890s in their articles and caricatures about the New Woman. Although the *Woman’s Herald* had offered a positive feminist image of the New Woman in 1893, this image was soon transformed by the mainstream press several months later. First, it took on a more “popular feminist” tone when it appeared in Sarah Grand’s article, “The New Aspect of the Woman Question,” in the *North American Review* in March 1894. Grand modeled women’s social and political activism upon the middle class’s philanthropic activities. She emphasized that through their duties of child-rearing, housekeeping, and charity, women were making the world a more pleasant place in which to live. According to Grand, “it is the woman’s place and pride and pleasure to teach the child, and man morally is in his infancy.”<sup>157</sup> In response to Grand, Ouida’s article, “The New Woman” in the *North American Review* in May 1894 transformed the New Woman

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<sup>156</sup> This shift in the debate contributed to the discourse of modernity—particularly fears about the new century and the possible erosion of middle-class values perceived in the New Woman—because according to Ardis, “to label something literary rather than ‘real’ is to quarantine it.” See Ann Ardis, *New Women, New Novels: Feminism and Early Modernism* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 12-13.

<sup>157</sup> Sarah Grand, “The New Aspect of the Woman Question,” *North American Review* 158, no. 448 (March 1894), 273.

into a literary (and thus fictional) farcical character. Ouida's comical description of the New Woman was one of the images adopted by the mainstream press.

The speaker is middle-aged and plain of feature; she wears an inverted plate on her head tied on with strings under her double-chin; she has balloon-sleeves, a bodice tight to bursting, a waist of ludicrous dimensions in proportion to her portly person; she is gesticulating with one hand, of which all the fingers are struck out in ungraceful defiance of all artistic law of gesture. Now why cannot this orator learn to gesticulate and learn to dress, instead of clamoring for a franchise?<sup>158</sup>

As a result the argument that the New Woman was actually nothing more than an invention became a major issue for debate.

Similarly, the rise of "New Woman Fiction," added to the debate regarding the reality or invention of the New Woman. Grant Allen's *The Woman Who Did*, published in 1895, became a notorious example of this new literary genre. The heroine, Herminia, a single, educated, financially independent young woman, refuses to marry. She views marriage as a "parcel of a system of slavery" because it is "an assertion of man's supremacy over woman."<sup>159</sup> She does not reject the love of a man, however, and is insistent upon having a monogamous relationship without the marriage contract. She also maintains her own living residence separate from her lover, Alan. Even when Herminia becomes pregnant, this domestic plan is not altered. She prides herself on giving her child the "unique and glorious birthright of being the only human being ever born into this world as the deliberate result of a free union, contracted on philosophical and ethical principles."<sup>160</sup> Only when Alan dies

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<sup>158</sup> Ouida, "The New Woman," *North American Review* 158, no. 450 (May 1894), 611-12.

<sup>159</sup> Grant Allen, *The Woman Who Did* (London: John Lane, 1895), 40-1.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, 75-6.

does Herminia neglect her martyrdom and “ethical principles” as she passes herself off as a wife to mask the illegitimacy of her child, the product of this “free union.”<sup>161</sup>

Although this novel provoked criticism from the mainstream press because it challenged Victorian notions of sexual “purity” and marriage, it was also attacked by the woman’s press for its subversive image of the New Woman linking sexual desire and the campaign for women’s rights.<sup>162</sup> For example, Millicent Garrett Fawcett, leader of the National Union of Women’s Suffrage Societies (NUWSS), wrote a scathing review of Allen’s book in the *Contemporary Review* in 1895.

[Mr. Grant Allen] is not a friend but an enemy....The whole of the social revolution sketched in “The Woman Who Did” would amount in its practical result to libertinage, not to liberty; it would mean the immeasurable degradation of women; it would reduce to anarchy the most momentous of human relationships—the relation between husband and wife and parents and children.<sup>163</sup>

Fawcett’s remarks only served to reinforce the feminist press’s image of the New Woman; one that stressed Victorian femininity and embraced marriage and motherhood as the justification for political rights.

This focus on fictional characters also could be extended to the variety of images created by articles and caricatures in the periodical press. *Woman* staged a contest in 1894 for the “best epigrammatic definition of the expression, the ‘New Woman.’” It was clear that even the winners of the contest had different notions of the New Woman. Edith Ready wrote, “At her worst—A creature of one idea—

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<sup>161</sup> A “free union” was the nineteenth-century label for a man and woman to share their lives together outside the institution of marriage.

<sup>162</sup> A literary response to Grant Allen’s *The Woman Who Did* also was provided by Victoria Crosse in her novel, *The Woman Who Didn’t* (1895).

<sup>163</sup> Millicent Garrett Fawcett, “The Woman Who Did,” *Contemporary Review* LXVII, (May 1895), 630.

emancipation; liberty at all costs. At her best—A cultured woman, claiming the right to order her life and use her powers.” Carrie Phipson countered with, “She flouts Love’s caresses, reforms ladies’ dresses, and scorns the Man-Monster’s tirades; She seems scarcely human, this Mannish ‘New Woman,’ This ‘Queen of the Blushless Brigade.’”<sup>164</sup> Similarly, in an article entitled, “What are Modern Influences Doing for Women?” the author, Blanch Oram, explored whether modern influences were “hardening” middle-class women or making them more “womanly.” After focusing on female doctors, politicians, and travelers, the author’s conclusion portrays contemporaries’ struggle between their desire for progress and simultaneous fear of destruction that characterized the 1890s. “Courage, perseverance, resolution, these three are the outcome of modern influences. But, on the whole, is there not some ground for fear that tenderness and modesty are withering in the strong sunshine of the new life?”<sup>165</sup>

Similar to Ouida’s ridiculously overemphasized feminine image of the New Woman based on fashion and the body, the predominately male mainstream press also focused on women’s physicality to portray a masculine image of the New Woman. One such popular journal was *Punch* whose satirical caricatures were widely disseminated to all classes. *Punch*, in particular, associated the New Woman with powerful visual images such as reading glasses, smoking, fashion, and bicycling to control the New Woman by establishing her as a cultural and farcical stereotype. Amongst these caricatures, two “unfeminine” images of the New Woman emerged:

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<sup>164</sup> *Woman*, 26 September 1894.

<sup>165</sup> Blanch Oram, “What are Modern Influences doing for Women?” *Woman*, 7 September 1892.

she was portrayed as either a “bespectacled, physically degenerate weakling or as a strapping Amazon who could outwalk, outcycle and outshoot any man.”<sup>166</sup>

As a response to *Punch*'s negative and masculine images of the New Woman, the feminist periodical, the *Woman's Signal*, published an article in 1895 that distinguished the New Woman of the popular press with the “proper” New Woman of the feminist press. The author harangued the “‘Manly’ New Woman of Mr. Punch” as a despicable image because she “seeks to be an imitation of man in every aspect.” The “real” New Woman, on the other hand, “is pre-eminently womanly and desires to remain so. She prefers the society of her own sex to that of men, and is as a rule, popular among women—which I think you will admit is a very good test of her womanliness.”<sup>167</sup> The feminist press, then sought to emphasize the New Woman's femininity by focusing on traditional, middle-class notions of womanhood represented in domestic duties, marriage, and motherhood. Women's natural roles as wives and mothers or “the moral authority of the nation” was viewed as a justification for women's social and political role in public life.

Symbolizing the anxiety caused by the collapse of separate spheres, and the struggle between an old and new way of life, it seems that by the end of the decade, much of the women's press attempted to offer a compromise by representing the New Woman as partly “old” and partly “new.” By being partly “old,” she still possessed Victorian ideals of femininity, and by being partly “new,” she also incorporated a newfound independence due to changes in education, employment, and consumerism

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<sup>166</sup> Richardson and Willis, *The New Woman in Fiction and Fact*, 13.

<sup>167</sup> *Woman's Signal*, 26 December 1895.

within the urban sphere. For example, the *Woman's Signal* claimed that “the woman of to-day is but the woman of yesterday, at a more advanced stage of her growth.” She has “gained a clearer knowledge of her own nature and of the world in which she is placed” and thus has gained “a truer notion of her own work in the world.”<sup>168</sup> Similarly, *Woman* argued, “The modern woman, the woman of today, does not break with the old ideal of womanhood; the ideal with which we are wont to associate the gentler virtues—pity, gentleness, and purity; but to these are added the ideals of the new—self-reliance, courage, and independence.”<sup>169</sup> The New Drama of the decade, however, was not as compromising in its review of the New Woman. In the theatre, the New Woman was viewed as a symbol of Britain’s cultural and moral deterioration.

#### The New Woman in the New Drama

The role of drama and the theatre was deeply intertwined with the debate about modernity’s influence on middle-class women’s femininity and society as a whole in the *fin-de-siècle*. Although *Woman* attempted to provide an image of the New Woman that combined conventional and modern notions of femininity, it was clear that readers and theatre-goers were not entirely convinced. In an essay contest on the subject, “Is the Influence of the Modern Drama on Society Elevating or Demoralising?” contributors often focused on the effects of modern drama upon the femininity of middle-class girls and young women. Miss Marie Faircloth argued that

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<sup>168</sup> Ibid., 8 November 1894.

<sup>169</sup> *Woman*, 3 November 1897.

“to some natures [modern drama] is beneficial, while to others demoralizing.” For example, a young girl’s sympathy for the less fortunate may be aroused by a play if she was accustomed to a privileged life and witnessed scenes of poverty, suffering, or crime within a drama. On the other hand, modern drama could also be demoralizing because “the most sacred relations of life” were often misrepresented and sins glossed over. Love, for example, could be portrayed as “mere passionate impulse, and society shown as false and hollow. All this, particularly to sensitive girls, just starting life with pure and lofty ideas, and with little knowledge of the evil around them, cannot be beneficial....”<sup>170</sup> In contrast to Miss Faircloth, Mrs. Flavell emphatically declared the demoralizing effects upon society, especially young, middle-class women. Mrs. Flavell argued, “Sin is too often made alluring...Our girls, who are strictly forbidden...to read *risqué* novels, are taken constantly to the theatre where, in almost all the modern plays and burlesques, there is something said or suggested that goes to lessen the fresh bloom on the peach, the first pure thoughts of a young girl.”<sup>171</sup>

It was not only women’s femininity that was of concern, but also the effects of modern drama upon society at large. There were those who felt that modern drama reflected society, and if the society was immoral, so too was the drama. Mrs. F. E. Wellesley claimed, “If a society is corrupt, the stage must necessarily pamper to its tastes, passions, and follies.” The question of “whether the influence of our modern drama on society is demoralising will require no further discussion, since we shall

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<sup>170</sup> Ibid., 12 February 1891.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid., 12 February 1891.

awake to the unpleasant truth that in our drama, as with our *fin de siècle* literature, we are regarded as dangerous and undesirable pioneers.”<sup>172</sup> On the other hand, there also were those who believed that modern drama could have an elevating influence upon society because the stage offered a place where an “ideal” life could be realized. For example, Miss Rose Hervey argued that the “mission of drama is not merely to help us pass an agreeable hour or two, but to teach us high and noble truths, and to represent an ideal life.” Likewise, Mrs. M.V. Richmond asserted that the theatre was an institution that was wedded deeply in the fabric of modern life. As such, “On the stage vice is whipped, shams exposed, and hypocrisy exposed, with more direct and clear teaching than can be exerted by the pulpit, the platform, the novel, or the essay.” In other words, “what is morally unworthy will not be accepted by an audience, and a play that is not founded on the principles of virtue, truth, and justice is wanting in the essential elements of success.”<sup>173</sup>

This dialogue about the effects of modern drama upon society was sparked by the emergence of New Drama. English New Drama was inspired heavily by Henrik Ibsen’s plays, *A Doll’s House*, which first premiered at London’s Novelty Theatre in 1889, and *Hedda Gabler*, which first premiered at London’s Vaudeville Theatre in 1891. In *A Doll’s House*, the protagonist Nora abandons her husband and children to discover her identity as a woman beyond the roles of wife and mother. In *Hedda Gabler*, the heroine Hedda kills herself and her unborn child instead of staying in a loveless marriage and a tedious bourgeois life. According to English spectators at the

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<sup>172</sup> Ibid., 19 February 1891.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid., 12 February 1891.

time, these plays “glorified [the] unwomanly woman”, and yet people wondered “Was it life or death for women?...Was it joy or sorrow for men?” Sally Ledger argues, “Ibsen’s challenging and subversive female character roles were...immensely influential in the formation of the identity of the New Woman in 1890s London.” As a result, English playwrights stepped up and took part in the discourse by writing and producing plays about the New Woman in all her guises.<sup>174</sup> Although playwrights like Wilde, Grundy and Pinero made these controversial New Women their heroines, the messages and the reception of these plays suggest that these New Women characters were examples of what middle-class women should not be. New Drama might have reflected society in terms of the cultural changes that allowed the New Woman to emerge, but contemporaries refused to accept this reflection as evidence of society’s moral degeneration. *Lady Windermere’s Fan*, *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray*, *The New Woman*, and *The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith* assert that the New Woman would not be the symbol of Britain’s cultural and moral decline in the new century. As a result, the New Women in these plays are punished for their emancipated ways and put in their proper place—tossed back to feminine roles and behavior prescribed by separate spheres ideology. As such, the New Drama of the 1890s itself was a discourse, a representation, and a performance of modernity.

### *Lady Windermere’s Fan*

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<sup>174</sup> Sally Ledger, “Ibsen, the New Woman and the Actress,” in *The New Woman in Fiction and Fact: Fin-de-Siècle Feminisms*, Angeliqe Richardson and Chris Willis, eds. (New York: Palgrave, 2001): 79-93.

Oscar Wilde's play, *Lady Windermere's Fan* (1892) reflected the concern for moral laxity in the modern world as an emancipated woman attempts to "get back" into polite society. Lady Windermere is unaware that as an infant she was abandoned by her mother, Mrs. Erlynne, who ran away from her husband with another man, only herself to be abandoned shortly after. Lady Windermere is depicted as the Angel-in-the House, reared by a Puritan aunt to know right from wrong and proper from improper behavior. In contrast, Mrs. Erlynne is the "worldly woman" or "woman-with-a-past" who is seen as a threat not only to traditional femininity, but also to the middle-class social order as she attempts to be accepted into society again. She is a woman who is susceptible to the needs of the flesh, seeks security from men, and is selfishly manipulative. The "worldly woman" character is one of the many representations of the New Woman seen in the New Drama of the *fin-de-siècle*. She becomes the archetype for a deep anxiety about cultural changes that are perceived to be advanced and modern, yet also usher in an environment of instability. She symbolizes a threat to the middle-class social order. Her "past" becomes fused with the present and is perceived as a sign of working-class ideals of women's femininity and sexuality polluting the middle class. In *Lady Windermere's Fan*, Mrs. Erlynne, therefore, embodies society's fears about a modern culture that has brought more independence to women, but in return has corrupted the femininity and sexuality of these New Women; a femininity and sexuality that is closely linked with an urban, consumer culture that "demands new morals as well as new fashions."<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>175</sup> Nava, "Women, the City and the Department Store," 56.

In Act I, Lady Windermere first hears of Mrs. Erlynne from her friend, the Duchess of Berwick. The Duchess is worried about Lady Windermere's reputation because of the time that her husband (Lord Windermere) has been spending with Mrs. Erlynne, and the money the Duchess suspects Lord Windermere has given to Mrs. Erlynne.

Duchess of Berwick: Oh...that horrid woman. She dresses so well, too, which makes it much worse, sets such a dreadful example...It is quite scandalous, for she is absolutely inadmissible into society. Many a woman has a past, but I am told that she has at least a dozen, and that they all fit....<sup>176</sup>

In this excerpt, the language of fashion and its ties to conventional femininity shows Mrs. Erlynne's corrupted femininity; her modern performance as a shopper blurs gender lines. Mrs. Erlynne is introduced as not just a "woman-with-a-past," but "at least a dozen, and that they all fit." The concern with women's presence in public fostered in part by department stores and thus thwarting the traditional feminine space of the home is evidenced here because all of Mrs. Erlynne's pasts "fit" her like a perfectly tailored dress.<sup>177</sup> Similarly, the fact that she "dresses so well" seems to obscure her unfeminine and illicit past, thus challenging gender norms.<sup>178</sup> For

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<sup>176</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Lady Windermere's Fan*, in *The Picture of Dorian Gray and Other Writings by Oscar Wilde*, ed. Richard Ellmann (New York: Bantam Books, 1982), 204-5; hereafter cited as *Lady Windermere's Fan*.

<sup>177</sup> Although on the one hand, shopping has been seen as a traditional activity for women in Brewer and Porter's *Consumption and the World of Goods*, on the other hand, modernity has been made synonymous with certain aspects of consumer culture such as the purchasing and display of commodities (including fashion) or the institution of the department store itself. See Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure*; Richards, *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England*.

<sup>178</sup> The difference between prescribed femininity and the historical reality was sometimes blurred in the fashion world in the late nineteenth century. Valerie Steele argues that although the prescribed ideal of femininity viewed female sexuality (derived from maternal instinct) as secondary, this was not always evident in dress. In fact, there was no clear distinction between the "pure," "respectable," "maternal", and "domestic" middle-class woman and that worn by the "fallen, public woman." Steele

example, when Mrs. Erlynne makes her first appearance onstage as a guest at Lady Windermere's birthday ball, Wilde's stage directions indicate that she is "very beautifully dressed and very dignified."<sup>179</sup> This direction suggests a respectability for Mrs. Erlynne that is contrasted with her aura of eroticism brought on by the rumours of her past. This paradox can be seen in the responses by other characters at the ball. To Lady Plymdale, Mrs. Erlynne is a "well-dressed woman," whereas to Mr. Dumby, she is "an *edition de luxe* of a wicked French novel."<sup>180</sup> Such examples blatantly illustrate the discourses and representations of modernity; specifically, the complex relationship between consumerism, women's independence, and the disintegration of conventional femininity perceived by Londoners in the 1890s.

Wilde also uses consumer language—as a discourse of modernity—to illustrate the uneasiness about middle-class women's ventures into the public sphere. It is not merely the independence provided by increased transportation and the emergence of department stores as appropriate "public" spaces for middle-class women, but also the "worldly knowledge" or experience of associating with men that ruin a woman's femininity that is founded in innocence and purity. Based on her misunderstanding of the relationship between Lord Windermere and Mrs. Erlynne, Lady Windermere leaves her husband and contemplates a new relationship with Lord Darlington, who has professed his undying love for her. Realizing the mistake her

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writes that "middle-class girls and women adopted styles that had initially been launched by courtesans, actresses, and aristocratic ladies; while prostitutes dressed professionally as 'ladies.'" See Valerie Steele, *Fashion and Eroticism: Ideals of Feminine Beauty from the Victorian Era to the Jazz Age* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 134, 96.

<sup>179</sup> Wilde, *Lady Windermere's Fan*, 218.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, 220.

daughter is about to make (one that she herself made over twenty years ago), Mrs. Erlynne tries to persuade her daughter to go back to her husband. In response, Lady Windermere declares, “women like you have no hearts. Heart is not in you. You are bought and sold.”<sup>181</sup> Here the language of consumerism portrays society’s anxiety about a modern, urban, and commercial world that has opened up opportunities for middle-class women and threatened gender roles and the moral values underpinning them. Liberated women like Mrs. Erlynne are not feminine; they are not ruled by emotion; they “have no hearts.” Wilde indicates that in a modern, consumer society, femininity and sexuality become commodities that can be “bought and sold.” Mrs. Erlynne might dress in a respectable and feminine way, but it is a disguise of her sexually explicit past. In other words, by “buying” traditionally feminine clothing that is showcased in society circles, Mrs. Erlynne can “sell” her disreputable past.<sup>182</sup>

Towards the end of the play, it appears that Mrs. Erlynne is successful in selling her past because she has indeed “gotten back” into the female circles of society. Mrs. Erlynne convinces Lady Windermere to return to her husband, but suspecting Mrs. Erlynne of seducing another man for money, Lord Windermere now becomes the voice of concern regarding emancipated women. In his confrontation with Mrs. Erlynne, society’s fears regarding a modern culture that has brought more

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<sup>181</sup> Ibid., 234-5.

<sup>182</sup> Wilde seems to be drawing upon a prevalent concern about what types of “deeds” could be disguised through dress, as a consequence of a modern, consumer culture and the consequences of the intermingling of classes within the city. For example, Judith Walkowitz argues that by the late nineteenth century, the prostitute represented a new division within London. She appeared in two guises: the “elegantly attired streetwalkers who perambulated around the fashionable shopping districts, to the impoverished women...committing ‘acts of indecency’ in the ill-lit alleys and courts of the city’s slums...” See Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight*, 21.

independence to women is characterized through a corruption of femininity in these New Women.

Mrs. Erlynnne [*shrugging her shoulders*]: ...I saw my chance, it is true, and took it...I have no ambition to play the part of a mother....[A] heart doesn't suit me, Windermere. Somehow it doesn't go with modern dress. It makes one look old. [*Takes up hand mirror from table and looks into it.*] And it spoils one's career at critical moments...I suppose, Windermere, you would like me to retire into a convent, or become a hospital nurse, or something of that kind, as people do in silly modern novels...[I]n real life we don't do such things—not as long as we have any good looks left, at any rate. No—what consoles one nowadays is not repentance, but pleasure. Repentance is quite out of date. And besides, if a woman really repents, she has to go to a bad dressmaker, otherwise no one believes in her....<sup>183</sup>

This passage is very telling of contemporaries' views about a masculinity and an immorality of women brought on by the performance of modernity—particularly the collapse of separate spheres for men and women. As more middle-class women engaged in the public and commercial city that “demand[ed] new morals as well as new fashions,” Londoners were concerned about its effects upon women's femininity and sexuality.<sup>184</sup> Mrs. Erlynnne's dismissal of women in “modern novels” as not being “real” women suggest that it is the “worldly woman”, not the “womanly woman”<sup>185</sup>, who is the true, modern woman of the new century. Traditional roles like motherhood are being abandoned for a different “career” that is realized in the visual display of sexuality provided by consumerism thus thwarting gender norms.<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> Ibid., 251-3.

<sup>184</sup> Nava, “Women, the City and the Department Store,” 56.

<sup>185</sup> “Real woman” or “womanly woman” were commonly used phrases in newspapers, journals, novels, plays, etc. in the 1890s and are used to depict traditional femininity (Angel-in-the-House), according to the Victorian, middle-class ideology of separate spheres.

<sup>186</sup> It became evident that the birthrate among the middle class began an irreversible decline beginning in the 1870s when rubber condoms came on the market. See Lawrence James, *The Middle Class: A*

By the final scene of the play, however, Mrs. Erlynne indeed has returned to all of society (not just the feminine circles) as she accepts Lord Augustus' proposal of marriage. Undeterred from his real feelings about Mrs. Erlynne, Lord Windermere graciously congratulates his friend with the remark, "well, you are certainly marrying a very clever woman!" but Mrs. Windermere has the last word, declaring "Ah, you're marrying a very good woman."<sup>187</sup> This last line implies that gender lines are not so clear cut at the end of the century as they once were when the ideology of separate spheres guided behavior between the sexes. With women participating more often in public life and reaping its liberating rewards, what once defined femininity ("good women" vs. "bad women") no longer applies in the modern world.

This message, as well as the entire play, was received "warmly," "with unqualified favour," according to the *Manchester Guardian*. The *Pall Mall Gazette* remarked, "Mr. Wilde had hit upon a quite new species of 'adventuress' and that Miss Marion Terry [the actress who played Mrs. Erlynne] was revealing her to the audience with an incomparable grace and spirit."<sup>188</sup> Although set in high society because Wilde's action was based in the educated use of language and conversation, this did not deter middle-class audiences from attending or from reading about these plays in the press.<sup>189</sup> For example, one theatre-goer observed that the audience

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*History* (London: Little, Brown, 2006), 221; Michael Mason, *The Making of Victorian Sexuality* (Oxford, 1994), 54-6, 62-4.

<sup>187</sup> Wilde, *Lady Windermere's Fan*, 259.

<sup>188</sup> *Pall Mall Gazette*, 22 February 1892. An "adventuress" was another term for a "woman-with-a-past" or "worldly woman." Marion Terry was the sister of fellow renowned actress and later suffragist, Ellen Terry.

<sup>189</sup> Dennis Kennedy, "The New Drama and the new audience" in *The Edwardian Theatre: Essays on Performance and the Stage*, eds. Michael R. Booth and Joel H. Kaplan (Cambridge, 1996), 137, 143.

consisted of “painters and lawyers, actors and managers, pretty women and exquisites...and a score of faultless dandies...” but “the ripples of laughter that ran through the house...proceeded as much from the pit as from the stalls.”<sup>190</sup> *Woman* claimed that it was the dialogue, particularly Wilde’s “scintillating epigrams” that made the play. “*Lady Windermere’s Fan*...will be appreciated by every woman who has a [sic] ear for real clever wit. It is brilliant to a degree.”<sup>191</sup> On opening night at the St. James Theatre in London, the audience applauded so enthusiastically and for so long that Oscar Wilde came out on stage and addressed the audience. “He expressed his pleasure on finding that the audience had enjoyed his play and seemed to appreciate it almost as much as he himself did. The satisfaction of the public was undoubtedly genuine...” and the evening was a complete success.<sup>192</sup> Such success did not only pertain to opening night, but *Lady Windermere’s Fan* ran for a whole season (150 performances) at the St. James Theatre before going on tour to America.<sup>193</sup>

### *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray*

Unlike Wilde, Sir Arthur Wing Pinero moved away from the comedies of manners towards plays perceived as serious and realistic by his middle-class

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<sup>190</sup> *Pall Mall Gazette*, 22 February 1892. Another playwright of New Drama, Sir Arthur Wing Pinero, was also in the audience.

<sup>191</sup> *Woman*, 24 February 1892.

<sup>192</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 22 February 1892.

<sup>193</sup> *Woman*, 22 June 1892. During its run in America, the *New York Times* wrote that although the plot was “conventional,” the “charm of the piece” was “in the subtle and pervasive atmosphere of polite ‘fast’ life in the capital of the world in this fag end of the nineteenth century....” *New York Times*, 7 February 1893.

audiences who also were the subject matter of his plays. In addition, he developed the “woman-with-a-past” or sexually promiscuous New Woman character further by making her the heroine of the play. In *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* (1893), Pinero uses the “woman-with-a-past” character to transform the role of wife into a “commercial transaction,” corrupting the middle-class, domestic ideology of separate spheres and the institution of marriage. Aubrey Tanqueray, his daughter Ellean, and Captain Hugh Ardale are all damaged by Paula Tanqueray’s past co-habitation with a succession of men, as she is herself. Jacqueline Bratton argues, “the belief that the fall of the ‘fallen woman’ was a transformation of good by the choice of evil, and as such was irrevocable, was central to the construction of that stereotype and the story which accompanied it.” The numerous plays and novels of the 1890s that built upon this theme illustrate how deep the apprehension about middle-class femininity and female sexuality in the modern world was as is evident here when Paula’s selfish, manipulative desire for male adoration and protection ultimately destroy everyone around her.<sup>194</sup>

The play begins with Aubrey Tanqueray hosting his friends at his apartment for one last time before he marries Paula, a “woman-with-a-past”, knowing he will thereafter be shunned from society. Concerned by his plans, Cayley Drummle warns Aubrey of the dangers of becoming involved with “fallen women.” This opening scene establishes the prevailing middle-class moral code of the decade and the challenge to it by emancipated women, but also foreshadows the tragic ending of the

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<sup>194</sup> J.S. Bratton, “Introduction” in *Trelawny of the ‘Wells’ and other Plays*, Arthur Wing Pinero (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), xvii.

play, legitimizing society's concern about moral laxity in the modern world.

Although Aubrey's intentions are good, his naïveté about how he will "injure no living soul by the step [he's] going to take" becomes his greatest downfall as the play proves that the wayward femininity and sexuality of New Women challenges the middle-class social order and corrupts the moral compass of everyone with whom they associate.<sup>195</sup>

Supporting this prediction is Paula's first entrance on stage when she arrives at Aubrey's apartment unaccompanied at quarter to eleven at night. Although Pinero describes her as "young", "beautiful", "fresh", and "innocent-looking" in a "superb evening dress", this entrance shows the behavior of an independent woman with no reputation to lose.<sup>196</sup> An audience of the 1890s would perceive this as the first evidence of Aubrey's premonition of their social ostracism and a warning about modern femininity in general. Shortly thereafter, the audience is given confirmation of Paula's past when she gives Aubrey one more chance to leave the relationship by giving him a letter listing all her past relationships with men. The scene ends with Aubrey naïvely refusing to read the letter and burning it in the fireplace.

At the beginning of the second act, the audience finds Paula a victim of her own desire for love, security, and protection through marriage. She finds being a

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<sup>195</sup> Arthur Wing Pinero, *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray in Trelawney of the 'Wells' and other Plays*, ed. J.S. Bratton (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 155; hereafter cited as *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray*.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, 157. In this play, Paula is a "woman-with-a-past," but Pinero also sets her up as a middle-class woman of some education and an incredible degree of independence. Although her finances may come from whoever she is currently in a relationship with, it allows her an independence to participate alongside men within the public sphere. Furthermore her middle-class status illustrates the danger caused by the collapse of separate spheres and the fear that working-class notions about sexuality were now invading the middle class and threatening the institution of marriage.

conventional, middle-class wife to be restricting, boring, and devoid of passion, made worse by the fact that she and Aubrey are isolated from polite society. Pinero implies that although Paula might be financially secure in marriage, she is not socially secure. Her vulnerability to lust and a longing for male protection which she seeks in marriage is really a corruption of gender norms. She is still a “woman-with-a-past”, but now attempts to legitimize her emancipated behavior through the institution of marriage, thus corrupting it as well.

Paula: Oh! Oh, I am so bored, Aubrey!

Aubrey: (*gathering up his letters and going to her, leaning over her shoulder*)  
Baby, what can I do for you?

Paula: I suppose, nothing. You have done all you can for me.

Aubrey: What do you mean?

Paula: You have married me...(*Pointing to the window*) Do you believe these people will *ever* come round us?...[W]e shall go on here, year in and year out, until the sap is run out of our lives, and we're stale and dry and withered from sheer, solitary respectability.<sup>197</sup>

Her isolation is compounded by Aubrey's devotion to his daughter (from his first marriage) Ellean who has come to live with them. Raised in a convent, Ellean is a “low-voiced, grave girl of about nineteen, with a face somewhat resembling a Madonna”<sup>198</sup> and strikes a stark contrast with Paula's “fallen” image. Aubrey's adoration for Ellean, Ellean's cold demeanor towards Paula, and Paula's own insecurity of wanting to be accepted by society exacerbate Paula's jealous and petulant behavior.

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<sup>197</sup> Ibid., 162-4.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid., 164.

Paula: ...I see you looking at her, watching her; your voice drops when you speak to her. I know how fond you are of that girl, Aubrey.

Aubrey: What would you have? I've no other home for her. She is my daughter.

Paula: She is your saint. Saint Ellean!

Aubrey: You have often told me how good and sweet you think her.

Paula: Good—yes! Do you imagine *that* makes me less jealous? (*Going to him and clinging to his arm*) Aubrey, there are two sorts of affection—the love for a woman you respect, and the love for a woman you—love. She gets the first from you: I never can.<sup>199</sup>

This dialogue embodies the societal tug of war about gendered expectations and modern effects upon them. Ellean is the epitome of Victorian femininity defined by separate spheres; she is the Angel-in-the-House, “Saint Ellean”, pure, chaste, “good” and “sweet”. She is the woman that a man “respects.” In contrast, Paula cannot help but feel inferior and impure, but her “fallen” past makes the contrast even starker. Because of her emancipated ways, she is not chaste, not good, and thus can never be an Angel-in-the-House even though she tries by marrying Aubrey. In contrast to Wilde’s Mrs. Erlynne who succeeds in returning to society, Pinero uses this scene as a commentary about emancipated women; they may be seen as exciting, desirable and even loveable, but they can never be respected. Instead of viewing the new century as an age of progress that leaves the past behind, Pinero, along with many of his contemporaries, seems to suggest that one’s past can never be forgotten. By acting on modern notions of gendered behavior, New Women might be fashionable for a short

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<sup>199</sup> Ibid., 165.

time, but society will always retreat to convention particularly in a time of instability or change.

As the Tanquerays' lives begin to unravel, the beginning of the third act shows Paula in a suffocating position. While Ellean is in Paris being introduced to polite society by a family friend, Mrs. Cortelyon, Paula has secretly been intercepting letters from Ellean to punish her husband for sending her away illustrating the selfish and manipulative characteristics embodied in New Women. Soon after telling Aubrey of her misdeed, Mrs. Cortelyon and Ellean arrive from Paris. Mrs. Cortelyon relays urgent news that Ellean had formed an attachment to a young soldier, Captain Hugh Ardale, who has traveled with them to introduce himself formally to Aubrey the next day. As Mrs. Cortelyon tells Aubrey of this news, simultaneously, Ellean does the same with Paula. Her experience of being in love with Hugh binds Ellean and Paula together briefly until Paula asks Ellean to present him to her that evening. When Ellean presents Captain Ardale to Paula, the full consequences of Paula's past strike the characters and the audience.

Paula: What's to be done?

Hugh: Damn this chance!

Paula: Oh, my God!

Hugh: Your husband doesn't know, does he!

Paula: ...No. He knows about others...Oh! Oh! What happened to that flat of ours in Ethelbert Street?

Hugh: I let it.

Paula: All that pretty furniture?

Hugh: Sold it.

Paula: I came across the key of the escritoire the other day in an old purse!  
*(Suddenly realizing the horror and hopelessness of her position, and starting to her feet with an hysterical cry of rage)* What am I maundering about?<sup>200</sup>

As Paula finally receives love and friendship from Ellean, the full effect of her past bears down on her and those around her when Ellean's beau is in fact her former lover. In this emotionally strained exchange, Paula and Hugh avoid confronting the horrific present to talking briefly about the pretty flat they once shared. Most "fallen women" characters in novels and plays had been portrayed as too monstrous to think about furniture. Paula's nostalgia about their flat, therefore, illustrated her humanity—that "fallen women" in the modern world were middle-class women with refined taste—and further underscored the shock that would have been felt by audiences in the 1890s.<sup>201</sup> Pinero illustrates that the corrupted femininity and female sexuality of emancipated women affect everyone with whom they associate. In other words, this modern femininity is dangerous to middle-class society, suggesting that modernity will also be a destruction of nineteenth-century conventions.

The final act begins with Paula telling Aubrey that she has met Captain Hugh Ardale and he was one of the names listed in the letter she gave to Aubrey before they got married (the same letter he tore up and threw in the fire). Aubrey realizes Paula's meaning and when Ellean next enters, he forbids her to see Captain Ardale. In the

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<sup>200</sup> Ibid., 194-5.

<sup>201</sup> See J.S. Bratton, "Introduction" to *Trelawney of the 'Well's and other Plays*, xviii and explanatory notes for Pinero's *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray*, 312.

scene that follows, Ellean tells her father that she knew about Captain Ardale's "worldly" past, and Paula's former relationship with the Captain is also revealed. Ellean's "worldly knowledge"—the very thing Aubrey wanted to avoid<sup>202</sup>—is exposed thus corrupting her "angelic" character and affirming society's fears about the decade, particularly gendered behavior and sexual morality, gone awry due to modernity.

Ellean: ...And it *is* you who have been speaking to my father against Captain Ardale. Isn't it?

Paula: ...But Ellean, you forget I—I am your stepmother. It was my—my duty—to tell your father what I—what I knew—

Ellean: What you knew! Why, after all, what can you know! You can only speak from gossip, report, heresay! How is it possible that you—! *She stops abruptly. The two women stand staring at each other for a moment; then Ellean backs away from Paula slowly.* Paula!... You—you knew Captain Ardale in London!

Paula: (*hoarsely*) You—you think I'm—that sort of creature, do you?

Ellean: ...I have always known what you were!

Paula: Ah! Who—who told you?

Ellean: Nobody but yourself. From the first moment I saw you I knew you were altogether unlike the good women I'd left; directly I saw you I knew what my father had done. You've wondered why I've turned from you! There—that's the reason! Oh, but this is a horrible way for the truth to come home to everyone! Oh!

Paula: It's a lie! It's all a lie!...Ellean, I'm a good woman! I swear I am! I've always been a good woman!...<sup>203</sup>

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<sup>202</sup> In Act 2, Aubrey discusses with Cayley Drummle his concern that by living in the same house, Paula's character and past will pollute Ellean's innocence and purity. See Pinero, *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray*, 168-70.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*, 205-7.

Pinero's ultimate message is revealed here: a "woman-with-a-past" cannot escape her past and this corruption brings ruin to the present and to the future. New Women who are sexually emancipated are not "good" women but a "sort of creature" because they defy the roles and expectations prescribed for them under "separate spheres" ideology. All of the Tanquerays are damaged now because of Paula and her unorthodox femininity and sexuality. Emancipated women like Paula symbolize the collapse of separate spheres and thus the destruction of society looming on the horizon of the new century if Londoners continue to foster change in the name of modernity.

Underscoring this message, the next scene shows Aubrey contemplating the effects of Paula's past upon their present lives while Paula laments about their future. She acknowledges that her past will never escape her, and thus never escape those around her as well. She fears that once her pretty features and sexual allure attached to them begin to fade, Aubrey too will realize what he has sacrificed to be with her and will regret it. The play closes with Paula committing suicide. Paula's final act is Pinero's solution to his contemporaries' fears about the decade. In attempting to maintain the conventional gendered and sexual code on stage, Pinero claims that "the future is only the past again, entered through another gate."<sup>204</sup> These New Women will not last long because they cannot escape their past—a past that is governed by the ideology of separate spheres. Anxieties about the new century being a radical break from the past will cease to be legitimate because the new century will only

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<sup>204</sup> Ibid., 209.

continue the prevailing ideas, behavior, and institutions of the previous one. In contrast to Wilde who maintains the gendered status quo by returning Mrs. Erlynne to society as an Angel-in-the-House, Pinero kills his emancipated woman and thus balance is restored to the Tanqueray family, and ultimately to society at large; all concerns about the new century are laid to rest.

Although the subject matter of Pinero's play was deemed "unpleasant" and even "hideous" by critics, the *Times* argued, however, that it was "written with undeniable power" and concluded with a "stern and inflexible logic which fully atones" for the "squalid" subject of the play. In contrast to plays written about "fallen women" ten years before, the reviewer claimed that Pinero presented his tragic heroine without apology. As such, *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* was "English and modern" and "holds the spectator from first to last in the thrall of a horrible fascination" as he takes the "fashionable adventuress...places her in a good social position, and allows her to be choked and crushed to death under her load of respectability." Furthermore, "Mrs. Tanqueray...is played by Mrs. Patrick Campbell with a realistic fidelity which raises it to the level of a great creation."<sup>205</sup> The *Manchester Guardian* claimed, "There can be no doubt that both technically and intellectually *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray*, produced on Saturday night at the St.

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<sup>205</sup> *Times* (London), 29 May 1893. This quotation is evidence of the "newness" made of the "adventuress" or "woman-with-a-past" character. She is seen as another guise of the New Woman in the 1890s because of the concern about working-class ideas of femininity and sexuality invading the middle-class social order, as the ideology of separate spheres disintegrated. In Mrs. Patrick Campbell's autobiography, she recalls comically that "many people held the attitude—'She could not play Mrs. Tanqueray as she does if she did not know something of that kind of life'—and—'Which is the real acting, Paula Tanqueray on the stage or the unworldly creature she appears off?'" Ironically, Mrs. Patrick Campbell was a married woman and a mother. She only went on the stage to provide for her family since her husband's business ventures as a "world adventurer" often failed to be successful. See Mrs. Patrick Campbell, *My Life and Some Letters* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1922), 82.

James's Theatre, London, is the strongest piece of work Mr. Pinero has done." In agreement with the *Times*, the reviewer wrote that "the realism of the thing was irresistible in its very sordidness."<sup>206</sup> In the same fashion, the *Era* argued that "no problem play has caused so much controversy in artistic circles or excited so much hostile comment in the congregations of the self-righteous...." Although George Alexander defended the play, the newspaper remarked, "it did not need...his earnest and eloquent periods to make it popular. It is strong in its absolute truth."<sup>207</sup>

The *Pall Mall Gazette*, however, was the most favorable. Hailing Pinero as a sort of "English Ibsen," the reviewer claimed that *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* was "the first time in our generation an English play...can be seriously saluted as a work of art." The reviewer agreed with the *Times*, the *Manchester Guardian*, and the *Era* about the realism of the play in a decade marked by instability. Although "melancholy," its purpose was to show the audience "men and women as they are or as they might be under possible conditions...." Finally, the newspaper heralded *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* as "the finest modern play of our time—that in spite of its merit it is a great success, that it marks an epoch in the history of our stage, that it may very likely herald the renaissance of our drama."<sup>208</sup> Opening night at the St. James Theatre in London concurred, producing a "crowded house" that greeted

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<sup>206</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 29 May 1893.

<sup>207</sup> *Era*, 8 September 1894. George Alexander was the actor who played Aubrey Tanqueray, and actor-manager of the St. James Theatre. After a successful run at the St. James's Theatre, *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* moved to northern London to the Grand Theatre in Islington in 1894.

<sup>208</sup> *Pall Mall Gazette*, 29 May 1893. Mrs. Patrick Campbell also wrote that *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* was "the most successful modern English play of the Century." See Campbell, *My Life and Some Letters*, 62.

author and actors with “enthusiastic applause.” Overall, the play ran for 225 performances over thirty-two weeks.<sup>209</sup>

### *The New Woman*

Unlike Wilde’s and Pinero’s image of the New Woman as a “woman-with-a-past,” in Sydney Grundy’s *The New Woman* (1894), the playwright portrayed New Women, Mrs. Agnes Sylvester, Miss Enid Bethune, Miss Victoria Vivash, and Dr. Mary Bevan as frauds. In contrast to Wilde and Pinero, who focused on selfishly manipulative and sexually promiscuous New Women, Grundy focuses on the ridiculous naïveté of educated and political New Women. Although claiming to be emancipated and independent, Grundy characterized these New Women as preposterously misguided by arguments for female liberation and easily distracted by more traditional “feminine pursuits” of shopping and a vulnerability to sexual desire and male protection. Although Grundy portrayed shopping as a controlling mechanism for maintaining conventional femininity, at the same time, consumerism was one element of modern, urban life that allowed middle-class women to enter into public which in turn gave them more opportunities to liberate themselves physically, socially, and economically.<sup>210</sup> As a result, although Grundy attempted to use shopping to control femininity, paradoxically he used the modern, public and consumer environment available to women to portray the masculinity of New Women

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<sup>209</sup> *Times* (London), 29 May 1893; *Manchester Guardian*, 29 May 1893. See also the *New York Times*, 2 November 1902.

<sup>210</sup> See Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure*.

through their actions and their work. New Women, Mrs. Agnes Sylvester, Miss Enid Bethune, Miss Victoria Vivash, and Dr. Mary Bevan, are often pitted against “real women” or “womanly women” like Lady Wargrave (Colonel Cazenove’s sister) and Margery (Gerald Cazenove’s wife) throughout the play to distinguish between “real” feminine women (and masculine men) and the corrupted gender attributed to emancipated women and male aesthetes.

The opening stage directions of Act I illustrate this “gender trouble.”<sup>211</sup> Grundy describes Gerald Cazenove’s (the Colonel’s nephew) chambers as a “sitting-room, somewhat effeminately decorated. The furniture of the boudoir type, several antimacassars and a profusion of photographs and flowers.”<sup>212</sup> These items are clear indicators of the effeminacy of Gerald (a supporter of women’s rights), and serve to overemphasize the antithetical manliness of the New Women. The play begins with Captain Sylvester complaining to Colonel Cazenove (the “real” masculine man) about his wife’s campaign for equal rights for women. As Captain Sylvester laments his marriage, Grundy betrays society’s concern with gender crossing, as well as the exasperation with middle-class women’s soapbox for equality between the sexes—products of the tug of war between old and new, and the consequential demise of separate spheres.

Sylvester: Yes, I am Mrs. Sylvester’s husband. I belong to my wife, but my wife doesn’t belong to me. She is the property of the public. Directly I saw her photograph in a shop-window I realized the situation.

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<sup>211</sup> See Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 177-9. Butler argues that gender is not a stable identity, but constituted in time through a “stylized repetition of acts.” It is through these acts that “the possibilities of gender transformation are to be found.”

<sup>212</sup> Grundy, *The New Woman*, 3.

People tell me I've a wife to be proud of; but they're wrong. Mrs. Sylvester is not my wife; I am her husband.

Colonel (*taking up a book*): This is what becomes of educating women. We have created a Frankenstein. '*Man, the Betrayer—A Study of the Sexes*—by Enid Bethune'.

Sylvester: Oh, I know her. She comes to our house.

Colonel: And has a man betrayed her?

Sylvester: Never. Not likely to.

Colonel: That's what's the matter, perhaps?

Sylvester: Her theory is, that boys ought to be girls, and young men should be maids. (*Colonel throws down the book*) That's how she'd equalize the sexes.

Colonel: Pshaw! (*Takes up another book*) '*Ye Foolish Virgins!—A Remonstrance*—by Victoria Vivash'.

Sylvester: Another soul! She's also for equality. Her theory is, that girls should be boys, and maids should be young men. Goes in for latchkeys<sup>213</sup> and that sort of thing.

Colonel (*throws down the book*): Bah! (*Takes up a third*) '*Naked and Unashamed—A Few Plain Facts and Figures*—by Mary Bevan, M.D.'<sup>214</sup> Who on earth's she?

Sylvester: One of the plain figures. *She* comes to our house, too.

Colonel (*reads*): '*The Physiology of the Sexes*'! Oh, this eternal babble of the sexes! (*Throws book down*) Why can't a woman be content to be a woman? What does she want to make a beastly man of herself for?

Sylvester: But my wife isn't a woman.

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<sup>213</sup> Latchkeys became a symbol of a women's independence in the late nineteenth century because they enabled young, single women to come and go at will, without the presence of a male chaperone or a curfew.

<sup>214</sup> Despite opposition and ridicule, medicine was one of the few professions in which women had made some advance at this time. The London School of Medicine for Women was founded in 1874; by 1891, there were 101 female doctors in London. See explanatory notes for Grundy's *The New Woman*, 268.

Colonel: None of them are, my boy. A woman, who *is* a woman, doesn't want to be anything else. These people are a sex of their own, Sylvester. They have invented a new gender. And to think my nephew's one of them!<sup>215</sup>

This dialogue represents the unraveling of gendered expectations and roles for both men and women; men like Captain Sylvester and the Colonel's nephew (Gerald) are cuckolded. Moreover, Gerald is effeminized by his association with New Women. Grundy uses images of "property of the public," the "shop window," and books like "*Man the Betrayer*" to show the quick expansion of a female urban culture and the consequential disruption of gender boundaries.<sup>216</sup> As a result of her public persona, her education, and her political consciousness, Mrs. Sylvester is not the Captain's wife or "a woman" by Victorian standards of femininity, but rather he is *her husband*. By educating women, Colonel Cazenove exclaims, society has created a "Frankenstein."<sup>217</sup> The representation of New Women as monstrous, paradoxical and confusing highlights the prevailing anxiety that they are "not quite women" yet "not quite men," much like the overall dialectical tension between progress and destruction throughout the decade. As a result, New Women like the "plain" Dr. Mary Bevan are a "sex of their own" or a "new gender" because they do not fit within the constraints of conventional Victorian femininity; they are not beautiful, fashionable, naïve, or isolated within the domestic sphere of the home. The blame is directly placed upon

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<sup>215</sup> Grundy, *The New Woman*, 5.

<sup>216</sup> Erika Rappaport argues that the influx of female consumers in the city during the late nineteenth century led to the development of a new female urban culture seen in department stores, theatres and women's clubs. She asserts that by identifying women as consumers during a time when London was transformed by changes in commerce, transportation, and leisure, what was considered "feminine" also was transformed. See Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure*.

<sup>217</sup> The irony in this statement is that the popular novel *Frankenstein* was written by a woman, Mary Shelley, and yet it is used here to denote the monstrous gender of literary New Women.

these New Women, even though men in their roles as businessmen, employers and educators are complicit in opening up new avenues for middle-class women in public. Men such as Captain Sylvester are complicit in allowing this public persona to invade the once stabilizing private (feminine) sphere of the home thus contributing to the collapse of separate spheres for men and women.

Grundy repeatedly turns these New Women into comical, farcical characters assuaging the blatant anxieties that Londoners had about emancipated women and the consequential erosion of femininity. As part of his caricatures, Grundy exaggerated commercial tokens of the “advanced woman”, namely the cigarette and latchkey. He humourously has Victoria light the wrong end of a cigarette to highlight her ignorance about how to smoke as she claims to “smoke on principle,” as if making a political statement about the emancipation of women.<sup>218</sup> The first scene in which these New Women are introduced point to a ridiculously naïve understanding of arguments for sexual equality (in other words, they are essentially intellectual lightweights), as well as a nonsensicality of these New Women themselves. As Enid and Victoria argue about equality between the sexes in every sphere, they come to the brazen and preposterous conclusion that any man “reeking with infamy” should marry a woman who “ought to reek with infamy as well.”<sup>219</sup>

These New Women with their modern femininity (or lack thereof) are pitted against the traditional femininity embodied in Lady Wargrave. Amidst the modern dialectic between progress and destruction consumed by society in the 1890s, Lady

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<sup>218</sup> Grundy, *The New Woman*, 28.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

Wargrave also emphasizes a common belief expressed by many contemporaries to comfort their concerns, namely that the New Woman was temporary; she was merely part of a phase of indulgence that would soon pass.

Lady Wargrave: Excuse my ignorance, but...Can this be the New Woman I have read about?

Colonel: Everything's New nowadays! We have a New Art—

Enid: A New Journalism—

Victoria: A New Political Economy—

Doctor: A New Morality—

Colonel: A New Sex!

Lady Wargrave (*smiling*): Ah!

Doctor: Do you object to modernity?

Lady Wargrave: I've only one objection to new things; they are so old....

Doctor: ...Do you deny that woman has arrived, Man has departed?

Lady Wargrave: I don't wonder at it. But Man has an awkward habit of coming back again.

Trio: Never!

Lady Wargrave: Then Woman will go after him.<sup>220</sup>

The emphasis on “New Art,” “New Journalism,” “New Political Economy,” “New Morality” and “New Sex” as signs of modernity also indicate social anxiety about what all these changes might mean. Just like dresses, books, newspapers and art could be bought and sold on the modern market, Grundy also implies that this market

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<sup>220</sup> Ibid., 17-18.

(or the modern city) creates a “new morality” and a “new sex” to be bought and sold in a “new political economy” where class values and gendered behavior are commodities defined by their political value.

Contemporaries’ struggled to determine whether these “New” discourses were progressive or destructive. For example, Lady Wargrave’s response that these new paradigms, including the New Woman, might in fact be old implies that these changes may not be permanent. Not only a controlling mechanism to comfort contemporary anxieties, this line also foreshadows the final message of the play, namely that New Women are frauds. For example, these feminists’ conversation moves from attacking “Man the Betrayer” to chatting about dresses on sale in popular department stores such as Peter Robinson’s and Swan and Edgar’s in London’s West End. Once again Grundy attempts to convey the importance of consumerism in restoring “order between the sexes” because women who spent their time shopping would not have energy to focus on the New Woman’s campaign for equal rights. Paradoxically, however, this consumer market was also a part of modern, urban life that contributed to the collapse of separate spheres, the development of new gendered identities and behavior, and ultimately, a burgeoning political consciousness among middle-class women in the twentieth century.

Grundy further satirizes the emancipated, educated woman by focusing on Mrs. Agnes Sylvester, the leader of the New Women. Throughout the play, she is draped in chiffons, silks, and feathers, making for a fashionable spectacle for audience-goers, and foreshadowing the triumph of traditional femininity over the

fraudulent New Woman.<sup>221</sup> Mrs. Sylvester writes a book with Colonel Cazenove's nephew, Gerald, on the "Ethics of Marriage." Her topic is particularly ironic since she neglects her husband—feeding him cold mutton two days in a row and thus driving him to his gentlemen's club and the delights of the notorious Empire Music Hall<sup>222</sup>—and pursues Gerald (who is married to Margery). Mrs. Sylvester—the hypocritical, emancipated woman whose intelligence and politics lie only in a surface profundity—is contrasted with Margery—the sweet, innocent, unsophisticated woman who only wants a man she can love, honour, and obey. In the confrontation between Mrs. Sylvester and Margery, Grundy exposes Agnes Sylvester's "emancipation" as a fraud by asserting that all women (including New Women) really want is to love and be loved by their husbands. "... You call yourself a New Woman—you're not New at all. You're just as old as Eve [, and just as hungry for the fruit she plucked]. You only want one thing—the one thing every woman wants—the one thing that no woman's life's worth living without! A true man's love! Ah, If we all had that, there'd be no problem of the sexes then."<sup>223</sup>

Summarizing many of the societal anxieties of the 1890s due to cultural and economic changes that have brought middle-class women out into public and fostered a new, independent self-awareness, Grundy confirms Londoners' fears by illustrating

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<sup>221</sup> Joel H. Kaplan and Sheila Stowell, *Theatre and Fashion: Oscar Wilde to the Suffragettes* (Cambridge, 1994), 62. The triumph is that of sex over gender; traditional femininity based in the biological (or perceived that way by society) vs. a social construction of femininity attempted by the New Woman.

<sup>222</sup> The Empire Music Hall, located in Leicester Square, became notorious for its promenades that were riddled with prostitutes amidst an audience of respectable middle-class men and women. The Empire made news when Laura Ormiston Chant launched a crusade to "clean up" the music hall as part of her Social Purity Campaign. For more discussion about Chant's campaign to "clean up" the Empire, see Chapter 3.

<sup>223</sup> Grundy, *The New Woman*, 49-51.

that middle-class women's emancipation leads to the ruin of femininity (and masculinity), social relationships and status i.e. the underpinnings of civil society! Simultaneously, Grundy calms social concerns by claiming that the New Woman is a whimsical disguise for the oldest woman of the world, Eve, and she wants nothing more than a "true man's love," which will solve any problem between the sexes in the modern world.

On opening night at the Comedy Theatre, this final message that the New Woman always had existed thus maintaining the gendered status quo was "met with a favourable reception...for the public never show much sympathy with strange doctrines," according to the *Times* critic.<sup>224</sup> The *Pall Mall Gazette* concluded, "Mr. Grundy seems to have said to himself, 'I'll teach you to be a New Woman! Your speech shall be foolish, your clothes hideous, and your manners abominable.'"<sup>225</sup> The female reviewer in *Woman* agreed that it was a "play with a purpose, and from *Woman's* point of view, a useful purpose, that of holding up to public ridicule the disagreeable type of New Woman—oh! That one might never hear or read of her again!—and Mr. Grundy evidently *feels* his purpose throughout the story...."<sup>226</sup> The *Era* observed that *The New Woman* was "one of the best plays that Mr. Grundy has written. It is brilliantly satirical, and its satire is so 'up-to-date' that everyone will be anxious to see it."<sup>227</sup> All together, critics agreed that the "brilliant and amusing

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<sup>224</sup> *Times* (London), 3 September 1894.

<sup>225</sup> *Pall Mall Gazette* 3 September 1894.

<sup>226</sup> *Woman*, 5 September 1894.

<sup>227</sup> *Era*, 8 September 1894.

dialogue,”<sup>228</sup> as well as the spectacle of the New Women “graciously arrayed...in shrewish manners, dowdy gowns, and unfashionable bonnets,”<sup>229</sup> exhilarated audiences. Sydney Grundy was called before the curtain by the audience, and the success of this play was repeated as it ran for over 100 performances at the Comedy Theatre.<sup>230</sup>

*The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith*

Unlike Wilde’s and Grundy’s characters and his own Paula Tanqueray, Sir Arthur Pinero’s *The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith* (1895) was an attempt to provide a positive portrayal of the New Woman. It ultimately, however, failed in this endeavor because by the end of the play, Mrs. Agnes Ebbsmith lacks the courage of her convictions introduced in the first two acts. Like Wilde and Grundy, Pinero once again is concerned with a socially inappropriate union between Agnes Ebbsmith and Lucas Cleeve. This time, however, Pinero portrays Agnes as a fusion of two images of the New Woman. On the one hand, Pinero initially distinguishes Agnes from the conventional “woman-with-a-past” because she is intent on a “free union” with Lucas. On the other hand, like Grundy, Pinero is concerned with the educated and political New Woman. Agnes is also a socialist reformer, despises the allure of conventional femininity and has no desire to embrace social convention like Wilde’s Mrs. Erlynne or Pinero’s Paula Tanqueray. At the end of the play, however, Pinero

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<sup>228</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 3 September 1894.

<sup>229</sup> *Times* (London), 3 September 1894.

<sup>230</sup> *Westminster Gazette*, 3 September 1894; *Era*, 8 September, 1894.

retreats from this portrayal when his heroine turns to sexual seductiveness to attach Lucas to her, and ultimately because of these actions becomes a penitent Puritan. This finale of the play further highlights the intense anxiety about “wayward” femininity or female sexuality of New Women as a symbolic warning of the instability of modern life in the new century.

Before she ever comes on stage, Agnes Ebbsmith is first introduced to the audience through the conversation between widow Gertrude Thorpe and her brother, Rev. Amos Winterfield. Gertrude declares that although she does not “share all Mrs. Cleeve’s views, or sympathise with them,” they do not stop her from “loving the gentle, sweet woman; admiring her for her patient, absorbing devotion to her husband; wondering at the beautiful stillness with which she seems to glide through life.”<sup>231</sup> At this point in the play, Gertrude is unaware of Agnes’ past. Pinero uses this description to distinguish Agnes’s “views” from her essential “gentle”, “sweet”, and “patient” character. The “devotion” and “beautiful stillness” of this New Woman portrays her as more sympathetic to an audience of the 1890s, but is also contradictory to her actions later in the play.

When Agnes first enters onstage, Pinero describes her as moving “firmly but noiselessly—a placid woman, with a sweet, low voice. Her dress is plain to the verge of coarseness; her face, which has little colour, is at first glance almost wholly unattractive.” Although the “sweet low voice” seems to confirm Gertrude’s account of Agnes, the emphasis on the plainness of dress and her face builds upon stereotypes

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<sup>231</sup> Arthur Pinero, *The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith* in *The New Woman and Other Emancipated Woman Plays*, ed. Jean Chothia (Oxford, 1998), 65; hereafter cited as *The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith*.

of the New Woman illustrated in Grundy's play, as well as in magazines and newspapers of the decade.<sup>232</sup> Shortly thereafter, Agnes is forced to tell Gertrude the truth about her past. The audience learns that Agnes was married for eight years to a harsh man who used her for his sexual pleasure, and when he died, she vowed never to marry again. Following her father's footsteps, she lectured on the socialist circuit, warning women of the unhappiness of marriage, but ultimately went into nursing in order to make ends meet.<sup>233</sup> Lucas was her patient and eventually became her lover. Agnes explains that Lucas left his wife (although they are still legally married), and she has replaced Mrs. Cleeve as Lucas's companion. Gertrude's responds, "You knew that I could not speak to you again after hearing this?" To which Agnes replies, "I thought it almost certain you would not."<sup>234</sup> Much like Mrs. Erlynne and Paula Tanqueray, the 1890s convention was that any woman who broke the sexual code embodied in the ideology of separate spheres must be ostracized by polite society. Furthermore, Agnes Ebbsmith represents a wider fear held by Londoners in the 1890s that working-class notions of femininity and sexuality such as sex outside of marriage were polluting the middle-class social order, and particularly, the institution of marriage. This sexually emancipated New Woman, therefore, was a symbol of the

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<sup>232</sup> According to Jean Chothia, since Agnes Ebbsmith was the heroine of the play, audiences would have expected her to wear the most glamorous clothes (regardless of her New Woman character). As a result, Pinero's portrayal implies a more extreme distortion, "the ugliness more surprising, and, probably disappointing." "The original audience, moreover, would have recognized, and many would have come specifically to see, Mrs. Pat, famously well-dressed in *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray*. The shock here foregrounds the moment of transformation in Act 3, when, fired by passion, the plain woman is revealed as a beauty." See explanatory notes for Pinero's *The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith*, 276.

<sup>233</sup> During her days as a socialist proselytizer, Agnes was known as the "Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith" or "Mad Agnes". See Pinero, *The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith*, 91.

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

degeneration of British society in the new century, thus contributing to the discourses and representations of modernity.

Complementing Agnes' New Woman character is Lucas, who Pinero describes as "a highly-strung, emotional creature."<sup>235</sup> Often a hypochondriac and weak in discipline, Pinero, like Grundy, highlights the gender distortion of effeminate male aesthetes who often associated with mannish emancipated women. This weakness in confidence presents itself again when Lucas complains of the difficulty with losing his promising political career, his position in society, his friends and his family due to his relationship with Agnes. He proclaims it is only her love that enables him to persevere. In the midst of this passionate outburst, however, Agnes recoils from his embrace. In her response, Pinero expands his depiction of the New Woman, which builds upon the opposite stereotype that emancipated women were sexually frigid. "Don't you think that such a union as ours would be much braver, much more truly courageous, if it could but be...devoid of passion, if passion had no share in it...[?]"<sup>236</sup> Since Agnes Ebbsmith is a "woman-with-a-past" who cannot marry Lucas (because he is still married), she can only attempt to achieve respectability by making their "free union" a celibate and chaste union. Like newspapers, magazines and novels of the decade, Pinero also illustrates the elasticity of the New Woman image. She might be sexually promiscuous or sexually frigid. In Agnes Ebbsmith, Pinero attempts to fuse both. This fusion of opposing images of the

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<sup>235</sup> Ibid., 66.

<sup>236</sup> Ibid., 78-9.

New Woman only underscores the modern dialectic about whether the new century would bring progress or destruction.

Lucas's reaction to this life "free from passion" is presented at the beginning of the second act through the significance of clothing in portraying gender identity as seen in Wilde's portrayal of Mrs. Erlynne. Lucas secretly arranges for Agnes to receive an extravagant gown: one that went against her pragmatic, plain, and passionless character as a New Woman.

Lucas: My dear Agnes, I can't understand your reason for trying to make yourself a plain-looking woman when nature intended you for a pretty one.

Agnes: Pretty!

Lucas: (*looking hard at her*) You *are* pretty.

Agnes: Oh, as a girl I may have been—(*disdainfully*)—pretty. What good did it do anybody? (*Fingering the dress with aversion*) And when would you have me hang this on my bones?<sup>237</sup>

Lucas: Oh, when we are dining... Why not look your best in a public place?

Agnes: (*slowly*) Look my best! You know, I don't think of this sort of garment in connection with our companionship, Lucas.

Lucas: It is not an extraordinary garment for a lady.

Agnes: Rustle of silk, glare of arms and throat—they belong, in my mind to such a very different order of things from that we have set up....

Lucas: ...I simply fail to understand why you should allow our mode of life to condemn you to perpetual...shabbiness!<sup>238</sup>

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<sup>237</sup> "...hang this on my bones" refers to the well-known actress, Mrs. Patrick Campbell (Mrs. Pat) who was notoriously thin, perhaps even anorexic.

<sup>238</sup> Pinero, *The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith*, 82-3.

This exchange showcases the importance of performing femininity through the display of fashion as part of the discourse of modernity.<sup>239</sup> The mannish and “plain” clothing that Agnes wears to identify herself as a New Woman is yet another affront to the ideology of separate spheres for men and women. It is not only her modern, emancipated ideas about having a “free union” with men that are threatening the middle-class social order, but also her physical appearance which rejects the beautiful, angelic, alluring yet demure qualities that are associated with Victorian femininity and female sexuality.

The shift in Agnes’s character from a New Woman to an Angel-in-the House (embodied in this gown), in order to hold onto Lucas, begins with a conversation with Lucas’ uncle, the Duke of St. Olpherts, who seeks to undermine this relationship and tempt Lucas back to his wife and polite society. In this exchange, Agnes learns of the real Lucas. Instead of genuinely being captivated by her principles as a New Woman, intent on a free union, St. Olpherts tells Agnes that Lucas has always been desperate for adulation from society. He possesses ambition without patience or self-confidence, is attracted to the “purr of pretty women”; in short “in intellect still nothing but a callow boy; in body, nervous, bloodless, hysterical; in morals—an epicure.”<sup>240</sup> Here Pinero, like Grundy, highlights Lucas’ effeminacy and thus indicates that Lucas is breaking the gendered code of behaviour as much as Agnes is. It is not only the mannish New Woman, but also the effeminate

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<sup>239</sup> Judith Butler argues that gender is “a corporeal style, an ‘act,’” that is both “intentional and performative.” She claims that gender is constituted through acts that are performed repeatedly. As a result of this continuous performance, a gendered identity is constructed and believed to be normal. See Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 177-9.

<sup>240</sup> Pinero, *The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith*, 93.

male aesthete that foreshadows the breakdown of separate spheres ideology and the decadence and degeneration of the new century.

Shocked by this admission, Agnes leaves the room at the same time that Lucas enters. St. Olpherts continues to thwart this relationship by now highlighting Agnes's faults to Lucas, and persuading Lucas to go back to his wife. The Duke criticizes Agnes' lack of femininity and further satirizes the New Woman, suggesting that she "doesn't appear to spend much time in dressing her hair" and if Agnes was just "gowned...respectably", this would begin to pave the way for her to be accepted by society.<sup>241</sup> Lucas replies that he must "smother these aesthetic tastes" to which the Duke retorts that unfortunately the public will "retain their sense of the incongruous" betraying society's gross fascination with proper and improper gendered dress, behavior, and relationships.<sup>242</sup>

This entire scene sets the stage for the radical transformation of Agnes when she returns in the extravagant gown that Lucas had presented to her at the beginning of the act, but for which she initially had distaste. According to the stage directions, "she enters, handsomely gowned, her throat and arms bare, the fashion of her hair roughly altered....She appears to be a beautiful woman."<sup>243</sup> Triumphantly noticing the shock on the Duke's face, Agnes tries to tempt the Duke to dine with her and Lucas, but the Duke declines the invitation.

Agnes: (*mockingly*) Really? You are sure you are not shy of being seen with a

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<sup>241</sup> Ibid., 95-6.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid., 96.

<sup>243</sup> Ibid., 97.

notorious woman?...No, I forget—that would be unlike you. *Mad*<sup>244</sup>  
people scare you, perhaps?

St. Olpherts: (*softly*) Ha, ha! Don't be too rough.

Agnes: (*between her teeth*) Come, Duke, confess—isn't there more sanity in me than you suspected?

St. Olpherts: (*in a low voice, eyeing her*) Much more. I think you are very clever.<sup>245</sup>

Much like Wilde's final message, here Pinero insinuates that emancipated women are cunning, manipulative, driven by a secret desire for male protection, and thus dangerous to the gendered status quo. Agnes is now a New Woman in the disguise of an Angel-in-the-House, and thus gender lines are not so clear cut at the end of the century as the once solid foundation of separate spheres begins to crack and crumble. Lucas is oblivious to Agnes's true feelings, but Agnes consciously and willingly sacrifices her emancipation, "resigns" herself to her new image and new role in order to maintain Lucas' interest in her. Her startling transformation is the turning point in the play. Thereafter, she adopts the characteristics of the conventional "woman-with-a-past", self-sacrificing and loving too much as Wilde's Mrs. Erlynne and Pinero's Paula Tanqueray. Agnes's betrayal of her emancipated principles highlights Londoners' anxiety about the decade's struggle between old and new with the old or conventional femininity being victorious for as Lucas states, "To be a woman trying

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<sup>244</sup> In Agnes' initial conversation with the Duke of St. Olpherts, he mentions that he met her once before on Carter Street in the Shoreditch area of East London. Here in this working-class area, "amongst a handful of frowsy folks who cracked nuts and blasphemed" there stood the socialist proselytizer, the "Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith! Mad Agnes!" See Pinero, *The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith*, 91 and explanatory notes, 280.

<sup>245</sup> *Ibid.*, 98.

not to be a woman—*that* is to be mad.”<sup>246</sup> Upon Agnes’s conscious metamorphosis to a “womanly woman”, both Lucas and Agnes therefore cease to be “mad” in their ideas of a “free union” and are now “ordinary man and woman.” Lucas is intent on persuading his wife for a divorce so that he and Agnes can marry, thus ending the struggle with modernity by continuing Victorian ideas about marriage, relations between the sexes, and gendered behavior.

The play does not end with this message, however, but goes one step further. In the third act, Agnes is confronted by the Duke about when she decided to transform into an Angel-in-the-House in order to be accepted by society (despite her “fallen” past). The Duke curiously asks who is the real Agnes—“the shabby, shapeless rebel who entertained me this afternoon” or the beautifully dressed and demure lady before him? Agnes replies, “This—this....My sex has found me out....[Lucas] is my child, my husband, my lover, my bread, my daylight—all—everything. Mine!...This is my hour.”<sup>247</sup> The once emancipated woman who had other ambitions now reduces herself to a life that is socially and financially dependent on a man and on her sexual allure. The emphasis on physical beauty as the basis for middle-class femininity, as well as social and financial security underscores the Victorian notion that women’s lives were brief in terms of gendered expectations and made more difficult for women with a disreputable past.

Like most “woman-with-a-past” characters, Agnes cannot entirely be accepted into society because she cannot entirely escape from her past. In the final act,

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<sup>246</sup> Ibid., 106.

<sup>247</sup> Ibid., 113.

Lucas's wife, Sybil, visits to request that Agnes continue to be Lucas's mistress in private. Sybil explains that her marriage to Lucas is one of convenience and appearances, but not one of love or passion. Agnes abandons all her principles and consents to the request. Agnes now seems to "fall" even further than before with the contention that her relationship with Lucas would continue, but clandestinely. After suddenly realizing what she's asking and its effect on her own character and status, Sybil retreats from her proposition. Equally in horror, Agnes realizes that she has succumbed to conventional, middle-class, gendered values that she spoke out against. Instead of returning to her emancipated position, however, Pinero assuages society's apprehension about New Women and ends the play with Agnes turning to the Bible to atone for her sins. The implication is that it is not only the sins of having relations with men who were not her husbands, but also her ideas about the independence of women, particularly their sexual and financial emancipation for which she has to atone. In other words, Agnes "falls" again because it is the New Woman that is completely destroyed by the end of the play.

Agnes: ...*I—I was to lead women! I was to show them...how laws—laws made and laws that are natural—may be set aside or slighted; how men and women may live independent and noble lives without rule, or guidance, or sacrament. I was to be the example—the figure set up for others to observe and imitate....You and I!...How base, and gross, and wicked...! (To him in a low voice)...Lucas, when I have learnt to pray again, I will remember you, every day of my life.*<sup>248</sup>

Pinero's central theme about "rational marriage" or the breakdown of an experimental or unorthodox relationship between man and woman "will probably

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<sup>248</sup> Ibid., 133-4.

excite more criticism because it touches upon a subject more generally relevant to the lives and thoughts of ordinary people” wrote the *Manchester Guardian*. Indeed, adding to the discourse of modernity, the *Guardian* itself faulted Pinero for having an “imperfect knowledge” of the New Women he portrayed in *Agnes Ebbsmith*. “He has not thoroughly learned their language or grasped the essence of their ideas.” Regardless of this fact, the *Manchester Guardian* concluded that the play was the “work of a master-playwright and an able man.”<sup>249</sup>

Mrs. Patrick Campbell, the actress who played *Agnes Ebbsmith* (and *Paula Tanqueray*), wrote that the last act of the play broke her heart. “I knew that such an *Agnes* in life could not have drifted into the Bible-reading inertia of the woman she became in the last act.”<sup>250</sup> The *Pall Mall Gazette* agreed that the first three acts were “magnificent... Three acts which promised to place this play a head and shoulders above any other play in London—and then a smash.” The “disease” of the play that came to a climax in the fourth act “is the desire to seem to evolve some profound moral principle... after the Ibsen fashion...”<sup>251</sup> The *Era* concluded that the reason why *The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith* had not measured up was due to the overwhelming success of *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray*, placing great expectations upon any future play by Pinero.<sup>252</sup>

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<sup>249</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 14 March 1895.

<sup>250</sup> Campbell, *My Life and Some Letters*, 98.

<sup>251</sup> *Pall Mall Gazette*, 14 March 1894.

<sup>252</sup> *Era*, 16 March 1894. The play ran for sixty performances before Mrs. Patrick Campbell left the cast. After her departure, the play fizzled with audiences. Although causing quite a stir, much of the popularity of the play was due to Mrs. Campbell’s portrayal of *Agnes Ebbsmith* and her own notoriety as an actress. Overall, the play only ran for three months (from March 13-June 14, 1895). See the *New York Times*, 2 November 1902.

The *Times*, on the other hand, was much more favorable highlighting how unusual it was for a playwright to “repeat himself with the degree of success” of a second play with a similar message. Although not seen as daring as *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray*, the reviewer noted that it was a “deeply absorbing play”, which “travels along the same plane of morality, harasses the spectator with the same painful emotions, and finally enforces the same moral, which is that the conventions of society with regard to the marriage tie are not lightly to be set at defiance.”<sup>253</sup>

Although *Woman* felt that *The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith* was a “finely daring play”, it otherwise concurred with the *Times*. The reviewer summarized the play as “a history of a crusade against marriage, and the sorry failure of that crusade.” Delighted in its ultimate message, the reviewer remarked that the play’s achievement could be “measured in some degree by the fact that he held us intent for over three hours, without the aid of a single comic personage” as evidenced by the “excited audience” at the Garrick Theatre.<sup>254</sup>

Although it appears that Wilde, Grundy, and Pinero may have been supportive of expanding women’s opportunities in the public sphere by casting subversive New Women characters as the heroines in their plays, their ultimate messages conformed to the conventional ideology about middle-class women’s roles.<sup>255</sup> The successes of

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<sup>253</sup> *Times* (London), 14 March 1895.

<sup>254</sup> *Woman*, 20 March 1895.

<sup>255</sup> Although Oscar Wilde reflected social anxieties about liberated women and their contribution to the erosion of traditional femininity and female sexuality in his plays, Wilde himself stressed self-discovery and self-expression. Oscar Wilde created (and was editor of) *The Woman’s World*, a fashion magazine for women. Under his direction, however, he molded it into an exchange of ideas about femininity, dress, society, literature, women in education and politics. This magazine initially addressed the elite, but soon expanded its readership to middle-class women. See Stephanie Green’s

these plays suggest that the playwrights' messages were accepted and shared by their audiences, as their own attendance and approval also contributed to the debate about modernity. Perhaps an attempt to stabilize an instable decade of binary visions consisting of new and old, public and private, pleasure and debauchery and decadence and degeneration, the messages of Wilde's, Grundy's and Pinero's plays are that these New Women are not so "advanced." Whether mannish, educated, financially independent, manipulative, selfish, sexual, or nonsensical, they still want and need men for love, security and respectability, and therefore are "womanly women" underneath the present exclamations of emancipation and equality or the sexual transgressions of past lives. Contributing to the discourse, representation, and performance of modernity, these plays argued that the New Woman was not an indicator of the destruction of Victorian middle-class values and institutions. Within the space of the theatre, this social anxiety was performed, but also alleviated. New Drama demonstrated that modern life would continue the conventional values regarding relations between the sexes and gendered behavior, and thus destroy this temporary anomaly of the New Woman.

Although such favorable reviews show a fascination with the New Woman that reveal an underlying concern about modern life, at the same time, however, by attending the theatre, society was contributing to a growing urban and consumer

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"Oscar Wilde's *The Woman's World*," *Victorian Periodicals Review*, vol. 30, no. 2 (Summer 1997): 102-120. In an interview in *Woman*, Sydney Grundy claimed that when writing *The New Woman*, "I had not a thought of scoffing at the modern cultured woman who is almost unconsciously treading on the heels of men, or even leaving them behind in the matter of culture, or in leading useful public lives. That is a type of woman for whom I have sincere respect.... It is the cheap sham that I had in mind in writing *The New Woman*. See *Woman*, 12 September 1894.

culture, which provided middle-class women with opportunities to actively participate within it. For example, with the rise of New Drama came the female matinée audience. The effect that a female audience had upon drama was reflected upon by Herbert Beerbohm Tree, a well-known manager of the Haymarket Theatre and His Majesty's Theatre in London's West End. In an interview in *Woman*, he claimed that he seriously considered middle-class women's tastes when choosing plays to be produced at his theatres. It was their taste and their values that shaped the content of plays, the advertising and consumption of plays, and raised the status of the theatre both on and off the stage.

Men seldom come to the theatre without ladies, and when there are to be ladies in the party, it is, I find, almost invariably left to them to decide for which house the seats are to be taken....I think that without the influence of women the theatre might have seriously degenerated during the past ten years....Another important point to be observed by managers is that women are an invaluable advertising medium for a play which appeals to them....The tone, not only of the drama but of theatrical life, has been undoubtedly raised by women—that is to say, those of the class from which some of the best actresses of to-day have come.<sup>256</sup>

Dennis Kennedy argued that most of these women in the matinée audience were from the middle class. They were not workers, but “wives and daughters of hard-working men of commerce sent out in daylight in flagrantly impractical dress to proclaim the freedom from drudgery for women bought by their masters' successful toil. Unable to afford the leisure of the aristocracy themselves, the male merchant class showed off women as surrogate signifiers of wealth.”<sup>257</sup> Such an audience clearly

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<sup>256</sup> *Woman*, 12 June 1895. Sydney Grundy also claimed to address women in his plays because “it is women of the family who in most cases decide for what play tickets are to be taken.” See *Woman*, 12 September 1894.

<sup>257</sup> Kennedy, “The New Drama and the new audience,” 137.

exemplified a growing female urban culture as a visual display of modernity, and like Grundy's feminists-turned-shoppers, this female audience also emphasized their femininity through the spectacle of fashion.<sup>258</sup>

Kennedy argued that the *matinée* hat worn by women was the ultimate signifier of such middle-class leisure and wealth. These hats were large and wide, piled with decorations such as fruit, flowers, or birds, and thus required an assistant and many long hatpins to secure them on one's head.<sup>259</sup> Removing these hats, therefore, was not an action to be considered lightly by women, even if they obscured the view of patrons sitting behind them. When the Court Theatre required women to remove their hats in order to accommodate all patrons, one columnist for the women's magazine, *The Lady*, responded, highlighting the important relationship between material display and femininity. "We were aghast at having to tear our hats off our heads as best we could...and I must say that most people looked disheveled and untidy in consequence, for hats do disarrange the hair and flatten the front waves, etc., in a way that no man can understand!"<sup>260</sup>

The *matinée* hat thus became a prominent issue of debate in newspapers and magazines, and therefore, contributed to the discourse and performance of modernity. Playbills of many popular theatres in London began to request in writing that ladies remove their hats so that all patrons may enjoy the performance without any visual

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<sup>258</sup> For more on the relationship between visual display and modernity, see Nava, "Women, the City and the Department Store"; Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure*.

<sup>259</sup> Kennedy, "The New Drama and the new audience," 137-9.

<sup>260</sup> *The Lady*, 8 December 1904.

impediment.<sup>261</sup> Mr. Tom B. Davis, manager of the Queen's Theatre, argued in *Woman*, that his decision to require the removal of matinée hats was due to the “enormous publicity given to the question recently by the Press” and the “alarming proportions” of the hats themselves, which disrupted many views of paying patrons. “No one admires a well and fashionably dressed woman more than myself, but, in my managerial capacity, I must consider the comfort of the majority of my patrons....I have had mirrors placed in the auditorium and passages of the Queen's Theatre for the convenience of ladies.”<sup>262</sup> Miss Evelyn Millard, the manageress of the Garrick Theatre in London argued that a milliner needed “to devise a practical and at the same time absolutely becoming theatre ‘cap,’ a form of head-gear barely larger than the head it is designed to cover, and yet so dainty and charming that every woman would feel happy in wearing it, not only at matinees, but at any other function which she might be attending afterwards.” The female editors of *Woman* magazine retorted that Miss Millard had a “larger belief in the absence of vanity in her fellow women.” As for the editors, they believed the only solution was to require women to remove their hats, but provide free cloakrooms where this millinery could be held throughout the performance.<sup>263</sup> For middle-class women, therefore, consuming the theatre also meant consuming fashion sold in the department store, all of which contributed to

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<sup>261</sup> The playbill for Cecil Raleigh's *The Best of Friends*, performed at the Drury Lane Theatre in 1902 noted: “The Management would esteem it a favour if all Ladies would *remove their hats*, as it is obvious that the *enjoyment* of many is *entirely spoiled* by the view being obstructed by Ladies' Hats.” A playbill for Cicely Hamilton's *Diana of Dobson's*, performed at the Kingsway Theatre in 1908 also noted: “Ladies are respectfully requested to add to the comfort of the audience by kindly removing their hats.” See London Playbills, John Johnson Collection, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, Oxford.

<sup>262</sup> *Woman*, 11 November 1908.

<sup>263</sup> *Ibid.*, 14 October 1908.

performing a new public femininity on the theatrical stage, within the theatre, and on the stage of the city of London.

This performance of a new public femininity connected with modern, urban life can also be seen in the music halls and variety theatres during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. By examining the role of women's participation in the music halls in London, one can recognize the role that music halls played in modernizing perceptions of middle-class women. Particularly for urban dwellers, the music hall provided a way to share the experiences of a new modern life while also aiding in the transition between a fading private sphere and an expanding public sphere. For example, Peter Bailey argues that "by the end of the century, the city on stage had become normalised as the main site of everyday living. The focus shifted from private and clandestine settings—the drawing room and low dive—to more public locations."<sup>264</sup>

As a result, the music hall had a tremendous effect upon women, particularly middle-class women in refashioning their self-image, as well as society's. Female performers on stage communicated a new role for middle-class women within this urban, modern world through their liberating dress, confident performance style, and financial independence. Similar to the *matinée* hat worn by women in the dramatic theatres, the music halls and variety theatres used conventional ideas of femininity—physical beauty illustrated through material display—and reshaped them to fit a modern world. As more middle-class women became audience members, there were

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<sup>264</sup> Peter Bailey, "Theatres of Entertainment/Spaces of Modernity: Rethinking the British Popular Stage, 1890-1914," *Nineteenth Century Theatre* 26, no. 1 (1998): 12.

more musical comedies about middle-class women actively participating in a new female urban culture. Women's magazines and theatrical reviews emphasized the relationship between consumerism and the stage where audience members were encouraged to adopt the fashion and style of the female performer. Whereas the dramatic theatres clung to the old world of tradition denouncing the femininity and sexuality of emancipated women, the music halls and variety theatres became a stage of transition moving society toward modern life and values. Musical comedies used the discourses and representations of modernity to adapt Victorian ideas of femininity and female sexuality to a modern setting. Middle-class women were no longer portrayed as Angels-in-the-House, and yet they were not depicted as the sexually promiscuous "woman-with-a-past" or the manly, political "shrieking sisterhood" that threatened the foundation of middle-class gendered behavior. The music halls and variety theatres, therefore, presented a new kind of New Woman: the Angel-in-the-City.<sup>265</sup> This middle-class woman was young, single, public, fashionable, sexually alluring but also chaste. Although financially independent, she still aspired to be a wife and mother. The Angel-in-the-City represented in musical comedies, therefore, offered a compromise between the Victorian Angel-in-the-House and the modern New Woman.

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<sup>265</sup> This is an original term that I have coined for this dissertation. See the Introduction and Chapter 3 for more details.

**Chapter Three**  
**Renegotiating the New Woman: The London Music Halls and Variety Theatres  
and the Genesis of the ‘Angel-in-the-City’**

The anxiety about middle-class femininity and female sexuality caused by the gradual disintegration of separate spheres developed the London music halls and variety theatres into significant modern institutions. Between 1890 and 1914, music halls and variety theatres played a prominent role in aiding Londoners to accept a new public femininity for middle-class women by introducing a more popular image of the New Woman. This new, public femininity or modern femininity was created and made legitimate in the music halls because the music hall itself was a product of modernity. Beginning as a working-class institution in the early nineteenth century and becoming a middle-class variety theatre by the late nineteenth century, it became a secure public place to express Londoners’ excitement and fear about modern life, particularly the effects of urbanization and the consequential demise of separate spheres. The anxiety about the modern world propelled the middle class paradoxically to participate in it. By making the music hall respectable through the architectural and performance changes that led to the variety theatre, the middle class controlled an element of modern life. They developed an institution and performance that conformed to conventional middle-class values while adapting to changes taking place in the city.

Contributing to the discourses, representations and performances of modernity, musical comedies set in department stores, restaurants, and on public

transport, for example, depicted new public, commercial, and urban spaces available to all.<sup>266</sup> These new commercial spaces permitted a physical independence for women of all classes and allowed the intermixing of classes and sexes. In addition, the music halls and variety theatres themselves were public spaces that allowed new constructions of gender and class identities by also providing sites where the sexes and classes mixed freely both on stage and in the audience. These public spaces both on and off the stage became significant sites for the reformation of the “modern self.” The expansion of consumer goods, for example, allowed for a wider range of personal expression of taste and self-identity.<sup>267</sup> Performers on stage thus became symbols for a “new cultural economy of style and fashionability.”<sup>268</sup>

By the late nineteenth century, the music hall shifted performance from “class to mass entertainment” and musical comedies became a “mass cultural form” invented to appeal to upper classes all the way down to the working class.<sup>269</sup> As a result, the music hall and variety theatre had a tremendous effect upon middle-class women in refashioning their self image. Martha Vicinus argues that women in the halls “personified not only the outward glories of music-hall life in their chic clothing, but also the potential for freedom and joy amidst a narrow life.”<sup>270</sup> Peter

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<sup>266</sup> Some examples of musical comedies set in these public, urban spaces were: *The Shop Girl* (1894), *The Girl From Kays* (1902), *The Girl Behind the Counter* (1906), and *The Girl In the Taxi* (1912). See Len Platt, *Musical Comedy on the West End Stage 1890-1939* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004).

<sup>267</sup> Richards, *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England*.

<sup>268</sup> Bailey, “Theatres of Entertainment,” 12-13; see also Nava, “Women, the City, and the Department Store.”

<sup>269</sup> See Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure*, 178-214; Martha Vicinus, *The Industrial Muse* (London: Croom Helm, 1974), 238.

<sup>270</sup> Vicinus, *The Industrial Muse*, 262.

Bailey states that by the Edwardian age, women became the ultimate heroines in the genre of musical comedy.<sup>271</sup>

Musical comedies, therefore, used the discourses and representations of modernity to adapt traditional ideas of femininity and female sexuality to a modern setting. As separate spheres ideology eroded, middle-class women were no longer portrayed as Angels-in-the-House on stage, and yet the dramatic theatres showed society was not yet ready for the educated, manly, or promiscuous New Woman who rejected marriage. As a result, I argue that the music halls and variety theatres created a new kind of New Woman: the Angel-in-the-City.<sup>272</sup> This figure was a middle way between the Angel-in-the-House and the New Woman. She was physically and financially independent, possessing a “worldly knowledge” that came from participating in public life as a worker and consumer. At the same time, she was young, single and sexually alluring yet chaste, fashionable, feminine, and only enjoying this independence until she became a wife and mother. In reality, the Angel-in-the-City embodied Victorian notions of femininity wrapped in a modern package. As a result, the Angel-in-the-City was a symbol of the modern tug of war between old and new, public and private, man and woman, and progress and destruction that Londoners grappled with between 1890 and 1914. Unlike the New Woman, the Angel-in-the-City was not perceived as threatening to society because

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<sup>271</sup> Bailey, “Theatres of Entertainment,” 13.

<sup>272</sup> This is an original term that I have coined for the dissertation. Musical comedies like *The Gaiety Girl*, *The Shop Girl*, *The Girl Behind the Counter*, *The Sunshine Girl*, etc., played upon notions of the virginal sexuality and innocence of pre-adolescent girls. The erotic nature and sex appeal, therefore, of the Angel-in-the-City was not perceived as dirty, but rather healthy, chaste, and safe. They flirt, but they do not act upon their sexual desire until marriage.

her consumption of material goods made her profitable and emphasized traditional notions of femininity that identified women as natural shoppers.<sup>273</sup> By consuming not only goods, but also entertainment, the Angel-in-the-City altered the old image of the “public woman” or prostitute, as well as the masculine, emancipated image of the New Woman, into the alluring, commercial, independent Angel-in-the-City during the first decade of the twentieth century.

By trying to create a compromise between old and new, the middle class actually created an institution (the variety theatre) where they could participate and share in the discourses, representations and performances of modernity. Although the Angel-in-the-City merely wrapped conventional femininity in a modern guise, this should not discredit the independence it offered to middle-class women. The music halls and variety theatres created a public femininity that was accepted by society. Instead of focusing on modernity as an age of destruction personified in the educated, masculine or promiscuous New Woman as the dramatic theatres did, the music halls and variety theatres predicted modernity as an age of progress, profit and delight embodied in the Angel-in-the-City. This modern femininity illustrates a discursive shift in society’s perceptions of femininity and female sexuality, but also a shift in the individual middle-class woman’s own subjectivity. The role played by music halls and variety theatres in transitioning society to accept a public femininity thus helped to develop not only an independent self-awareness for middle-class women, but

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<sup>273</sup> See G.J. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago, 1992); Brewer and Porter, *Consumption and the World of Goods*.

eventually also a political consciousness, paving the way for the emergence of the Modern Woman.<sup>274</sup>

### From Music Hall to Variety Theatre: Modernity and the Middle Class

With the demise of separate spheres ideology, the middle class struggled to create a new foundation of middle-class ideals within a modern way of life. As more middle-class women participated in public, urban life more often, there was a fear that working-class notions of femininity and sexuality were polluting middle-class values. As a result, one of the main concerns regarding the music halls was their role in encouraging debauchery by promoting provocative performances on stage and tolerating prostitutes in the audience. According to Judith Walkowitz, the prostitute was the quintessential female figure of the modern metropolis portrayed throughout literature and theatre. She argues that particularly in the Victorian period, the prostitute provided a stark contrast to the domestic and virtuous middle-class woman, as well as to the male bourgeois identity. “She was the embodiment of the corporeal smells and animal passions that the rational bourgeois male had repudiated and that the virtuous woman, the spiritualized ‘angel in the house,’ had suppressed.” By the late nineteenth century, prostitutes began emulating middle-class dress and behavior while mingling with respectable women in the fashionable shopping districts in the

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<sup>274</sup> This is an original term that I have coined for this dissertation. See the Introduction and Chapter 4 for a more thorough discussion of the Modern Woman. Clearly, music halls and variety theatres were not the only elements in creating a modern femininity. Educational and legal reforms and increasing employment opportunities also were critical to middle-class women’s participation in the public sphere. The cultural institutions of the music hall and variety theatre, however, provided a secure and familiar space for Londoners to deal with these changes. As a result, they were a compelling force in shaping women’s roles in the modern world and making these changes acceptable to society.

West End, making it difficult to distinguish between virtuous and licentious middle-class women.<sup>275</sup>

Although actresses had been compared to prostitutes long before the nineteenth century, the comparison became more complex and intensified in the 1890s due to the gradual influx of more middle-class women in the public sphere. For Victorians, female performers were seen as prostitutes because they challenged the middle-class convention that a woman's role was in the home, socially and financially dependent upon her husband. Tracy C. Davis argues that actresses like prostitutes therefore were considered to be "lawless."

As working mothers and wives (but not necessarily both), they threatened traditional family structures, the balance of economic power, and gender-based restrictions of association, movement, dress, education, and influence. . . . She was criticized for doing exactly what men did: turning outside the home for social intercourse, intellectual stimulation, and occupational fulfillment.<sup>276</sup>

In other words, the conspicuousness of the female performer both at work and at home defied the middle-class separation of public and private spheres. Moreover, a growing consumer society, in which women actively participated, complicated perceptions of female stage performers. The fashions that actresses wore on stage influenced fashions for middle-class women in society.<sup>277</sup> But if the *artiste* who earned her living through the male gaze was viewed as a prostitute, then what did that imply about middle-class women who now wore the same fashions and were within the male gaze as they traveled from tram to department store to variety theatre

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<sup>275</sup> Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight*, 21.

<sup>276</sup> Davis, *Actresses as Working Women*, 99, 86.

<sup>277</sup> See Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure*.

throughout the city? This concern was complicated by the fact that the majority of female performers on the music hall stage came from the working class or the lower-middle class.<sup>278</sup> This caused greater friction because now a lower class was dictating the fashions and behaviors of the middle and upper classes. The contradictory perceptions of the *artiste* that emerged only served to confuse perceptions of middle-class women's femininity and sexuality by the late nineteenth century. Since the majority of the more popular music halls and variety theatres were located in the fashionable shopping districts in London's West End to which middle-class women frequented, they thus became a major source of concern for the maintenance of Victorian morality and respectability within modern, urban life.

In response to this social anxiety, the middle class reformed the way acts were performed on stage, the types of programs performed, and the architecture of the halls. For example, the early working-class audiences influenced as much of the music-hall program as the performers and owners. The early halls permitted a great degree of communication between the audience and performers. Audiences sat at tables drinking and talking. As a result, artists had to compete for attention and convince audiences of the worth of their performances. Chorus singing and

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<sup>278</sup> This was beginning to change, however. Performers such as Mrs. Patrick Campbell, Kitty Marion, Eva Moore, Elizabeth Robins and Ellen Terry came from the middle class. As a result of a campaign to raise the status of the stage in the second half of the nineteenth century, more women entered the profession. In 1841, there were three actors to one actress; by 1891, actresses were in the majority. Many of the new actresses in the 1880s and 1890s came from the educated middle classes. See Gardner and Rutherford, *The New Woman and Her Sisters*, 7-8.

boisterous applause from the audience were also prominent features of the early halls.<sup>279</sup>

Part of the failure initially to attract larger audiences from the middle and upper classes stemmed from the criticism of this “riotous behavior” of the early working-class music halls. Not until music-hall proprietors began a campaign of discipline in the 1870s due to protests by social purity reformers that sought to keep classes “pure” and moral, did the halls begin to attract a wider audience. For example, in 1885, the renovated London Pavilion in Piccadilly Circus set the standard when it opened as a new form of the music hall: the variety theatre. The variety theatre differed from the music hall in several ways. Due in part to please LCC regulations for licenses, first, the architecture resembled that of a traditional theatre with a stage and rows of seats instead of tables, and refreshment rooms were separated from the entertainment. As a result, prostitutes were less able to mingle with patrons much to the satisfaction of middle-class reformers, and the audience also was forced to remain seated throughout the performance. Performers, therefore, no longer competed with the audience for attention. Some performers’ contracts even prohibited their direct address of the audience, and in turn, audiences were policed to discourage chorus singing.<sup>280</sup> In addition, there now was a master of ceremonies who introduced the performers, which eliminated the personal interaction between performers and patrons.

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<sup>279</sup> Peter Bailey, “Custom, Capital and Culture in the Victorian Music Hall,” in *Popular Culture and Custom in Nineteenth-Century England*, ed. Robert D. Storch (London: Croom Helm, 1982), 180-86.

<sup>280</sup> Peter Bailey, “Conspiracies of Meaning: Music-Hall and the Knowingness of Popular Culture,” *Past and Present*, no. 144 (August 1994): 156; Dagmar Kift, *The Victorian Music Hall: Culture, Class and Conflict* (Cambridge, 1996), 22-3.

Such measures increased the efficiency and “timetabling” of acts. For example, the audience now was asked to leave the auditorium immediately after the show so that the theatre could offer two shows in the same night. These measures also aimed to reduce the “volatile spontaneity of the music-hall experience,” which achieved greater success as halls grew larger and performances became more theatricalized, culminating in the practice of darkening the auditorium by the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>281</sup>

Secondly, the ownership of variety theatres was remarkably different from the music halls. Traditionally, the halls had been owned by individuals, but now both the halls and theatres were being controlled by major syndicates who had built chains of these institutions not only in London, but also throughout the rest of Britain. By 1900, *Era Annual* had totaled twenty-three syndicates across Britain.<sup>282</sup> These syndicates were formed to meet the expense of instituting such changes to the halls. They cut costs by having artists exchange irregular highly paid engagements at individual independent halls for the less well-paid, but regular work in a related set of halls and theatres.<sup>283</sup>

Finally, “variety” entertainment no longer consisted of only the comic song and character sketches performed in the music hall, but also included musical comedies, satirical revues, acrobatics, and ballets. Part of the reason for the changes

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<sup>281</sup> Bailey, “Conspiracies of Meaning,” 157.

<sup>282</sup> *Era Annual* 1914, 73-6. One large syndicate was Moss Empires, which included thirty-three music halls and variety theatres across Britain. Kitty Marion protested this company’s treatment of female *artistes* by throwing a brick through its London office. See Chapter 1.

<sup>283</sup> Dave Russell, “Varieties of Life: the Making of the Edwardian Music Hall,” in *The Edwardian Theatre: Essays on Performance and the Stage*, eds. Michael R. Booth and Joel H. Kaplan (Cambridge, 1996), 63.

was due to a changing market. In a time of organized temperance and social purity campaigns, the music hall increasingly was susceptible to criticism with its association with drink and the trade. Newly built halls were being denied alcohol licenses. According to Dave Russell, drink receipts constituted approximately fifteen to twenty percent of the total revenue of the halls in the 1890s. With the loss of this vital source of profit, “it was not surprising that the assumption of respectability marked the way ahead.” Entertainment, therefore, became the main source of profit in the variety theatres which drew its consumers from those who had opposed the music hall and its relationship with alcohol. As a result, Russell argues that “women’s attendance was sought with particular vigour, not simply because they represented a less than fully exploited audience sector, but because the cachet that their attendance conferred might prove a stimulus to previously recalcitrant males.”<sup>284</sup> In order to make the halls and theatres acceptable and respectable for middle-class women, therefore, social purity reformers sought to abolish prostitution in the halls and tame provocative and suggestive performances on stage throughout the 1880s and 1890s. By trying to “clean up” the halls to maintain conventional notions of femininity and morality, in actuality these reformers merely paved the way for an evolving modern femininity that affirmed a public persona for middle-class women. One renowned example of this campaign centered on the Empire Theatre in London’s West End.

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<sup>284</sup> Ibid., 62.

### The Case of the Empire Theatre

In the 1880s, the Social Purity Movement aimed at tempering alcoholism and prostitution. One woman's organization that developed from this movement was the National Vigilance Association (NVA), formed in 1885. Its focus was primarily on prostitution, but its goals went beyond just the act itself. This organization aimed to raise the standards of social morality within society by repressing sexuality and promoting chastity. After the repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts in 1886, their efforts intensified. They attacked "obscenities" in society, arts and entertainment. Music halls became a primary focus with their scantily clad dancers and songs full of sexual innuendo and double entendre.<sup>285</sup> The NVA's crusade was aided in 1889, when the power to license music halls transferred from local magistrates to the newly-formed LCC Subcommittee on Theatres and Music Halls.<sup>286</sup> Overall, this campaign exposed a modern fear about working-class notions of sexuality polluting values held by the middle class, resulting from more middle-class women's participation in public life.

The Empire Theatre in London's Leicester Square was one of the most notorious cases in this struggle between moral reformers and mass entertainment. The Empire was a new form of variety theatre, dominated by upper- and middle-class audiences, and located in the heart of the West End, a main center of prostitution. Led by Laura Ormiston Chant, social reformers objected to the renewal of the

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<sup>285</sup> Kift, *The Victorian Music Hall*, 158.

<sup>286</sup> Tracy C. Davis, "Indecency and Vigilance in the Music Halls," in *British Theatre in the 1890s: Essays on Drama and the Stage*, ed. Richard Foulkes (Cambridge, 1992), 113-14.

Empire's license because of its role in permitting prostitution in the promenade and provocative behavior and dress of women on stage. As Davis argues, however, it was not so much the prostitution *per se* that inspired action against the Empire, rather "it was the contiguity of behaviour in the promenades to the performance on stage that preoccupied the witnesses."<sup>287</sup> Laura Ormiston Chant's testimony from the LCC hearings reveals a concern about the performance of femininity and sexuality on stage exemplified in the costumes and gestures of female stage performers. Regarding ballerinas' performances in two numbers, "La Folique" and "The Girl I Left Behind Me", she describes the following:

There seemed not the least attempt to disguise that which common sense and decency is required to be hidden....There was [an] item in which the dancers appeared as a body of naked women simply disguised with little gauzy veils, after which there came in a girl dressed in skirts, who pirouetted until her slight skirts flew around her head after which came another, who gathering up her skirts, raised her leg and kicked a male performer on the top of his head....The audience took these peculiarly objectionable parts very quietly, but were more enthusiastic over many parts of the entertainment which were above reproach.<sup>288</sup>

Davis argues that the root of the problem was that many patrons found the dances "indecent and thus provocative of sexual desire. With desire so inflamed regularly each evening at ten o'clock, the women of the promenades had a guaranteed clientele."<sup>289</sup>

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<sup>287</sup> Ibid., 123. Valerie Steele and Judith Walkowitz also claim that in the late nineteenth century, prostitutes began to emulate middle-class dress and behavior. This blurring of class lines made it difficult for Londoners to distinguish between proper and respectable middle-class women who now engaged in public, urban life alongside traditional "public" or "working women" who engaged in prostitution. See Steele, *Fashion and Eroticism*; Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight*.

<sup>288</sup> *Music Hall and Theatre Review*, 12 October 1894.

<sup>289</sup> Davis, "Indecency and Vigilance in the Music Halls," 124.

Chant also attacked Marie Lloyd's performance of "I asked Johnny Jones, So I Know Now!" for its sexual connotations.<sup>290</sup> Lloyd came on stage dressed as a schoolgirl and throughout the song, pesters her parents for knowledge of a sexual nature, but in the end learns more from her friend, Johnny Jones. For example, the following verse sparked debate.

And one of them—oh! what a shame!—  
 She called Pa "Bertie"—it's not his name,—  
 Then went like this (*kissing sound*) and winked her eye—  
 And so I said to Pa, "Oh, my!"—

Chorus:  
 What's that for Eh? Oh tell me Ma!  
 If you won't tell me, I'll ask Pa!  
 But Ma said, "Oh it's nothing, shut your row!"  
 Well—I've asked Johnny Jones, see  
 So I know now.<sup>291</sup>

As a result of Chant's protests, Lloyd sang the song absolutely straight with no gestures for the Licensing Committee, but the committee found nothing offensive in its nature. She then sang it with "every possible lewd gesture, wink and innuendo." Based on this evidence, the committee decided that lewdness existed in the audience's minds, not in the lyrics themselves, and as a result, there legally was nothing to be done. The ruling of the Licensing Committee illustrated an unprecedented objective stance regarding women's performances on stage, and thus allowed for more flexible middle-class notions of femininity to emerge.<sup>292</sup>

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<sup>290</sup> Born in Hoxton, London in 1870, Marie Lloyd was perhaps the most famous music hall artist (either male or female) on the British stage. This working-class serio-comic was famous for her big, toothy smile and her suggestive wink. See Daniel Farson, *Marie Lloyd and Music Hall* (London: Tom Stacey, 1972); Naomi Jacob, *"Our Marie": A Biography* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1936).

<sup>291</sup> Farson, *Marie Lloyd and Music Hall*, 67.

<sup>292</sup> Kift, *The Victorian Music Hall*, 163.

In spite of her vehement attacks upon the Empire, Chant was not so much an enemy of music-hall entertainment, but rather was against the exploitation of women and the male double standards that were encouraged in the music halls and variety theatres. It appears, however, as though the motives of social purity reformers like Chant who sought to clean up the halls were contradictory. On the one hand, there was a need for self-preservation—to prevent working-class values from polluting the middle class now that they were no longer kept apart due to the erosion of separate spheres ideology. On the other hand, there was an altruistic effort on the part of these reformers that showed a genuine concern about the sexual double standard and exploitation of women in the halls.<sup>293</sup> I argue that these two sides of the same coin represent a society in transition within the dialectic of modernity. Chant's motives, therefore, also represent a significant shift in middle-class ideas because it accepted the popularity of entertainment in the halls and theatres and recognized the increasing presence of not just women on stage, but women in the audience.

Chant's campaign was successful in the short term because some of the husbands of members of the NVA also sat on the Licensing Committee. As a result of Chant's campaign, the committee, led by Frederick Nicholas Charrington, decided to withhold the Empire's license until the manager could remove the sale of alcohol from the auditorium and find some other use for the theatre's promenade. The LCC ruled that the Empire's license would be renewed only "on the condition that the promenades be abolished and the space now occupied by them disposed of to the

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<sup>293</sup> See Mrs. Ormiston Chant, *Why We Attacked the Empire* (London: Horace Marshall & Son, 1895); see also the Kitty Marion Papers, 55-6.

satisfaction of the Council, and that no intoxicating drinks be sold in the auditorium.”<sup>294</sup> The manager, George Edwardes, appealed the decision, but his appeal was rejected and the Empire was forced to close in 1894. The LCC, however, underestimated the range of public opposition to this closure. The business and trades people of Leicester Square, such as the cabbies, variety unions, and charity organizations for music-hall artists, were the most outraged due to their invested interest in the Empire. Many supporters argued that closing down the Empire would not abolish or even reduce prostitution since four hundred ballerinas would be thrown out onto the streets. Simultaneously, however, opposition also focused on the ridiculousness of associating female performers with prostitutes. *The Music Hall and Theatre Review* argued the following:

Starting with the somewhat extraordinary idea that nearly every woman who at present leads an immoral life dates her ruin from the time she first set foot inside a music hall, [Mr. Charrington]...would do away altogether with these sinks of iniquity. Failing this, and he has by this time probably found out that public opinion is as yet hardly ripe for so stringent a step, he and those who think with him are evidently desirous of exercising such strict supervision and constant espionage over music halls and theatres as will render the managers’ lives a burden to them....The British public will have its amusements, and those who willfully set themselves to suppress them ought to find that they are left out in the cold at the next election.<sup>295</sup>

The Empire, however, was only closed for one week. It reopened on November 3, 1894 with a wall dividing the bar from the auditorium as instructed by the LCC. By March 1895, the promenade had been greatly reduced by additional

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<sup>294</sup> *Music Hall and Theatre Review*, 12 October 1894.

<sup>295</sup> *Ibid.*, 8 June 1889.

seating and more barriers dividing the promenade from the dress circle level.<sup>296</sup> The prostitution debate surrounding the Empire resulted in a paradox of femininity. Since neither the civic authorities nor the managers of the halls would provide measures to specifically ban prostitutes from the premises, they blurred the lines of respectable and disreputable femininity and thus enabled a shift to a modern femininity.

Simultaneously, by yielding to the Social Purity Movement's call to abolish the space where prostitutes mingled with patrons, the halls and theatres separated female performers on stage from the prostitutes in the aisles, thereby making them more respectable. Consequently, this separation of female stage performer and prostitute also made it more permissible for middle-class women to visit the halls and theatres as legitimate consumers of entertainment and members of the audience. Ironically, prostitutes still attended the music halls and variety theatres, but now were disguised through the emulation of middle-class dress and behavior.<sup>297</sup> I argue that as middle-class women became Angels-in-the-City—the new respectable image of the “public woman”—prostitutes became “private women” in the sense that they were forced to disguise themselves as respectable in the public sphere, yet were “fallen” in the private sphere. The Empire case, therefore, is a prime example of a shift in middle-class notions of gendered morality as female sexuality invaded both the public and

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<sup>296</sup> *Era*, 2 March 1895; Joseph Donohue, *Fantasies of Empire: The Empire Theatre of Varieties and the Licensing Controversy of 1894* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2005), 184-88.

<sup>297</sup> See Steele, *Fashion and Eroticism*; Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight*.

private spheres, thereby strengthening the legitimacy of the halls and the development of a modern femininity.<sup>298</sup>

### Musical Comedy and the Angel-in-the-City

In 1891, F. Anstey described the London music-hall scene in *Harper's Monthly Magazine*.

London music halls might be roughly grouped into four classes—first, the aristocratic variety theatre of the West End, chiefly found in the immediate neighbourhood of Leicester Square, then the smaller and less aristocratic West End halls; next, the large bourgeois music halls of the less fashionable parts and in the suburbs; last the minor music halls of the poor and squalid districts.<sup>299</sup>

The third category of bourgeois halls that Anstey mentioned included the Metropolitan on Edgware Road, the Canterbury in Lambeth, and the Middlesex in Holborn.<sup>300</sup> Although middle-class halls may not have existed before this time, those in the West End had always attracted a wide audience including not only aristocrats,

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<sup>298</sup> Although social purity reformers wanted to eliminate prostitution in all areas of London, and wanted to “clean up” the performances in most music halls, the Empire case was the most notorious. Part of the extraordinary publicity centered on the Empire was due to the enormous size of its promenade, which held 500 people regularly (out of a theatre that seated 1300). Furthermore, the Empire’s location in Leicester Square was a crucial site for prostitution, alcohol, gambling houses, variety theatres, and dancing halls. This case notwithstanding, during the LCC proceedings, the Palace Theatre of Varieties, which simulated nudity in their *tableaux vivants*, was also under investigation. When the Empire temporarily closed, the Alhambra Theatre became concerned about the vast increase of prostitutes at its establishment—a clear migration from the nearby Empire. Furthermore, the LCC also used their power to carry out inspections for fire and safety regulations as a way to control or shut down venues deemed as morally objectionable. The Gaiety and the Olympic were “inspected” on these grounds. Out of 1,299 inspections of halls and theatres between 1890 and 1893, 167 alterations were required by the LCC. The ultimate failure of Chant’s crusade to abolish prostitution and provocative performances on stage, however, indicates a shift in Londoner’s notions about gender and class in the modern world, as they supported the popularity of the halls and theatres, and women’s presence in public whether on stage or in the audience. See Barry J. Faulk, *Music Hall and Modernity: The Late-Victorian Discovery of Popular Culture* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2004), 78-9; Donohue, *Fantasies of Empire*, 180-1.

<sup>299</sup> F. Anstey, “London Music Halls,” *Harper's Monthly Magazine*, 1891, 190.

<sup>300</sup> Kift, *The Victorian Music Hall*, 62.

but also bohemians and students. As the middle class, particularly women increasingly ventured out into the West End to shop, the halls and theatres, including newly-built venues, began to cater to the upper and middle classes in the 1890s and early 1900s.<sup>301</sup> In addition to the Empire and the Alhambra in Leicester Square, eight other variety theatres had been built in the West End by 1892. These included the Oxford on Oxford Street, the Middlesex on Drury Lane, the London Pavilion in Piccadilly Circus, the Trocadero on great Windmill Street, Gatti's on Villiers Street, the Royal Aquarium on Tothill Street, the Royal Holborn Empire in High Holborn, and the Royal Standard on Victoria Street.<sup>302</sup>

Even though artists and audiences now were distanced and policed within the variety theatre, the connection between the two did not wholly disappear. Peter Bailey asserts that “the prime device lay in the ‘things of suggestion’, and as controls tightened and actual time on stage contracted it was the compressed code of the *double entendre* and the innuendo that signaled complicity with an audience, investing language, tone and gesture with oblique but knowing conspiracies of meaning.”<sup>303</sup> For example, Lloyd’s performance of “I’ve Never Lost My Last Train Yet” depicted a girl who carved out a place for herself in the modern world by her own wits.

Now although I am as heartless as a lambkin  
That has never heard of mint sauce in its “puff”,  
I am getting somewhat sick of rural beauty,  
Or in other words I’ve had about enough.

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<sup>301</sup> See Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure*.

<sup>302</sup> Davis, *Actresses as Working Women*, 140-1.

<sup>303</sup> Bailey, “Conspiracies of Meaning,” 158.

I should love to have a flat in Piccadilly  
 And to go and do exactly as I choose,  
 For had I my habitation  
 In a West End situation,  
 Then of course, I would not have a train to lose.

Chorus:  
 Yes, I've learnt to know the bliss  
 Of a stolen little kiss,  
 When you heave a sigh and softly murmur, "Pet!"  
 As you gaze into his face,  
 Wrapt in amorous embrace,  
 But I've never lost my last train yet, Oh No!  
 I've never lost my last train yet.<sup>304</sup>

This song and its corresponding suggestive performance thus illustrated the paradox of the innocent country girl who actually proves to be a clever, experienced, urban woman. Through a "knowing look", suggestive gesture, and double entendre, female *artistes* communicated certain meanings turning the performance itself into a discourse. Like the song, for middle-class women, modern life introduced this "worldly knowledge" prohibited to them before when they were Angels-in-the-House. This "worldly knowledge" became a discourse where the audience shared common experiences of events in their own lives, but also shared myths and notions about other classes. The song presented a middle-class world of train trips into the independent, exciting, seductive ambience of the city.

In addition, women on stage were quite aware of their sexuality and the "conspiracies of meaning" that were conveyed through their performance. Marie Lloyd appeared to take pleasure in the "suggestiveness of the situations that she sang

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<sup>304</sup> George Rollit, "I've Never Lost My Last Train Yet," in *Songs of the British Music Hall*, ed. Peter Davison (New York: Oak Publications, 1971), 106-7.

about...and... reporters...recorded a knowing response to this kind of material from women in the audience.”<sup>305</sup> As *Angels-in-the-City*, middle-class women in the audience could share and relate to the independence and worldliness of female *artistes* like Marie Lloyd. Her enormous popularity as perhaps the most famous music hall artist in Britain suggests that men and women delighted in her talent for conveying such “conspiracies of meaning.”<sup>306</sup> The consciousness shared between performer and audience made them active players in a sophisticated dialogue about modern life. These performances celebrated the joy and freedom of urban life for women.<sup>307</sup> In the discursive tug of war where the dramatic theatres warned of the destruction brought by modernity, the music halls and variety theatres, on the other hand, projected the unlimited possibilities of modern life.

Overall, the growing middle-class presence in the halls from the 1890s onwards, argues Bailey, was evidence of a class “learning how to enjoy being in conspiracy against itself.”<sup>308</sup>

The bourgeois man and wife who now took their reserved seats in the syndicated halls of the (“naughty”) nineties were much less self-consciously

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<sup>305</sup> Bailey, “Conspiracies of Meaning,” 164.

<sup>306</sup> In the public outpouring of grief following Marie Lloyd’s death, T.S. Eliot claimed, “no other comedian succeeded so well in giving expression to the life of the audience, in raising it to a kind of art. It was, I think, this capacity for expressing the soul of the people that made Marie Lloyd unique and that made her audience...not so much hilarious as happy.” As quoted by Farson in *Marie Lloyd and Music Hall*, 55.

<sup>307</sup> I argue that the music halls became a liminal and comfortable space for reevaluating definitions of good and bad, old and new and masculine and feminine in a changing world. These performances produced meanings and defined subjectivity for both the performers and the audience. This “knowingness” itself was a performance because both performer and audience member were conscious of the meanings being shared. For more on performance as consciousness, see Carlson, “What is Performance,” 68-73; for more on liminality, see McKenzie, “The Liminal-Norm,” 26-31 and Turner, “Liminality and Communitas,” 79-87; see also the Introduction.

<sup>308</sup> One example of the middle class “being in conspiracy against itself” was the LCC Licensing Committee’s claim that depravity existed in the audience’s minds and not in the lyrics of music-hall songs during the Empire Theatre controversy.

transgressive in their pleasures, but were learning to savour the collusive but contained mischief of the performers' address, in whose exchanges they too could register the competencies of knowingness. By the turn of the century, music-halls' knowingness was fast becoming a second language for *all* classes, as music-hall itself became an agreeable national *alter ego*....<sup>309</sup>

As the lives of men and women began to alter, the music halls became a secure and liminal place to explore these changes. For middle-class women, the music halls and variety theatres became instrumental in fashioning their own self-identity and femininity in the modern world.

Enabling the shift to middle-class audiences and the Angel-in-the-City was the discourse regarding the femininity of women on the stage and their relationship to female spectators in the audience. During a period where Victorian femininity and female sexuality were being challenged by the emergence of the New Woman, as well as female *artistes'* provocative performances on stage, an emphasis upon the respectability and conventional femininity of the female performer at home became paramount. By portraying these working women as having traditional middle-class virtues, it eased the concern about working-class values seeping into middle-class life, and legitimized the halls and theatres as respectable places for middle-class women to frequent. Contributing to the campaign to make the stage respectable, the early issues of the *Music Hall and Theatre Review* in the 1880s and 1890s often stressed the female performer's domesticity and modesty off stage in their interviews and profiles to counteract what was perceived as immodest behavior on the stage. For example, in a column entitled "Miss Bessie Bellwood at Home," written on July

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<sup>309</sup> Bailey, "Conspiracies of Meaning," 166-7.

13, 1889, the journalist characterizes one of England's "Queens of Comic Song" at home.

Miss Bellwood's personality on the stage is so well known to my readers, that it is needless for me to go into details....But the artiste at home and the artiste on the stage are very different....Wednesday, July 3<sup>rd</sup>, found me in the neighbourhood of Bloomsbury....There is such an air of intense respectability about the houses clustering around the British Museum....Here, in one of the largest houses in the vicinity, dwells Miss Bellwood....[Her] dining room... has yet a certain lightness and elegance which must always appeal successfully to the artistic mind. The art collection here is distinctly good...while her library of standard English poets includes a number of handsomely bound volumes.<sup>310</sup>

This emphasis upon Victorian middle-class notions of domesticity, modesty and respectability embodied in separate spheres ideology were especially crucial for those women who were male impersonators on stage. For example, Miss Bessie Bonehill, a popular "swell"<sup>311</sup> comic was described in the following manner:

...[T]he facility with which she compels admiration from all, is as noticeable in her private life as in her appearance before audiences. The crown of her domestic life is studded with the priceless jewels of modesty, graciousness and charity....In deeds of charity and benevolence, in the profession she

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<sup>310</sup> *Music Hall and Theatre Review*, 13 July 1889. The emphasis on the femininity and respectability of female performers also helped to counteract working-class behavior and values both on stage and off. Bessie Bellwood, for example, was notorious for her slanging matches with audiences and her aggressive behavior towards men who insulted her. See Vicinus, *The Industrial Muse*, 262.

<sup>311</sup> In the 1860s, the *lion comique* developed as a parody of the "swell" or "dandy"—the "gentleman's gentleman" of elegant dress—and was a popular character for several decades. The *lion comique*, however, was a far cry from elegance, often portrayed with a fur coat, large handkerchief, rakish hat, walking cane, cigar, monocle, large diamond rings, etc. The parody lay in the exaggeration of this role model and the upper class to which it belonged. The *lion comique* also offered a different role for women on stage—to impersonate men—which not only challenged their own femininity, but also the conventional masculinity of the Victorian period. The shape of the female body was often more pronounced through men's clothing and ironically made female *lion comiques* more erotic. In contrast, male cross-dressers often portrayed older, matronly women or the ugly, emancipated woman and thus were void of sexual desire. Although these characters and the music hall itself provided a liminal space to test and contest gender images and stereotypes, J. S. Bratton argues that they are not transgressive in any sexual way, but should be read as "carnavalesque." See J.S. Bratton, "Beating the Bounds: Gender Play and Role Reversal in the Edwardian Music Hall," in *The Edwardian Theatre: Essays on Performance and the Stage*, eds. Michael R. Booth and Joel H. Kaplan (Cambridge, 1996): 86-110; J.S. Bratton, "Irrational Dress," in *The New Woman and Her Sisters*: 77-94.

adorns, she is always the first of her sex to be appealed to, and her generous support and patronage can always be relied on.<sup>312</sup>

These attempts to legitimize female music-hall performers within the Victorian ideology of separate spheres or the “cult of domesticity” for women aided in attracting larger and more middle-class audiences during the late nineteenth century. The increase in crossover actresses from the dramatic to variety stages also aided in raising the respectability of music halls and variety theatres. One female journalist of *Woman* remarked on this phenomenon.

...Miss Amy Roselle...has made arrangements with Mr. George Edwards to appear at the Empire Music Hall and give dramatic sketches, the interest of which will be heightened by sumptuous costumes and a wealth of scenic accessories...If refined and educated women of Miss Roselle’s type obtain a firm footing in the music-halls the benefit will be incalculable...with the result that there will no longer be any necessity for interference with the morals of music-halls, and the whole standard of public amusement will be elevated.<sup>313</sup>

Actress Irene Vanbrugh remarked that by 1911, “a definite movement in theatrical history took place.” Previously the music hall and variety theatre had been seen as separate from the established and legitimate dramatic theatre, but “now for the first time both worlds seemed to appreciate the possibilities of the other, and led to the bridging of the gulf by the best of both worlds entering each other’s territories.”<sup>314</sup> Such accounts contributed to the performance of modernity as the middle class reconciled a growing public and urban culture with traditional values and ways of living. By making the music halls and variety theatres respectable, middle-class

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<sup>312</sup> *Music Hall and Theatre Review*, 2 January 1892.

<sup>313</sup> *Woman*, 11 January 1890. Amy Roselle was a well known actress in London’s dramatic theatres during the 1880s-1890s.

<sup>314</sup> Irene Vanbrugh, *To Tell My Own Story* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1949), 104.

institutions, I argue that they became significant modern institutions. These public spaces were important stages for shifting society's perceptions about femininity from the Angel-in-the-House to the Angel-in-the-City, thus also shifting the identity of the middle-class woman.

As perceptions of female *artistes* on stage were delineated from those of prostitutes, the female stage performer began to become a fashion icon after which to be modeled. Erika Rappaport argues that women's magazines, theatrical reviews, and newspapers intensified the relationship between consumption and the stage and "encouraged readers to adopt the look and style of the actress. By focusing attention on costumes and sets...the press asked audiences to see theatergoing as a prelude to shopping and to link shopping with radical re-fashioning of the self."<sup>315</sup> For example, Stagg and Mantle playfully advertised the "'Empire' Wonderful Satin Chameuse Coat" in a playbill of the Empire Theatre.<sup>316</sup> In another program of the revue, "Everybody's Doing It" performed at the Empire in 1912, H.C. Russell advertised three ladies' matinée hats, cleverly pitching, "Buy a Russell Hat, 'Everybody's Doing It.'"<sup>317</sup> Likewise, the Coliseum's playbills advertised Swan and Edgar's ladies cloaks and gowns "suitable for theatre and restaurant wear."<sup>318</sup>

Beginning in the 1890s, *The Music Hall and Theatre Review* also began running a column regarding music-hall fashions that highlighted costumes worn on

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<sup>315</sup> Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure*, 185-6.

<sup>316</sup> *Empire Theatre Programme*, 10 August 1911, London Playbills, John Johnson Collection, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, Oxford.

<sup>317</sup> *Empire Theatre Programme*, 17 October 1912, London Playbills, John Johnson Collection, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, Oxford.

<sup>318</sup> *Coliseum Programme*, n.d. [circa 1890], Box 2, London Play Places, John Johnson Collection, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, Oxford.

stage by female performers. Each week an award was given to the female artist who displayed the utmost elegance and femininity in her dress. In addition, dressmakers offered their newest fashions to be worn by actresses on stage, and department stores circulated portraits of actresses alongside society “beauties” in these new fashions to promote business.<sup>319</sup> Rappaport asserts that this association of actresses, who traditionally were perceived as prostitutes, with society “beauties” at the turn of the century actually portrayed a new kind of femininity that identified the actress with fashion and consumption, and thus raised her to an acceptable position in middle-class society.<sup>320</sup> In other words, shared notions of femininity cut across class lines through the presence of women in the music halls, both on stage and in the audience. As the middle-class Angel-in-the-City consumed theatres, as well as department stores, she emulated many of the fashions on stage that were simultaneously being displayed in store windows.<sup>321</sup> It was these middle-class women that made such dress worn on stage acceptable and respectable, legitimizing this modern femininity in the transition between the Victorian world of separate spheres and the public, urban and heterosocial world of modernity.

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<sup>319</sup> For example, in one issue of *The Lady of Fashion*, there is a picture of musical comedy *artiste*, Lilian Hubbard in a “lovely gown by madam Jack. This dress, which the young actress wore in the second act [*The Other Man’s Business*, Grand Theatre, Fulham], is of turquoise blue ninon, trimmed, with heliotrope velvet and buttons to match. The boa, sunshade, and gloves of heliotrope produced an extremely artistic effect.” Juxtaposed on the opposite page of Lilian Hubbard is the Society beauty, Miss Jean Whitelaw Reid, “the only daughter of the American Ambassador, who was one of a group of pretty American girls presented at the first Court.” See *The Lady of Fashion: An Up-to-Date Journal for Up-to-Date Women*, 7 June 1906.

<sup>320</sup> Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure*, 185-6.

<sup>321</sup> Joel Kaplan and Sheila Stowell argue that beginning in the 1890s, the fashion press, creative merchandising by dressmakers and West End theatres created a “voyeuristic triangle” between stage, stalls and gallery where leading ladies on stage served as living mannequins of the latest fashions. See Kaplan and Stowell, *Theatre and Fashion*, 2.

The emergence of musical comedy became a prime medium in which to illustrate the relationship between consumerism and mass entertainment, as well as to showcase the middle-class Angel-in-the-City. Musical comedy was the predecessor to the stage and film musical of today. This genre derived from the Victorian burlesque, which was a parody of a well known legend, play or historic event. However, whereas burlesque had been perceived as “grotesque” and “eccentric,” musical comedy was “lavish” and “spectacular.”<sup>322</sup> For contemporaries like music-hall *artiste* Ada Reeve, “musical comedy was an entirely new *genre*—light, gay and topical, played in modern dress.”<sup>323</sup> Musical comedy and the Gaiety Theatre in the West End became synonymous and contributed to the enormous popularity of the variety theatre beginning in the 1890s and extending to 1914. George Edwardes, manager of the Gaiety, was the man most responsible for the exaltation of the woman as girl in his shows.<sup>324</sup> The musical comedy girl, in particular, revealed a double

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<sup>322</sup> Peter Bailey, *Popular Culture and Performance in the Victorian City* (Cambridge, 1998), 176.

<sup>323</sup> Ada Reeve, *Take it for a Fact: A Record of My Seventy-Five Years on the Stage* (London: William Heinemann, Ltd., 1954), 46. Ada Reeve played the lead in Edwardes’ productions of *The Shop Girl* (1894), *Floradora* (1899), and *Kitty Grey* (1900). Coincidentally, Kitty Marion was the understudy for the lead in Edwardes’ production of *Kitty Grey* in London, and appears to have performed the title role at least in one performance. See the Kitty Marion Papers, 116.

<sup>324</sup> George Edwardes was the manager of the Empire Theatre, Daly’s Theatre, and the Gaiety Theatre in London. He was also Richard D’Oyly Carte’s directing manager of the Savoy Theatre where he helped produce several Gilbert and Sullivan comic operas until 1885. Beginning with *A Gaiety Girl* in 1893, he created the genre of musical comedy as a form of musical play that was more respectable than burlesque and integrated music and spoken dialogue in a lighter, less satiric style than comic operas in order to attract more middle-class audiences. The “woman as girl” character can be seen in the following musical comedies: *A Gaiety Girl* (1893), *The Shop Girl* (1894), *The Geisha* (1896), *The Circus Girl* (1896), *My Girl* (1896), *A Runaway Girl* (1898), *A Country Girl* (1902), *The Girl from Kays* (1902), *The Earl and the Girl* (1903), *The Gypsy Girl* (1905), *The Girl Behind the Counter* (1906), *Our Miss Gibbs* (1909), *The Quaker Girl* (1910), *The Girl in the Taxi* (1912), *The Sunshine Girl* (1912), *The Girl from Utah* (1913), *The Pearl Girl* (1913), and *After the Girl* (1914). Edwardes produced thirteen out of seventeen of these “woman as girl” comedies in London, along with other musicals throughout the period. There is no comprehensive directory of musical comedies in the *fin-de-siècle* and Edwardian age, but two extensive resources are Platt’s *Musical Comedy on the West End*

performance because she was not only a worker in her own profession, but also portrayed workers on stage.<sup>325</sup>

Many musical comedies were set in the new service sector of the economy that often employed women: teashops, department stores, and telegraph offices. Like these places, the musical comedy was introduced to appeal to a middle-class audience, but particularly centered on middle-class women.<sup>326</sup> However, this genre was not concerned with the oppressive reality of retail work or with its long hours and meager wages.<sup>327</sup> Rather places such as the department store offered a visual display of everyday life that ironically was already theatricalized through its emphasis on glamour and display. Stores such as Harrod's and Selfridges in London often borrowed theatrical elements like show windows decorated with curtains, painted backgrounds, lighting, etc. to sell their goods. Similarly, West End theatres borrowed from department stores by setting musical comedies within the shops. The similar material environments of the stage and shop converged the theatre and department store, but emphasized different delights. Whereas department stores like Selfridges advertised the shop as a world of women, George Edwardes' musical comedies

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*Stage*, appendix 1; and the "British Musical Theatre" website,

[<http://math.boisestate.edu/GaS/british/musicals.html>].

<sup>325</sup> See Carlson, "What is Performance?" For Carlson, performance equals consciousness turning this double performance into a double consciousness. Consequently, this experience shared by female performers would directly influence their political consciousness guiding many to contribute to the women's suffrage movement in the early twentieth century.

<sup>326</sup> Platt, *Musical Comedy on the West End Stage*, 8; Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure*, 193.

<sup>327</sup> See Clementina Black, *Sweated Industry and the Minimum Wage* (London: Duckworth, 1907).

advertised the modern shopping experience as a spectacular sensual, erotic and heterosocial world.<sup>328</sup> Musical comedy therefore was itself a modern commodity.

All musical comedies set in the department store tell the same story: a working-class or lower-middle-class shop girl uses commodities to create a glamorous and alluring image in order to capture male attention. In spite of her financial independence, this Angel-in-the-City attracts men in order to “shop” for a husband. At the end of every musical, the most skilled consumer is the shop girl because she “buys” a respectable husband and theoretically lives happily ever after. These musical comedies attempted to counter the reality of shop girls’ lives. Instead of the oppressive drudgery of drapers’ firms and shop assistants rejecting marriage for independence, musical comedies provided an opposite and glamorous picture. As evidence of Londoners’ anxiety about modern life and its effects on women’s femininity and sexuality, musical comedies depicted an independent yet conventional feminine woman in the Angel-in-the-City. The heroines in these musicals worked, but did so to attract a husband and ultimately return to their role as Angels-in-the-House. Musical comedies thus commodified Victorian notions of femininity in a modern package. This compromise offered by this genre suggests a continuing fear about working-class values shaping middle-class women’s identity as they now interacted with both sexes of all classes in the public sphere. As such, musical comedies were performances of modernity.

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<sup>328</sup> Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure*, 179.

For example, in *The Shop Girl* (1894), these themes of consumption, performance and romance converge. The action takes place within two acts and two commercial settings, a department store and charity bazaar. Such public spaces provide the intermixing of classes and sexes, which was the foundation of musical comedy depicting life in the modern city.<sup>329</sup> H.J.W. Dam, the author of the comedy, claimed to have based his department store on Whiteley's in Bayswater, London because "the taste of the public is becoming more local and real....As many thousands of people do business at the large shops and stores in London...[I realized] the stores formed an excellent sphere to make the basis of a musical piece...."<sup>330</sup> This romantic narrative portrayed the department store (and perhaps the theatre as well) as a pleasurable site of class-mixed, heterosocial, and heterosexual interaction. Rappaport claims that in these stores, "shop girls encounter aristocrats, male assistants flirt with wealthy female shoppers, and customers ogle each other." Simultaneously, the theatre also replicated this narrative. "Male audiences found themselves invited into the supposedly female space of the stores. Rather than being emasculated by the experience, they are asked to consume a spectacle of feminine bodies, to be attracted to a commercialized female ideal."<sup>331</sup> With middle-class women emulating fashions worn on stage and displaying themselves by sitting alongside other men in the theatre auditorium, the relationship between consumerism and marriage was inescapable.

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<sup>329</sup> *The Girl Behind the Counter* (1906) and *Our Miss Gibbs* (1909) duplicated these settings and storyline. The successes of these musicals suggest the popularity and acceptance of this new, romantic, feminine image of the middle-class woman in public.

<sup>330</sup> *Sketch*, 28 November 1894.

<sup>331</sup> Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure*, 197.

In Dam's production, the shop girl heroine Bessie Brent, played by Ada Reeve, sings the foundational number around which the comedy revolves.

When I came to the shop some years ago  
 I was terribly shy and simple;  
 With my skirt too high and my hat too low  
 And an unbecoming dimple.  
 But soon I learnt with a customer's aid  
 How men make up to a sweet little maid;  
 And another lesson I've learnt since then  
 How a dear little maid "makes up" for men.  
 A touch of rouge that is just a touch  
 And a black in the eye, but not too much;  
 And a look that makes the Johnnies stop  
 I learnt that all in the shop, shop, shop!

...Ladies of rank,  
 Who could buy up the bank,  
 They bully the girl in the shop.  
 But, oh! what a wonderful change you will spy  
 When gentlemen come to my counter to buy!  
 They don't seem to care if the prices are high,  
 They help me to put the things tidy.  
 They say I am working too hard for my pay,  
 And ask me if I can't get out early some day,  
 And have a nice dinner, and go to the play—  
 Say Saturday—No? Well, then, Friday?  
 And they all make eyes at the Shop Girl,  
 Sweet little, meek little Shop Girl,  
 That's what they do,  
 Married men, too—  
 Really, they never will stop!  
 They all make eyes at the Shop Girl,  
 Neat little, sweet little Shop Girl,  
 Oh, how they stare,  
 And they frequently dare  
 To wink at the girl in the shop.<sup>332</sup>

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<sup>332</sup> H.J.W. Dam, music by Ivan Caryll with additional numbers by Adrian Ross and Lionel Monckton, *The Shop Girl*, first performed November 24, 1894, Gaiety Theatre, London Playbills, John Johnson Collection, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, Oxford; hereafter cited as *The Shop Girl*.

While many of the women in *The Shop Girl* sing about wanting to marry for money, in the end, the shop girl marries for love. The oppressive reality of work that shop girls experienced is ignored because the shop girl in these comedies never remains a worker, but after marriage, takes the place of a middle-class or upper-class shopper. Working until the right man came along was not just the message of these musical comedies on stage, but could also be seen off stage in real life. In an article entitled, “Young People Employed in Shops,” one businesswoman wrote, “...if a girl has any real wish to take up any particular work or calling, by all means let her do so...until she marries the first eligible man who asks her.”<sup>333</sup>

This sentiment seemed to carry over to female performers as well. Because of the connection between the department stores and the theatres, many actresses like shop girls were idolized for their femininity, fashionability, and sexual allure.<sup>334</sup> Similarly, the oppressive realities of women’s lives on stage are ignored.<sup>335</sup> For example, in *The Shop Girl*, a dancer sings of the courtship game that often crossed classes in the modern world.

Ah, dear boys you won’t be very glad  
 When I’m married to a noble lad,  
 I shall turn most singularly prim,  
 And I reckon I’ll look after him;  
 Oh, I’ll be a very proper sort,  
 Quite propriety itself, in short,  
 And all the press shall vote me a success,  
 The grandest dame at Court,

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<sup>333</sup> *Woman*, 22 July 1903.

<sup>334</sup> In one issue of the *Woman at Home*, music-hall songstress, Adelina Patti is pictured (much like a Society beauty) on “A Page of Confessions” that lists all her favorites: favorite occupation, pastime, season of the year, flower, poet, novelist, quality most admired in a man, in a woman, etc. *Woman at Home*, October 1893.

<sup>335</sup> See the Kitty Marion Papers.

Yes, I think that I shall find the method answer,  
 A duchess will develop from a dancer,  
 All the House of Lords will own that there never has been known  
 Such a dear, demure and dainty little duck,  
 And a dancing girl burlesque or operatic  
 May be mother of a race aristocratic,  
 Who will trace their noble rights to an ancestress in tights,  
 For you never, never, never know your luck, luck, luck  
 For you never, never, never know your luck.<sup>336</sup>

And yet, this song did not just glamorize wishful thinking. Several Gaiety Girls married into the aristocracy, increasing their celebrity status to be “the most talked-of girls in London in the 1890s and the early part of [the twentieth] century.”<sup>337</sup> Alan Hyman argues that the chorus of Gaiety Girls became a “matrimonial agency for girls with ambitions to marry into the peerage.” Beginning with Connie Gilchrist who married the Earl of Orkney, “a score” of Edwardes’ “budding stars left him to marry peers or men of title, while other Gaiety Girls settled for a banker or a stockbroker.”<sup>338</sup>

The Gaiety Girls formed the first modern chorus line that differed from the burlesque and music hall styles of dance in that it was more mechanical and repetitious.<sup>339</sup> According to Ada Reeve, although they were just chorus girls, their popularity often made them more important than the principals of the shows. “Their photographs could be seen everywhere. It seemed impossible that such a bevy of exquisite creatures could exist in the theatre...[T]o be a Gaiety Girl meant first-class

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<sup>336</sup> Dam, *The Shop Girl*.

<sup>337</sup> Reeve, *Take it for a Fact*, 80; see also the Kitty Marion Papers, 95.

<sup>338</sup> Alan Hyman, *The Gaiety Years* (London: Cassell & Co., 1975), 169.

<sup>339</sup> Bailey, *Popular Culture and Performance in the Victorian City*, 178.

training, and it was an achievement to be one.”<sup>340</sup> In fact, George Edwards deliberately employed teachers not only to teach the girls to sing, dance, and act, but also to improve their speech, dress and carriage. Unlike the past, many of these chorus girls were from the middle class and they became the pinnacle icons of the Angel-in-the-City.<sup>341</sup> Following a trend within the British theatre, managers claimed “that it is from the drawing room, not from the factory, that our future actresses *must* come.”<sup>342</sup> With a phenomenal run of 546 performances, breaking all previous records at the Gaiety theatre, this modern femininity portrayed in *The Shop Girl*, therefore, now crossed class lines instigating acceptance not anxiety from Londoners.<sup>343</sup>

Musical comedy also provided a venue for department stores to battle each other for promotional dominance in the West End. For example, the shop girl in *Our Miss Gibbs* (1909), works the counter at “Garrods”, the theatrical replication of Harrods in Knightsbridge. “Garrods” (like Harrods) was competing with a new department store, Selfridge’s, on Oxford Street.<sup>344</sup> In the opening number, shopping

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<sup>340</sup> Reeve, *Take it for a Fact*, 80.

<sup>341</sup> Hyman claims that these girls were daughters of doctors, lawyers, and clergyman who “thought it was great fun to share a dressing-room with ‘Greasy Gracie’, whose father was a gravedigger at Kensal Green.” The class and refinement of the Gaiety Girls (that Edwards deliberately maintained) was respected by “stage door johnnies” who waited to take them to dinner, and thus placed a high value on their femininity and popularity with society. See Hyman, *The Gaiety Years*, 96, 99, 169.

<sup>342</sup> *Stage*, 20 January 1888.

<sup>343</sup> Hyman, *The Gaiety Years*, 70; see also *Era*, 1 December 1894.

<sup>344</sup> As a response to Selfridge’s domination of the press, Richard Burbidge of Harrods financed *Our Miss Gibbs* to sell his vision of Harrods. In a time of intense advertising and competition, Gordon Selfridge and Richard Burbidge, owners of the two biggest department stores in central London, turned to the theatre to advertise their stores and their conception of shopping in the modern world. For example, in 1910, Gordon Selfridge financed the one-act farce, *Selfrich’s Annual Sale*. In this play, Selfridge instructs female playgoers (and shoppers) how to shop efficiently. The play was timed to promote Selfridges’ sale occurring simultaneously. I argue that this theatrical entrepreneurship on behalf of Burbidge and Selfridge also strengthened the commodification of middle-class femininity, making the Angel-in-the-City profitable and thus acceptable to society. See Kaplan and Stowell, *Theatre and Fashion*, 183; Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure*, 179.

at “Garrods” was portrayed as a heavenly paradise and one in which everyone could enjoy.

Garrod’s! Garrod’s! it’s undisputed,  
 You can go there for  
 All you care for!  
 Garrod’s! Garrod’s! you will be suited,  
 Pay your money and take your choice!

For they will do your hair  
 Up the revolving stair,  
 Tickets for trips,  
 Railways or ships,  
 Shampoo or tub,  
 Feminine club,  
 Massage for either sex,  
 Bank where they cash your cheques!  
 Theatre stalls,  
 Brougham for calls,  
 Everything’s found at Garrod’s!

And if a lady you would meet,  
 It’s better here than in the street!  
 For while you choose a Paris skirt  
 There’s always time to flirt!

Garrod’s! Garrod’s! If you are lacking  
 Whiting or blacking,  
 Lace or sacking,  
 Garrod’s! Garrod’s! all things are there!  
 Brooches,  
 Coaches,  
 Tresses of hair!  
 Rosies,  
 Cosies,  
 Silk underwear—  
 Ev’rything for ev’rybody—  
 Ev’rywhere!<sup>345</sup>

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<sup>345</sup> Adrian Ross and Percy Greenback, with music by Ivan Caryll, and Lionel Monckton, *Our Miss Gibbs*, first performed January 25, 1909, Gaiety Theatre, Lord Chamberlain’s Plays, British Library, London; hereafter cited as *Our Miss Gibbs*.

Frequently, even the shop girl emerged from behind the counter to claim her other identity as a female consumer in a “shop-till-you-drop” number.

In an out and round about,  
Hardley ever stopping,  
Buying this and buying that and leaving me to pay—  
Won't you come out shopping, shopping, shopping for the day?<sup>346</sup>

This focus on consumption, in many ways, became a form of control. Women who spent their time shopping would not have energy to focus on more threatening activities such as the New Woman's campaign for female suffrage. Like the image of the New Woman, the “ugly” women in musical comedies set in department stores were those who looked, but did not buy. Shopping and desiring material things had long been acknowledged as a “natural” feminine trait.<sup>347</sup> On stage, women's desire for consumption was understood as sexual, and thus an important aspect of their appeal to men. Those women who did not consume in the department store were thus ridiculed and defeminized, and contrasted with the glamorous, consuming shop girl. The emphasis on the use of goods in the creation of sexual desire was a dramatic shift in the perceptions of women and their role in the public sphere. For example, the popular song “Hats” from *Our Miss Gibbs* illustrates the tight relationship between consumerism and sexuality.

Some people say success is  
Won by dresses.  
Fancy that!  
But what are dresses without a hat?

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<sup>346</sup> Ibid.

<sup>347</sup> See Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility*; Brewer and Porter, *Consumption and the World of Goods*; Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure*.

If you would set men talking  
 When you're walking  
 Out to shop.  
 You'll be all right if you're right on top!

...That's the last Parisian hat,  
 So buy it  
 And try it!  
 Keep your head up steady and straight,  
 Though you're fainting under the weight!

...All the boys that you meet  
 Will declare you are sweet—  
 Men will wait outside on the mat  
 If you have that hat!<sup>348</sup>

In other words, the musical comedy had turned buying and selling into a romantic comedy, thereby creating an ambiguous image for women. As both spectator and spectacle, the *Angel-in-the-City* refashioned both the “fallen” and “emancipated” images of the New Woman into the sexy, youthful modern girl.

Historians Erika Rappaport and Peter Bailey seem to believe, as did Londoners at the time, that this idealistic, romantic femininity of the *Angel-in-the-City* portrayed in musical comedies was an entirely new femininity that defined women's lives off the stage as well.<sup>349</sup> The reality of middle-class women's lives, however, was vastly different. Whether shop girls, actresses, teachers or journalists, many of these New Women were rejecting marriage for financial independence. Much like the response to the New Woman in the dramatic theatres, I argue that there was a great anxiety about the femininity and sexuality of middle-class women who

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<sup>348</sup> Ross and Greenback, *Our Miss Gibbs*.

<sup>349</sup> *Our Miss Gibbs* ran for an extraordinary 636 performances at the Gaiety Theatre. See the “British Musical Theatre website, [<http://math.boisestate.edu/GaS/british/musicals.html>]; see also *Era*, 30 January 1909.

worked in public alongside men and women of all classes. The Angel-in-the-City portrayed in musical comedies was a solution to this anxiety. George Edwardes took conventional ideas of femininity and dressed them up in modern guise. The Angel-in-the-City allowed middle-class women a degree of independence within the public, urban sphere, while guiding them towards an ultimately conventional role. Desire in these musical comedies was controlled since the exchange of goods for flirtation ultimately led to marriage and social and financial stability. In contrast to Rappaport and Bailey, I argue that musical comedies portrayed the Angel-in-the-City as a modern disguise of the Angel-in-the-House. Her independence as a single woman working and consuming in the city was really a means to find a husband and thus forfeit this freedom.

In this sense, the Angel-in-the-City embodied the modern tug of war between old and new, public and private, man and woman, and progress and destruction. However restricting this femininity might appear, it should not discredit the degree of independence the model of the Angel-in-the-City still provided for middle-class women. By wrapping conventional femininity in this modern package, musical comedies and variety theatres made the public presence of middle-class women acceptable, allowing even more agency to emerge in the Modern Woman. This ambiguity of the Angel-in-the-City made her a transitional figure in the shifting discourses, representations and performances of modernity. She would become a stepping stone to the emergence of the Modern Woman, who would combine the femininity and consumption of the Angel-in-the-City with the politics and

independence of the New Woman. In other words, by taking anxieties about modern life and selling them as goods and entertainment, the musical comedy and the variety theatre defined new, modern gender and class identities.

Even when not set in the department store itself, musical comedies like *The Sunshine Girl* (1912), still focused on a female sexuality created or bought by commodities. In *The Sunshine Girl*, the story stays the same, but the location is set in a soap factory. Much like the musical comedies set in department stores, this musical did not portray the factory as an oppressive place with long working hours and meager wages, but glamorized the factory as a clean, delightful, and proper middle-class establishment.<sup>350</sup> The relationship between consumption and female sexuality, in this case the association of soap and physical beauty, is still ubiquitous. For example, the song, “A Tiny Touch,” offered instruction about the erotic display of cosmetics and dress.

You should always try to look your very best,  
Men will be impressed,  
If you're nicely dressed.  
Just a little touch will often be enough,  
A touch of powder-puff will be enough.  
Puff, puff!  
Then a dab of rouge gives colour to it all—  
Just in case young Lord Tom Noddy comes to call!

Just a little teeny,  
Teeny, tiny touch,  
Not a bit too little,  
Not a bit too much;  
Then he's sure to say,

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<sup>350</sup> Although the Factory Acts passed throughout the nineteenth century provided more security for workers (limiting work hours for women and children, raising wages, and raising the minimum age of employment), the work was still very hard and taxing upon workers, especially upon women who also had to care for the household.

“How well you look to-day!”  
If it is only just a tiny touch!

When you have to cross a rather muddy street,  
Show an ankle neat—  
Just above two feet!  
And above the ankle let a something show,  
A little frill or so, enough to show—  
Just so!  
That the fireman’s not the only one who knows  
All about the charming art of “fetching hose”!

Just a little teeny  
Teeny touch,  
Just a filly frou-frou,  
Not so very much;  
What they see of you  
Will “frill” them “frou and frou,”  
If it is only just a tiny touch!<sup>351</sup>

Like those comedies set in department stores, the beauty provided by cosmetics and dress here reemphasize not only the sexual pleasure, but also the social or class advancement a wisely purchased femininity could bring “just in case Lord Tom Noddy comes to call.” In addition to the dresses worn by female performers on the stage and sold in department stores, actresses often advertised beauty and cleansing products like soap. *The Sunshine Girl’s* setting within a soap factory highlights the famous Pears’ Soap advertisements that featured the beautiful, healthy, feminine faces of such stars of the stage as Lillie Langtry and Adelina Patti. According to

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<sup>351</sup> Paul A. Rubens and Cecil Raleigh, lyrics by Paul A. Rubens and Arthur Wimperis, music by Paul A. Rubens, *The Sunshine Girl*, first performed in 1912, Gaiety Theatre, Lord Chamberlain’s Plays, British Library, London; hereafter cited as *The Sunshine Girl*.

these stage beauties, there was no comparison to other brands because Pears' Soap was "matchless" for the "hands and complexion."<sup>352</sup>

This representation of the Angel-in-the-City created by mass consumerism and entertainment and portrayed in the musical comedies of the variety theatre also trickled back into the music halls.<sup>353</sup> This modern femininity shaped by the erotic nature of consumption, fashion, and the "worldly knowledge" of traveling into the class-mixed and heterosocial city made such songs as "When I Take My Morning Promenade" and "And Her Golden Hair Was Hanging Down Her Back" wildly popular. For example, Marie Lloyd's performance, "When I Take My Morning Promenade" celebrates the pleasures of the womanly shape through fashionable dress as illustrated in the chorus.

As I take my morning promenade,  
Quite a fashion card, on the promenade.  
Now I don't mind nice boys staring hard  
If it satisfies their desire.  
Do you think my dress is a little bit,  
Just a little bit—not too much of it?  
If it shows my shape just a little bit,  
That's the little bit the boys admire.<sup>354</sup>

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<sup>352</sup> See *English Illustrated*, vol. XI, no. 121 (October 1893); See also Soap Advertisements, Boxes 4-5, John Johnson Collection, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, Oxford. Adelina Patti was a well-known opera singer and turned to performing in the music halls in the 1880s and 1890s. Lillie Langtry (the "Jersey Lily") was internationally famous on the dramatic stage, and also due to her high profile love affairs including one with the future King Edward VII. In the foreword to her autobiography, Richard LeGallienne writes, "To have been the representative of Beauty in one's own time, its very symbol, is a peculiarly aristocratic form of immortality." "Her book would have no *raison d'être* otherwise....[S]he accepts the fame of her beauty as a fact...with but one frock, she suddenly found herself the bewildered idol of London fashionable society." See Lillie Langtry, *The Days I Knew* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1925), 9-11.

<sup>353</sup> The opposite is true as well. Music-hall songs such as "And Her Golden Hair Was Hanging Down Her Back" were added as encores to musical comedies like *The Shop Girl*, which ran for 546 performances in 1894-5.

<sup>354</sup> A.J. Mills and Bennett Scott, "When I Take My Morning Promenade," in *Songs of the British Music Hall*, ed. Peter Davison (New York: Oak Publications, 1971), 98-9.

Like musical comedies, this song emphasizes the importance of material consumption in the process of seduction. Taking a morning stroll is presented for what it really is: to attract men's attention. Dress is clearly part of that sexual allure, but the value is not on the fashionability of the dress itself, but rather its end purpose which is the attention and desire it captures.

Originally performed by Alice Leamar in the music halls, but then added as an encore to *The Shop Girl*, “And Her Golden Hair Was Hanging Down Her Back” tells the tale of a country girl who comes to London, learns the way of the world and returns home “with a naughty little twinkle in her eye.” The last two verses of the song expose this country girl to participating in a *tableaux vivant* equated with a Pears' Soap advertisement, which contrasts her to the “maiden aunt” and the renown prude, Laura Ormiston Chant.<sup>355</sup>

And London people were so nice to artless little Flo,  
 When her golden hair was hanging down her back;  
 That she had been persuaded to appear in a tableau  
 Where her golden hair was hanging down her back;  
 She posed beside a marble bath upon some marble stairs,  
 Just like a water nymph or an advertisement for Pears  
 And if you ask me to describe the costume that she wears—  
 Well, her golden hair is hanging down her back.

She met a young philanthropist, a friend of Missus Chant,  
 And her golden hair was hanging down her back;  
 He lived in Peckham Rye with an extremely maiden aunt  
 Who had not a hair a-hanging down her back;  
 The lady looked upon him in her fascinating way,

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<sup>355</sup> *Tableaux vivants* were “living pictures” or recreations of paintings produced on stage. They were controversial because they displayed women in a simulated nudity, inviting the audience to gaze at the female body thus also inciting an erotic spectacle. See Faulk, *Music Hall and Modernity*, 142-187. One popular advertisement for Pear's soap in the late Victorian period featured a naked child to which this song refers.

And what the consequences were, I really cannot say,  
 But when his worthy maiden aunt remarked his coat next day,  
 Well, some golden hairs were hanging down the back.<sup>356</sup>

Bailey argues that that refrain line “and her golden hair was hanging down her back” sung at the conclusion of each verse “carries a ready message of her freeness of manner, together with symbolic associations of sexual power, and in its goldenness, its translation into money.”<sup>357</sup> This modern femininity personified in the Angel-in-the-City depended upon the commercial sphere of the city to associate femininity and sexuality with consumption, which also resulted in a “worldly knowledge” for middle-class women. Middle-class women’s exaltation of female performers could be seen in their quick acceptance of these new consumerist ideals of feminine beauty.<sup>358</sup> For example, in an article entitled, “Fashions Set by the Stage,” from a 1906 issue of *Woman’s Life*, the writer claimed, “from the feminine point of view the stage constitutes the most effective fashion plate, and influences attire and personal adornment from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot to a more powerful degree than miles of window displays or dozens of fashion pages in the papers.” The writer continued by citing numerous examples of shifting fashion crazes occurring after actresses on both the dramatic and variety stages wore new items.<sup>359</sup> The appeal of musical comedy for middle-class women was that it gave them agency that also

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<sup>356</sup> Felix McGlennon, “And Her Golden Hair Was Hanging Down Her Back,” in *Songs of the British Music Hall*, ed. Peter Davison (New York: Oak Publications, 1971), 84-5.

<sup>357</sup> Bailey, *Popular Culture and Performance in the Victorian City*, 184-5.

<sup>358</sup> Kaplan and Stowell, *Theatre and Fashion*.

<sup>359</sup> *Woman’s Life*, 31 March 1906. For example, after Edna May wore a large hat with long streamers and ostrich plumes in the musical comedy, *The Bell of New York* (1897), then large matinée hats became the vogue. Similarly, after Mrs. Patrick Campell wore a sleeveless dress in the play, *The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith* (1895), any dress with sleeves was “immediately banished.”

was well-received by society. Instead of creating a binary world of virtuous and fallen women, musical comedies put women in charge of commodifying their own feminine identity. Musical comedies cast women as heroines who acquired “worldly knowledge” through their urban adventures. Unlike the political or “fallen” New Woman, this “worldly knowledge” provided a modern femininity where middle-class women could move freely and contemplate desire—whether material or sexual—and still be regarded as respectable.

Although this femininity was founded on conventional notions of femininity and could be seen as a form of control because it was constructed by the men who wrote the musical comedies and the retailers who sold fashion and beauty products in their stores, it still provided new enterprising roles for middle-class women. In attempting to redefine the New Woman into the Angel-in-the-City, musical comedies opened the door for other ways middle-class women could participate in public life. Through accepting her employment, consumption and performance of femininity, society contributed to the middle-class woman’s growing cultural assertiveness, which ultimately would reveal itself in the first large-scale female political movement.

As musical comedies paved the way for a modern femininity, this shift towards an even wider role for women in public could also be seen within this entertainment form. For example, in *The Sunshine Girl* (1912), the duet “When the Ladies have their Way” between Marie, the head of the packing department at the soap works, and Floom, an ex-four-wheel driver, relates a modern world where gender

roles are reversed. As its run at the Gaiety coincided with the campaign for women's suffrage in London, this female political consciousness is apparent in the second verse.

Lady magistrates, I think, will shortly take the place of men—  
 Just you mind what you're about or you'll get into trouble then!  
 Off to Parkhurst you'll be sent before you know the why or how—  
 Well, it *was* called Parkhurst—I suppose they'll call it *Pankhurst* now!

Ain't it wonderful to see  
 What things are coming to?  
 It's time you had a lady magistrate—  
 It's "time" I'll have to do!  
 For six weeks without the option,  
 She'll put you away!  
 Well, if she's my wife  
 She'll put me in for life,  
 When you ladies have their own sweet way!<sup>360</sup>

Although this song poked fun at female politics, as well as the genre of musical comedy itself, it also showed the shift taking place towards a political consciousness among middle-class women. Many female performers, as well as other middle-class women who now worked in schools, hospitals, department stores, telegraph offices and newspaper offices claimed it was their experiences of working in these public, urban spaces that made them aware of their own agency. For example, Fanny Leslie, an actress who performed in both the music halls and dramatic theatres, delighted in the independence and free will offered by the halls.

I like to make my own successes, and I work hard to earn them, and I don't like to be robbed of the fruits of my labours by other people's incompetence. On the halls I choose my own songs, arrange my own business, and if I fail to make a hit it is a satisfaction to know that no one is to blame but

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<sup>360</sup> Rubens and Raleigh, *The Sunshine Girl*.

myself...You see on the theatres you are so much dependent on other people; you may make a big failure through no fault of your own.<sup>361</sup>

With the premise that “good art could be appreciated by more than one public,” the crossover of actresses from the dramatic to the variety stage provided female performers with more opportunities for more diverse roles.<sup>362</sup> In contrast to the dramatic theatres, musical comedies gave female performers new portrayals of women on stage. These roles, however, were still not independent enough in comparison with actresses’ lives off the stage.

Many actresses on the dramatic stage thus were cognizant of the profound irony presented in playing conventional female roles or thwarted New Women roles in the 1890s. These actresses were conspicuously socially and financially independent in their real lives simply because they worked, which transcended the gendered boundaries of separate spheres ideology placed upon middle-class women. Although the acceptance of a modern femininity in the early twentieth century enabled more agency for middle-class women than the generation before, they still were victims of the sexual double standard in the workplace and society. Laura Ormiston Chant’s campaign to purify the Empire Theatre illustrated a concern not with a female presence on stage or in the audience, but with the sexual exploitation experienced by women in the halls. Kitty Marion’s experience in the halls sympathized with this campaign for she too was determined to “fight this vile,

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<sup>361</sup> *Music Hall and Theatre Review*, 9 September 1892.

<sup>362</sup> Vanbrugh, *To Tell My Own Story*, 104.

economic and sex domination over women”, prompting her to join the women’s suffrage movement.<sup>363</sup>

Building upon their experiences in the public sphere, middle-class women then in the twentieth century came to believe that it was political and legal equality that would instigate gender equality between the sexes. By building upon a new, modern femininity personified in the Angel-in-the-City, middle-class suffragists created a new New Woman: the Modern Woman. Whether single or married, the Modern Woman was still public, feminine, fashionable, and independent, but also politically conscious. Unlike the masculine, independent New Woman and the sexually alluring yet frivolous Angel-in-the-City, the Modern Woman used the display of material culture to maintain not only her femininity, but also to campaign for a singular political message.<sup>364</sup> Through her experiences as an Angel-in-the-City, the Modern Woman developed a political sensibility and birthed a principal icon of modern, urban life: a middle-class, female politics.

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<sup>363</sup> The Kitty Marion Papers, 144.

<sup>364</sup> Joan Scott argues that “political history has...been enacted on the field of gender.” See Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*, 46.

## Chapter Four

### Politicizing the Female Experience: Forging a Modern, Middle-Class and Female Politics

#### Introduction

In 1905, Christabel Pankhurst and Annie Kenney went to a Liberal meeting in the Free Trade Hall in Manchester. During the question time, Christabel raised a flag with the words “Votes for Women” on it and Annie Kenney asked “if the Liberal Party is returned to power, will they take steps to give votes for women?” No answer was given and Annie was forced back into her seat. When Christabel repeated the question, shouts and catcalls resounded in the hall. Annie Kenney tried one more time to ask the question as the meeting broke up and was greeted with a mob.<sup>365</sup> The crowd’s reaction was violent. They tried to pull Annie off her chair, but Christabel warded off their blows while being “scratched” on her hands “until the blood ran down on Annie’s hat that lay upon the seat, and stained it red...”<sup>366</sup> The question was never answered, and the two women were physically ejected out of the hall and arrested. Both chose imprisonment rather than paying a fine. For Annie and Christabel “the old life had gone, a new life had come.”<sup>367</sup> They had brought the question of women’s suffrage out of the “doldrums”, and in one act, “became at once a live topic of comment from one end of Great Britain to the other.”<sup>368</sup>

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<sup>365</sup> E. Pankhurst, *My Own Story*, 46-7.

<sup>366</sup> E. Sylvia Pankhurst, *The Suffragette* (London: Gay & Hancock Ltd., 1911), 28-9.

<sup>367</sup> Annie Kenney, *Memories of a Militant* (London: Edward Arnold & Co., 1924; reprint, London: Routledge/Thoemmes Press, 1994), 42 (page citations are to reprint edition).

<sup>368</sup> E. Pankhurst, *My Own Story*, 50. The WSPU to which Christabel and Annie belonged was not the first women’s suffrage organization; since 1867 a variety of constitutionalist suffrage societies had

The actions taken by Christabel and Annie at the Free Trade Hall in Manchester in 1905 introduced a modern, middle-class and female politics. Although middle-class women had been entering previous “male” or public spaces through education, employment and consumerism, this was the first time that a woman entered the male, political arena, and actively participated and demanded to be heard. Formed by Christabel and her mother, Mrs. Emmeline Pankhurst in 1903, the WSPU introduced a new political tactic in the women’s suffrage movement: militancy. This was a new and modern form of politics because it was the first time that the word ‘militant’ consciously was used in a political or trade union sense of a person who used organized, direct action to promote change, and it was the first time this tactic was employed by women.<sup>369</sup> This single act of militancy sparked the public’s attention and inspired others like schoolteacher, Mary Gawthorpe, to join the cause.

I heard and answered that call instantly, as soon as the news that the two women submitted to imprisonment rather than pay a fine was reported in the press, next day. According to my opportunities I said, writing to Miss Pankhurst, in Strangeways Prison, if it was necessary to go to prison in order to win the vote, I was ready. That declaration brought me into direct, immediate contact with Christabel in this new relationship, as distinct from

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been working towards a women’s suffrage bill. In 1897, these societies formalized their ties in the National Union of Women’s Suffrage Societies (NUWSS), spearheaded by Millicent Garrett Fawcett. In spite of their efforts, however, the years between 1885 and 1904 have been described as the “doldrums” of women’s suffrage where little was accomplished. Suffrage societies’ membership declined sharply after the failure of the 1884 bill, and between 1885 and 1904, Parliament only voted twice on the question of women’s suffrage. See Constance Rover, *Women’s Suffrage and Party Politics in Britain 1866-1914* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967), 28; van Wingerden, *The Women’s Suffrage Movement in Britain*, 55-63.

<sup>369</sup> According to Suzanne Romaine, “the word *militant* is placed in inverted commas because it was a new 20<sup>th</sup> century use of the term. Emmeline Pankhurst was one of the first militants in this political or trade union sense of a person who advocated the use of direct action, demonstrations and so forth as a way of enforcing or obtaining change.” Mrs. Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence also argued that women’s militant, but non-violent methods were the “great contribution of women to political life.” See Suzanne Romaine, *Communicating Gender* (Mahwah, NJ: L. Erlbaum Associates, 1999), 143; Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence, “The Tactics of the Suffragettes,” 1907 in *The Militants: Suffragette Activism*, eds. Marie Mulvey Roberts and Tamae Mizuta (London: Routledge/Thoemmes Press, 1994).

the general labour sympathies. She now followed me up with a barrage of press cuttings....<sup>370</sup>

Taking her own initiative, Mary “took the material at hand, looked up the announced meetings of the parliamentary candidates in my own city, watched the papers, began to write letters to the press, prepared to act on my own.”<sup>371</sup> Events that followed would inspire other Angels-in-the-City like Kitty Marion, Mary Richardson, Evelyn Sharp and countless others to do the same.

Although the women’s suffrage movement began in the nineteenth century, the numbers of women involved in the cause were low due to the resilient ideology of separate spheres. As more middle-class women participated in public life in the 1890s, anxiety about these New Women appeared in the New Drama. At the turn of the twentieth century, George Edwardes’ musical comedies celebrated middle-class women’s consumerism and its ties to conventional femininity. As a result, musical comedies countered the figure of the New Woman by offering a vision of femininity in the Angel-in-the-City that was public, commercial, independent and acceptable.<sup>372</sup>

This fluid tug of war between old and new and man and woman marked the age of

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<sup>370</sup> Mary Gawthorpe, *Up Hill to Holloway* (Penobscot, ME: Traversity Press, 1962), 207. In 1903, the Leeds Arts Club introduced Yorkshire to an *avant garde* modernist culture with the works of G.K. Chesterton, George Bernard Shaw, Henrik Ibsen and Friedrich Nietzsche. Consisting primarily of the educated middle class and Labour sympathizers, teachers, Mary Gawthorpe, Millicent Price, and Hilda Marjory Sharp joined the Leeds Arts Club in their mid-twenties. Mary described the Club “as distinguished a group as I have met anywhere....It was stimulating, refreshing and nourishing to be a member. See Catherine Thackeray, “The World of an Insignificant Woman: The Life of Hilda Marjory Sharp, née Ingle” Typescript Biography, 1988, Hilda Marjory Sharp née Ingle Papers, The Women’s Library, London, England, 43. This typescript biography was written by Hilda’s daughter Catherine Thackeray, based on her mother’s unpublished memoirs, letters from her children and lives of her brothers. Catherine also supports this material with secondary sources about what life was like for women during her mother’s generation.

<sup>371</sup> Gawthorpe, *Up Hill to Holloway*, 207.

<sup>372</sup> See Chapter 3.

modernity and the origin of a new kind of politics. It was not until the twentieth century, however, that many middle-class women (young and old, single and married) became politically conscious. As Angels-in-the-City, these middle-class women had acquired a “worldly knowledge” previously unavailable to them as Angels-in-the-House. With newfound knowledge provided by urban life—its material and consumer delights, mass entertainment, public transportation, more job opportunities—came an experience *for women* and a self-awareness *as women* of living and working in the public sphere alongside men. Like Kitty Marion’s conversion, their experiences as actresses, writers, teachers, and shoppers began to inform them of a sexual double standard and a desire for more rights even within increased agency. As a result, middle-class women began to feel a need to be active participants not only in urban life as consumers and workers, but also as political activists. This political awareness and activism is what separated the Modern Woman from the Angel-in-the-City and completed her transformation.

Although the suffrage story has been examined extensively, there has not been an emphasis on what triggered so many middle-class women to become involved in the movement.<sup>373</sup> I argue that it was their experiences as Angels-in-the-City—working, consuming and participating in public, urban and modern life—that shaped their political consciousnesses. Furthermore, the role of the WSPU in creating a gendered politics—uniting femininity and politics—and triggering women’s political

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<sup>373</sup> For classic accounts of the women’s suffrage movement, see Holton, *Feminism and Democracy*; Kent, *Sex and Suffrage in Britain*; Liddington and Norris, *One Hand Tied Behind Us*; Antonia Raeburn, *The Militant Suffragettes*; Rosen, *Rise Up, Women!*; Rover, *Women’s Suffrage and Party Politics in Britain*; and David Rubinstein, *Before the Suffragettes: Women’s Emancipation in the 1890s* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1986).

awareness based on shared experiences as Angels-in-the-City should not be overlooked. Lisa Tickner has illustrated how the WSPU used female artists to create banners, posters, cartoons, sashes and buttons to create a feminine, political spectacle.<sup>374</sup> It was not just artists, but also writers and female performers that the WSPU employed to dramatize the cause by making militant, political methods theatrical, and also specifically female.<sup>375</sup> I argue that the theatrical elements of militancy, in particular, inspired middle-class women to examine their own lives and experiences as Angels-in-the-City as a foundation for fighting for political power. For instance, actress and writer, Elizabeth Robins stated that although she lived an unconventional life through her career on stage, it was not until “a certain memorable afternoon in Trafalgar Square when I first heard women talking politics in public” that her conversion to the suffrage movement began.<sup>376</sup> “I went out of shamefaced curiosity, my head full of masculine criticism as to woman’s limitations....But on that Sunday afternoon, in front of Nelson’s Monument, a new chapter was begun for me in the lesson of faith in the capacities of women.” According to Elizabeth, although her experience in the theatre had led her to believe that women needed more education to improve their lives, it was not until that moment in Trafalgar Square that

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<sup>374</sup> See Tickner, *The Spectacle of Women* and the Introduction.

<sup>375</sup> See Chapter 5.

<sup>376</sup> Elizabeth Robins was a well-known actress of the New Drama performing in Ibsen’s plays *A Doll’s House* and *Hedda Gabler*. She also was a well-known writer of such provocative works as *Alan’s Wife*, *The Open Question*, and also suffrage works like *The Convert* and *Votes for Women*. See Joanne E. Gates, *Elizabeth Robins, 1862-1952, Actress, Novelist, Feminist* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1994); Angela V. John, *Elizabeth Robins: Staging A Life 1862-1952* (London: Routledge, 1995).

she realized “only through liberty” could education and other rights come.<sup>377</sup> It was the theatrical performance of militancy that sparked Elizabeth’s attention and many middle-class women like her, but this trigger merely brought to the surface the political awareness that had already developed as a result of living and working in the city.

Many historians have downplayed the significance of the WSPU in shaping a modern, middle-class and female politics due to the decline in its membership and public support before the First World War, as well as its role in causing divisiveness within the movement.<sup>378</sup> Although the WSPU caused tension among suffrage societies, its contribution to creating a modern, middle-class and female politics should not be dismissed. It is precisely this tension that shows the impact of middle-class values underpinning the movement. Although claiming to embrace all classes of women as equal, suffrage societies like the WSPU, the NUWSS and the Women’s Freedom League (WFL) were led by and predominantly made up of middle-class women. I argue that when the WSPU engaged in breaking windows, hunger striking, forced feeding and arson, they were seen as undermining the middle-class core of the movement. They were no longer viewed as “feminine” according to middle-class notions of femininity depicted in the Angel-in-the-House and carried through to the

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<sup>377</sup> Elizabeth Robins, *Way Stations* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1913), 38-9.

<sup>378</sup> See Brian Harrison, *Separate Spheres: The Opposition to Women’s Suffrage* (London: Croom Helm, 1978); Arthur Marwick, *Women at War 1914-1918* (London: Fontana, 1977); David Morgan, *Suffragists and Liberals: The Politics of Women’s Suffrage in Britain* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1975); Martin Pugh, *The March of Women: A Revisionist Analysis of the Campaign for Women’s Suffrage 1866-1914* (Oxford, 2000); Rosen, *Rise Up, Women!*.

Angel-in-the-City and now the Modern Woman.<sup>379</sup> Following the WSPU's lead, the NUWSS and the WFL tapped into the collective experience shared by middle-class women to garner support for the movement. These two societies adapted the theatrical elements introduced by the WSPU (demonstrations, colors, banners) to fit middle-class notions of femininity and political protest.<sup>380</sup> Furthermore, they went beyond the single issue of the vote to campaign for other social and legal reforms to benefit women much like middle-class reformers and philanthropists in the nineteenth century.<sup>381</sup> As a result, these societies gained membership and support as the WSPU increasingly lost favor with the public.

I argue that the struggle to adapt and maintain Victorian middle-class values is yet another example of the performance of modernity. As Londoners grappled to come to terms with redefining themselves amidst the collapse of separate spheres, the tension between old and new, man and woman, public and private and progress and destruction that marked the age of modernity can be seen throughout the women's suffrage movement. For historian Sandra Holton, the primary goal of the women's suffrage movement was to create a woman-centered politics and ultimately a woman-

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<sup>379</sup> See Chapters 1-3 for a thorough discussion and evidence of continuing elements of Victorian womanhood seen in London society between 1890 and 1914.

<sup>380</sup> Such middle-class ideas of political protest included boycotting and petitioning Parliament. The NUWSS characterized itself as a constitutionalist society and focused its campaign on gathering petitions for a women's suffrage bill. The WFL claimed to be militant, but nonviolent and focused its campaign by boycotting and protesting political institutions like taxation and the census that did not recognize women as legal citizens, but still used or exploited them. See Hilary Frances, "'Dare to Be Free!' The Women's Freedom League and its Legacy," in *Votes for Women*, eds. June Purvis and Sandra Stanley Holton (London: Routledge, 2000), 181-202; James, *The Middle Class*; Rubinstein, *A Different World for Women*.

<sup>381</sup> Kent, *Sex and Suffrage in Britain*; Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century England*.

centered society.<sup>382</sup> Although I agree with Holton, I would add that this modern, female politics not only attempted to reshape the political and social systems as female-centered, but also as middle-class. With the erosion of the ideology of separate spheres, I argue that the making of the Modern Woman was about maintaining a strong, middle-class influence within society by reshaping notions of womanhood to fit the modern world. The new image of femininity embodied in the Modern Woman was only accepted and ultimately respected because she personified modernized, middle-class notions of femininity. The making of the Modern Woman and a middle-class, female politics in London thus was an attempt to redefine the political and social spheres of the modern age as both middle-class and woman-centered.

#### The Continuation of the “Womanly Woman”: The Arguments for Suffrage

One misconception about the women’s suffrage movement in Britain is the basis of suffragists’ arguments for enfranchisement. Although the *tactics* of constitutionalists and militants differed, a closer examination of the *arguments* reveal, however, that both groups campaigned for the vote based on women’s unique experiences, roles and issues. Drawing from liberal and cultural feminist arguments of the nineteenth century, “difference” did not mean inequality—all suffragists wanted equal social and political power on the same terms as men—but the justification for this equality was founded in the different perspectives and knowledge

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<sup>382</sup> Holton, *Feminism and Democracy*.

that women could bring to the voting electorate.<sup>383</sup> It also initially paved the way for both men and women to support the cause.

Coinciding with the emergence of the New Woman and the anxiety produced by her threat to separate spheres ideology in the 1890s, constitutionalist suffragists began the “difference argument” as a basis for female suffrage. Replying to an anti-suffrage article in *The Nineteenth Century*, Mrs. Millicent Garrett Fawcett claimed that it was women’s roles as wives and mothers that prepared them to have the vote.<sup>384</sup> Voting on issues to which they were better informed than men, did not make them “unwomanly”, but brought their “womanly influence” to state matters.

We do not want women to be bad imitations of men; we neither deny nor minimize differences between men and women. The claim of women to representation depends to a large extent on those differences. Women bring something to the service of the state different from that which can be brought by men. Let this fact be frankly recognised and let due weight be given to it in the representative system of the country.<sup>385</sup>

As the most public figure and later official leader of the NUWSS, Mrs. Fawcett saw the nation of England as a larger version of the domestic home. The “purity and stability of the home” was the “life-blood” of the country, and since it was women

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<sup>383</sup> For background on the “equality vs. difference” debate, see discussions of Enlightenment liberal feminism and nineteenth-century cultural feminism in Josephine Donovan’s *Feminist Theory: The Intellectual Traditions*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (New York: Continuum, 2000), 17-78; Chapter 8, “The Sears Case,” in Joan W. Scott’s *Gender and the Politics of History, Revised Edition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 167-77.

<sup>384</sup> Mrs. Millicent Garrett Fawcett came from a middle-class family and entered politics through her husband, Henry Fawcett, a radical M.P. from Brighton. Because Henry was blind, Millicent often assisted him in his work. She wrote journal articles and books on both politics and later the women’s suffrage movement specifically. Millicent, her husband, and her sister Elizabeth Garrett, one of the first female doctors in Britain, were supporters of women’s rights and the suffrage movement. She joined the London suffrage society in 1868, but her organizing and public speaking skills soon catapulted her to be one of the primary leaders in the constitutionalist campaign for women’s suffrage. See Rubinstein, *A Different World for Women*.

<sup>385</sup> Millicent Garrett Fawcett, “Female Suffrage: A Reply”, *The Nineteenth Century*, July 1889 in *Women in Public, 1850-1900: Documents of the Victorian Women’s Movement*, ed. Patricia Hollis (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1979), 329-331.

who maintained the morality and dignity of the home, they should bring this same experience and strength of character to national politics. “Do not give up one jot or tittle of your womanliness, your love for children, your care for the sick, your gentleness, your self-control, your obedience to conscience and duty, for all these things are terribly wanted in politics.”<sup>386</sup>

Although advocating for political and social equality with men, embodied in the vote, the militant WSPU also made “difference arguments” that echoed claims of the constitutionalist suffragists. In Mrs. Pankhurst’s speech, “The Importance of the Vote,” she outlined that since laws legislated marriage, the education of children, and the future of these children, then women should be consulted in the making of these laws that directly affected their lives. “In the first place it is important that women should have the vote in order that in the government of the country the women’s point of view should be put forward....[T]hose who make the laws should...consult women and learn women’s views when they are contemplating the making or the altering of laws.”<sup>387</sup> Like Mrs. Fawcett, Mrs. Pankhurst argued that the home should be brought into politics, and that the nation as a home was the macrocosm of the domestic home. “...[N]o woman who enters into this agitation need feel that she has got to give up a single one of her woman’s duties in the home. She learns that she is attaching a larger meaning to those duties....The home is the home of everybody of the nation.”<sup>388</sup>

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<sup>386</sup> Mrs. Henry Fawcett, “Home and Politics,” (London: Women’s Printing Society, n.d.), 3-4, Women’s Suffrage Box 5, John Johnson Collection, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, Oxford.

<sup>387</sup> Mrs. Pankhurst, “The Importance of the Vote,” (London: Woman’s Press, 1908), 2-3.

<sup>388</sup> Ibid., 12.

Similarly echoing Mrs. Fawcett, Mrs. Pethick-Lawrence of the WSPU also argued that female suffragists did “not want to be like men” because they valued their own “womanhood.”<sup>389</sup> “...We know that women and men are essentially different, have a different outlook upon the world, have different ideals and different conceptions of life,” and because of this difference, it was vital that women be represented in the “political and social development of the nation.”<sup>390</sup> While drawing on the collective experience of middle-class women, Mrs. Pethick-Lawrence also outlined the significance of the vote for the individual Modern Woman.<sup>391</sup> While many Angels-in-the-City had become economically and politically conscious, there still was a desire to express this consciousness in a way that would be recognized by society. Like Mrs. Fawcett and Mrs. Pankhurst, Mrs. Pethick-Lawrence cited women’s roles as mothers and thus the keepers of the nation’s morality as crucial evidence for possessing the vote, and thus giving them agency.

What does this Woman’s Movement mean and what is its significance in our modern life?...The first thing it means is that the woman’s soul and being is to-day alive and awake, and is crying out for self-expression....[T]he vote in modern times is the medium of expression; because the vote to-day is the symbol and medium of human will and human power shaping the circumstances and conditions of the outside human world....If women are allowed self-expression, it does not mean that the home will be neglected, but the home will be much more sacred than it has ever been before....No human body or soul can enter into this life of the world, but it must enter through the

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<sup>389</sup> Mrs. Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence had an upper-middle class upbringing and became a voluntary social worker to help working-class girls in the 1890s. This experience converted her to socialist ideas as a way to help the poor. She became interested in the women’s suffrage movement after Christabel Pankhurst and Annie Kenney were arrested at the Free Trade Hall in Manchester in 1905, and joined the Pankhursts in mobilizing the militant movement. Her husband, Frederick Lawrence, a wealthy banker, was also a supporter and active participant in the women’s suffrage movement. See Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence, *My Part in a Changing World* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1938).

<sup>390</sup> *Votes for Women*, October 1907.

<sup>391</sup> See the Introduction for more about how both the individual and collective experiences of womanhood help shape women’s identity.

body and soul of some woman...and it is for the sake of the generations to come...that we want women to be free to express themselves, free to live out their best and their highest ideals.<sup>392</sup>

Another militant organization, the WFL, also highlighted women's different roles as a basis for enfranchisement. In the WFL newspaper the *Vote*, Charlotte Despard, wrote, "...it is because so much of our work belongs to home—its provision, its aid, its safeguarding—that we desire to lose no time in vindicating our right to a place in political life."<sup>393</sup> Like Mrs. Fawcett, Mrs. Pankhurst, and Mrs. Pethick-Lawrence, Charlotte continued by arguing, "As long as politics interfere with me, with my house, my children, my way of earning my livelihood, I will interfere with politics."<sup>394</sup> Even as late as 1914, the WFL argued for women's participation in politics based on their different experiences and character as women. "From the first dawn of history this difference in function...is brought to our notice. The hunter and the homemaker, the fighter and the peace centre...the masculine and feminine forces that work in the world's evolution...We are wanted on the world's councils because we are women and we have a woman's point of view."<sup>395</sup>

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<sup>392</sup> Mrs. Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence, "The Meaning of the Woman's Movement," (London: Woman's Press, 1909), 1-12.

<sup>393</sup> Charlotte Despard was the daughter of an Irish naval commander, but at the age of ten was sent to live with her relatives in London. Shocked by the poverty she saw in the city, she dedicated her life to helping the poor. She was a Poor Law Guardian in Lambeth and a member of the Independent Labour Party. Although a member of the NUWSS, she was frustrated by the lack of its success and joined the WSPU. In 1907, frustrated with the autocratic methods of the Pankhursts, she and others formed the WFL. See the latter part of this chapter for more details about the creation of the WFL. See also Margaret Mulvihill, *Charlotte Despard: A Biography* (London: Pandora Press, 1989).

<sup>394</sup> *Vote*, 20 May 1909. This statement was a general declaration for womanhood. Charlotte Despard married Frenchman Max Despard, but her husband died in 1890. She and her husband had no children. She was not known by the convention of "Mrs. Despard" throughout the movement, but by her full name.

<sup>395</sup> *Ibid.*, 8 May 1914.

This emphasis on “difference” as the basis for political equality at first glance might seem to continue conventional notions of femininity and gendered relations between the sexes based on the ideology of separate spheres. This argument, however, was a product of modernity. Within this transitional period where Londoners anxiously debated what the twentieth century would bring, the argument itself symbolized this struggle between a traditional and modern way of life. In the nineteenth century, separate spheres ideology governed the roles and behavior of the sexes, but this ideology had begun to disintegrate in the 1890s. With middle-class women not only fulfilling the roles of wives and mothers, but also the roles of employees and consumers, the only public territory left under the guise of that ideology seemed to be politics. Symbolizing their own ideas and concerns about the different experiences of men and women, female suffragists offered an argument that maintained older notions about the female sex, while pushing forward into a new and modern sphere of participation for women. I argue that these women did not want to simply engage in an already established system of politics, but actually redefine this authoritative sphere from male to female within a middle-class code of gendered behavior. Their arguments and tactics were an attempt to accomplish this goal, and thus made their politics not only female and middle-class, but also modern.

#### Feminizing Politics: The Rise and Fall of Spectacular Tactics

Although all suffrage societies’ arguments were gendered feminine, the tactics of societies were different. The WSPU’s tactics were more complex and

contradictory in nature than the NUWSS and the WFL. What distinguished the WSPU from any previous suffrage society were their militant methods.<sup>396</sup> Although the WSPU methods later became violent due to their frustration with the government's response, initially "militant" methods did not equal violent methods.<sup>397</sup> Mrs. Pankhurst argued that the WSPU's motto of "Deeds, not Words" or direct action was the fundamental definition of militancy. In contrast to the NUWSS, the WSPU was militant because it did not want to just discuss women's grievances, but to do something to rectify those grievances. As Suffragette Evelyn Sharp explained, "...some women welcomed the militant movement because it enabled them to express their discontent publicly without appearing to reproach any individual man in the home....The Suffragettes...were passionately aware of the deeper implications of the militant movement...."<sup>398</sup> Militancy was viewed as a necessary tool to enable women's participation in the political process. Although often citing men's movements for political rights as a historical justification for their own methods, in

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<sup>396</sup> Since the WFL was not created until 1907, the WSPU were the first to use militant methods for political means. Once the WFL came into existence, they maintained nonviolent, militant methods until 1914 while the WSPU increasingly became more radical and violent in their militancy.

<sup>397</sup> Constance Rover argues that the WSPU's militancy in the early part of its campaign, with its focus on passive resistance, is thought to have influenced Mahatma Gandhi and Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. See Rover, *Women's Suffrage and Party Politics in Britain*, 205.

<sup>398</sup> Evelyn Sharp, *Unfinished Adventure: Selected Reminiscences from an Englishwoman's Life* (London: John Lane The Bodley Head Limited, 1933), 132-33. Evelyn Sharp was a single, middle-class woman and journalist for the *Manchester Guardian*, who joined the WSPU in 1906. The term "suffragist" refers to those who were supporters of the women's suffrage movement, whether constitutional or militant. The label "Suffragette," however, refers only to those engaged in the militant and later violent campaign of the WSPU. "Suffragette" was the first word in which the suffix "-ette" was used to indicate a person of the female sex in a pejorative way. Initially dubbed the "Suffragettes" by the *Daily Mail* to differentiate and denigrate them from constitutional suffragists, the WSPU in return decided to embrace the label as a source of pride in the movement and their tactics. By 1915, the *Oxford English Dictionary* defined *suffragette* as "a female supporter of the cause of women's political enfranchisement, esp. one of a violent or 'militant' type." See *Daily Mail*, 10 January 1906; Romaine, *Communicating Gender*, 143; Robert W. Burchfield, *Unlocking the English Language* (London: Faber & Faber, Ltd., 1989), 65-6.

contrast to men's agitation, the WSPU identified its campaign as the first modern "militant agitation carried on by any people wholly deprived of political rights, without violence, without injury to life or limb or property."<sup>399</sup> Furthermore, unlike any other suffrage society, Mrs. Pankhurst argued that what made the WSPU different and modern was that it focused solely on political equality with men through the means of votes for women. "No member of the WSPU divides her attention between suffrage and other social reforms.... There is not the slightest doubt that the women of Great Britain would have been enfranchised years ago had all the suffragists adopted this simple principle."<sup>400</sup>

This initial non-violent militancy, however, allowed for a coalition between the NUWSS and WSPU in the early stages of the movement.<sup>401</sup> The acts of the Suffragettes during 1905-07 could best be described as acts of civil disobedience. They opposed the government at by-elections, they heckled Cabinet Ministers, and sent deputations to the House of Commons.<sup>402</sup> For example, schoolteacher, Millicent ("Millie") Price's first act of political activism was protesting against the M.P. in Hitchin. It was her friendship with Mary Gawthorpe and her experience as an Angel-in-City that prompted her into the movement, but the public response to her protest solidified her political consciousness and activism. Millie recalls how she, Mary and

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<sup>399</sup> *Votes for Women*, March 1908; E. Pethick-Lawrence, "The Tactics of the Suffragettes," 2.

<sup>400</sup> E. Pankhurst, *My Own Story*, 57. The NUWSS and WFL were involved in other social and political reforms relating to marriage, education, Poor Law, taxation, etc.

<sup>401</sup> The Pankhursts were members of the NUWSS's Manchester Society before they created the WSPU in 1903.

<sup>402</sup> Christabel Pankhurst, "The Militant Methods of the WSPU," (London: Women's Press, 1908).

two other friends wore “Votes for Women” buttons and raised “Votes for Women” flags as they walked to the market square.

A crowd followed us, jostling and screaming cat-calls. Bessie got separated from us, and her tiny body, hemmed in by roughs and hooligans, was bruised and battered, her clothes torn, and her hat thrown into the melee. We struggled on to the meeting place where a chair to stand on had been borrowed, but Mary had no sooner mounted the chair than it was torn from under her and broken into bits which could be and were used as weapons. Then the police arrived. Bessie was rescued and we were all escorted to the house of a local sympathizer where the police stood guard to prevent further onslaught. For me the issue was decided. I would become a suffragette. If to merely *ask* for equality evoked such a brutal response, I would go on asking and asking until apathy and enmity were broken down.<sup>403</sup>

According to Mrs. Pankhurst, the “heckling campaign made women’s suffrage a matter of news—it had never been that before. Now the newspapers were full of us. For another thing, we woke up the old suffrage associations. During the general election various groups of non-militant suffragists came back to life and organised a gigantic manifesto in favour of action from the Liberal Government.”<sup>404</sup> Mrs. Fawcett of the NUWSS supported Mrs. Pankhurst’s claims that the WSPU’s militant actions brought new life to the women’s suffrage movement, which in turn affected non-militant societies.

It is difficult now to realize the tremendous sensation caused by the doings of the Suffragettes. Wherever one went nothing else was talked of; intense hatred and contempt being frequently expressed and answered by equally

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<sup>403</sup> Millie Price, “This World’s Festival, an autobiographical effort”, Typescript Autobiography, 1960, Millicent Price née Browne Papers, The Women’s Library, London, England, 117; hereafter cited as the Millicent Price Papers. Part of Price’s memoirs are missing so there is a gap regarding her initial introduction to the cause. However, Mary Gawthorpe’s and Hilda Marjory Sharp’s personal papers confirm Millicent’s membership in the Leeds Arts Club during the same time that they were members. Furthermore, her involvement in women’s suffrage coincided and was directly involved with Gawthorpe’s activities in the movement. No last name is given for “Bessie”, so other than a friend of Price, it is not clear where she stood in the movement.

<sup>404</sup> E. Pankhurst, *My Own Story*, 53.

vehement approval....The secretaries and other active members of the older Suffrage Societies were worked off their feet; every post brought applications for information and membership. Women's Suffrage was the topic of conversation in every household and at every social gathering; the newspapers, too, were full of it. Money rolled in in an unexpected way....<sup>405</sup>

Because the WSPU brought a resurgence to the movement, Mrs. Fawcett and the NUWSS at large were able to support the militants as long as their methods continued to be nonviolent. Mrs. Fawcett confirmed Mrs. Pankhurst's declaration that at the outset of the WSPU's campaign, there was no trace of "intentional violence or non-constitutional action." In fact, up until 1908, many suffragists were both members of the NUWSS and the WSPU.<sup>406</sup>

Early on, Mrs. Fawcett expressed deep respect for militants. She was particularly outraged at the violence inflicted upon them and the press's outlandish exaggerations of Suffragettes' behavior as they questioned Cabinet Ministers or made speeches in support of women's enfranchisement. One such case was the "disturbance" in the lobby of the House of Commons on October 23, 1906 where Mrs. Pethick-Lawrence, Annie Kenney, Teresa Billington and Mary Gawthorpe were arrested and unjustly sentenced to two months in prison merely for standing on their chairs and speaking for women's suffrage.<sup>407</sup> Evelyn Sharp, a journalist for the *Manchester Guardian*, was sent to Tunbridge Wells to report on the annual

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<sup>405</sup> Millicent Garrett Fawcett, *What I Remember* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, Ltd., 1924), 182, 184.

<sup>406</sup> van Wingerden, *The Women's Suffrage Movement in Britain*, 101; Gawthorpe, *Uphill to Holloway*, 209.

<sup>407</sup> Teresa Billington would marry Scotsman Frederick Greig in 1907. Instead of complying with marital convention, Teresa hyphenated her last name, and was known as Teresa Billington-Greig for the rest of her life.

conference of the National Union of Women Workers.<sup>408</sup> Coincidentally, the conference was held on the day after these women appeared in a London court for protesting in the lobby of the House of Commons the night before. “This sensational news in the morning paper had the effect, that afternoon, of crowding the theatre at Tunbridge Wells, where the conference was meeting. No seat was unoccupied at the Press table.”<sup>409</sup> It was Elizabeth Robins’ speech at this session on women’s suffrage that prompted Evelyn to join the movement. Evelyn already had admired Elizabeth’s career as an actress and writer and “the thrill was deepened when she...told quite simply in her wonderful voice how she had come straight from the police court to give the conference an eye-witness account of the women whose actions had been grossly travestied in most of the newspapers. The impression she made was profound....”<sup>410</sup>

Although the experience of Elizabeth’s sensational speech moved Evelyn, she wrote that the enfranchisement of women seemed the only possible solution to what already had “subconsciously worried me from the time when, as a London child, I had seen ragged and barefoot children begging in the streets, while I with brothers and nurses went by on our way to play in Kensington Gardens.”<sup>411</sup> As a result, she “made spasmodic excursions into philanthropy, worked in girls’ clubs...joined the

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<sup>408</sup> From the 1890s, the National Union of Women Workers sought to create a national network of women committed to education, philanthropy, and other kinds of public service. As of 1895, Millicent Garrett Fawcett was Vice President of the organization. See Julia Bush, “The National Union of Women Workers and Women’s Suffrage” in *Suffrage Outside Suffragism: Women’s Vote in Britain, 1880-1914*, ed. Myrian Boussahba-Bravard (NY: Palgrave, 2007), 105-131; Rubinstein, *A Different World for Women*, 151-2.

<sup>409</sup> Sharp, *Unfinished Adventure*, 129.

<sup>410</sup> *Ibid.*, 130. This account is corroborated by Millicent Garrett Fawcett in her autobiography, *What I Remember*, 189.

<sup>411</sup> *Ibid.*, 128.

Anti-Sweating League, helped the Women's Industrial Council," but it was not until the "early sensational tactics of the militants [that] focused my attention upon the political futility of the voteless reformer" that she joined the suffrage movement.<sup>412</sup>

As Evelyn joined the movement, simultaneously Mrs. Fawcett also showed her support for these Suffragettes who had been unjustly treated for protesting in the House of Commons. She offered a "public mark of the value we attach to their self-sacrificing devotion" in the form of a banquet to welcome the prisoners home. "The banquet took place in December [1906], and was a brilliant success, but as was to be expected, my share in promoting it was severely criticized in many quarters, including my own Society. What had moved me...was the unscrupulous abuse and misrepresentation to which they had been subjected in the Press."<sup>413</sup> Such criticism only foreshadowed the discord within the movement that would grow as militancy intensified.

This early relationship between constitutionalists and militants helped to revive not only the movement as a whole, but also the NUWSS in particular. While maintaining constitutional methods that they had employed in the nineteenth century, they adopted new spectacular tactics that they learned from the WSPU. For example, like the WSPU, the NUWSS began to work for the woman's vote at by-elections. In contrast to the WSPU, however, who campaigned against the Liberal, the NUWSS,

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<sup>412</sup> Ibid., 129. The "militants" refers to the tactics of the WSPU in their campaign for women's suffrage. Sharp's account of having nurses and engaging in philanthropic work mark the middle-class nature of her upbringing.

<sup>413</sup> Fawcett, *What I Remember*, 188-9. These women were described by the press as being wild and hysterical with excitement. Mary Gawthorpe's account in *Uphill to Holloway* supports Fawcett's and Elizabeth Robins' accounts that it was in fact the police who offered a hysterical response to the women's actions.

on the other hand, supported any candidate that supported women's suffrage.<sup>414</sup>

Another successful method borrowed from the militants was the public processions of suffragists throughout the streets of London portraying a feminized politics, complete with bands, banners, society colors and dress. The first of these processions by the NUWSS took place on February 9, 1907 and became known as the "Mud March" due to the foul weather. Between 3,000-4,000 "law-abiding women" marched from Hyde Park Corner to Exeter Hall to demand women's enfranchisement.<sup>415</sup> By the summer of 1908, a London procession of constitutional suffragists marching from the Embankment to the Albert Hall, led by Mrs. Fawcett attracted more than 10,000 women. As a result of this new spectacular politics, all suffrage societies grew in membership.<sup>416</sup>

It was the WSPU, however, who created this "agitation by symbol" that other suffragists emulated.<sup>417</sup> Similar to the display of middle-class femininity seen on the theatrical stage, militants dramatized the cause on the streets of London through a new kind of performative, political spectacle embodied in pictorial leaflets, cartoons, posters, postcards, processions, banners, colors, costumes and plays. Unlike any political movement that came before, the militants consciously used female artists, writers, and performers to visually represent women's suffering due to their lack of

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<sup>414</sup> van Wingerden, *The Women's Suffrage Movement in Britain*, 98.

<sup>415</sup> Fawcett, *What I Remember*, 190.

<sup>416</sup> The constitutional societies, however, benefited most. By 1909, the NUWSS had seventy societies, with more than 13,000 members. Although WSPU records are scarce and incomplete, the WSPU seemed only to have 4-5,000 members at its peak in 1909-1910. NUWSS Information Bureau Department, "Formation and Growth of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies," 1914, Box FL 303, Records of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, Women's Library, London, England; See also van Wingerden, *The Women's Suffrage Movement in Britain*, 99; Pugh, *The March of the Women*, 210.

<sup>417</sup> *Common Cause*, 15 July 1909.

political equality.<sup>418</sup> Their tactics were made out of a conscious effort to be modern, to be feminine as dictated by middle-class notions, and to be performative in the sense of creating a theatrical spectacle. Lisa Tickner argues that “with elegant sleight of hand, women responded to the accusation that they were ‘making a spectacle of themselves’ by doing precisely that, in full self-consciousness and with great skill and ingenuity. They were indeed part of the spectacle, but they also produced and controlled it....”<sup>419</sup> Even the slogans of “Votes for Women” and “Deeds not Words” were a performative discourse in the theatrical nature of the phrases and the actions in the words. Furthermore, militants understood that it would be harder for middle-class women to be heard in the last public, male bastion of politics from which they had been excluded, and thus a more powerful “show” or sensation was needed to attract society’s attention.

In these modern times women who have a great cause to advocate come out into the open. Petitions go into parliamentary waste-paper baskets. They cannot put a procession of fifteen thousand women into waste-paper baskets. They cannot ignore them and pretend that they are not there. All London comes out to see them, and those that see the amazing spectacle of two miles of women—women of every class, of every profession and calling—realise perfectly well that they represent a very great and widespread and irresistible demand.<sup>420</sup>

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<sup>418</sup> The WSPU also employed musicians. Dr. Ethel Smyth, composer and Suffragette, wrote the music to “The March of the Women” in 1911, which would become the official anthem of the women’s suffrage movement. Cicely Hamilton composed the words to the march. Ethel joined the WSPU in 1910, giving up her music career for two years in order to devote full-time to the cause. She was arrested in 1912 for smashing windows of anti-suffrage politicians’ homes and spent two months in Holloway Prison. See Ethel Smyth, *Female Pipings in Eden* (Edinburgh: Peter Davies, Ltd., 1934), 190-222; see also Hamilton, *Life Errant*, 78-81; see Appendix 3 for words to “The March of the Women.”

<sup>419</sup> Tickner, *Spectacle of Women*, 81.

<sup>420</sup> *Votes for Women*, 15 July 1910. Although the WSPU claimed to embrace all classes, in reality, they were comprised mostly of middle-class women. Furthermore, their campaign which required members to buy many material items in the WSPU colors and spend weeks or months at a time in prison exposed a middle-class privilege.

This political performance was particularly helpful in drawing young, single middle-class women who had not had the experience of working for themselves, but still engaged in the city as a consumer or spectator. For example, Gertrude Harding was riding the bus in central London when she was first introduced to the spectacle of the suffrage movement.<sup>421</sup>

I have often been asked how I happened to become interested in the Militant Suffragettes. It began with a small incident while I was riding on top of a bus in London...; when I saw a sort of parade of women all carrying some sort of large white posters I was much intrigued. They walked in single file on the street close to the curb with a policeman in attendance....People in the street were staring at the women and some were shouting rude things as they passed by, [the women] looking straight ahead and paying no attention to what went on around them. I felt very upset at the scene for some reason but curious and excited. From that day on I lost no opportunity to learn more about the Suffragettes and their strange goings-on.<sup>422</sup>

While observing this demonstration, Gertrude was on her way to call on distant cousins. This occasion would prove to be enlightening for Gertrude. Her cousin, Bessie was a militant Suffragette and Gertrude learned that Bessie had broken windows in Downing Street and was sentenced to two weeks in Holloway Prison. “I was speechless and gazed with unbelieving eyes at this white-haired old lady as if she were from another world. She began to tell me about the Militant Suffrage movement led by Mrs. Pankhurst and her daughter Christabel....I drank it all in and examined

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<sup>421</sup> Gertrude Harding was a middle-class girl, who lived on a large farm in Welsford, Canada. She accompanied her sister and her sister’s family to England in 1912 when she was twenty-three years old. Almost immediately, she joined the militant movement and was a militant Suffragette for six of the eight years she lived in London. See Gretchen Wilson, *With All Her Might: The Life of Gertrude Harding Militant Suffragette* (Fredericton, New Brunswick: Goose Lane, 1996).

<sup>422</sup> *Ibid.*, 17. This biography is written by Gertrude Harding’s great-niece and uses Harding’s own unpublished memoirs to tell her story.

Bessie's Prison Badge with awe...."<sup>423</sup> With *Votes for Women* in every shop, Suffragettes selling or parading on the streets, and meetings held throughout London, it was easy for Gertrude to learn more. She read *Votes for Women*, which opened her mind to revolutionary ideas: "that women should be treated as men's equals, and that, even though men *do* have exclusive power, it doesn't necessarily follow that they *should* have exclusive power. The new idea of her innate right to vote grew and resonated with Gert's own sense of justice."<sup>424</sup>

The most extraordinary display of this modern, middle-class, feminine, political spectacle was the "Women's Sunday" procession and demonstration in Hyde Park on June 21, 1908. In response to the Prime Minister's challenge that women show him the extent of support for votes for women, the WSPU organized a demonstration that attracted a total of 500,000 people. The WSPU arranged dozens of trains to transport supporters from across England to London where seven different processions of 30,000 Suffragettes dressed in white dresses decorated with WSPU colors (purple and green), 700 banners and forty bands passed through the streets of London, converging on Hyde Park where twenty different platforms from which 100 speakers put forth the demands of women.<sup>425</sup> Along with Kitty Marion, Millicent Price and countless others, Grace Roe went to Hyde Park on "Women's Sunday" to discover more about the movement.<sup>426</sup> Amazed at the convergence of the seven

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<sup>423</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>424</sup> Ibid., 87-8.

<sup>425</sup> *Votes for Women*, 25 June 1908; E. Pankhurst, *My Own Story*, 112-115; van Wingerden, *The Women's Suffrage Movement*, 83.

<sup>426</sup> Grace Roe was an Irish, middle-class girl whose mother had been a suffragist in the nineteenth century, but died when Grace was only twelve. Within the WSPU, Roe was fiercely loyal to

processions of suffragists, floating banners and bands, along with the crowds of spectators that accompanied them, like Kitty Marion, Grace was converted to the cause. “It was here that I first saw Mrs. Pankhurst, and I shall never forget how overcome I was at her great dignity.” Moving towards Christabel’s platform, “...it was not possible to get near her nor to hear one word she said. In the warm sunshine, cap and academic gown thrown off, this brilliant young girl...must have made a profound impression...I left the scene saying, ‘That is the woman I am going to follow.’”<sup>427</sup>

The *Daily Express* claimed of “Women’s Sunday,” “it is probable that so many people never before stood in one square mass anywhere in England.”<sup>428</sup> The press’s comments praised the Suffragettes’ organization, brilliant display of pageantry, and the eloquence of their speeches. The *Times* remarked that “...it is impossible to recall anything at all comparable in mere magnitude with the crowd assembled in Hyde Park yesterday, drawn together by the demonstration of women Suffragists....If [it] proved nothing else, it would prove incontestably that the Suffragists have acquired great skill in the art of popular agitation.” The newspaper continued by giving an account of the procession of banners in “regimental colors” marching to the beat of drums and the calls of bugles. Upon gathering in the park around the platforms where more than 100 women spoke, “the effect of whiteness being given by the costumes of the ladies” and “straw hats, parasols, and the millinery

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Christabel, and took over the publishing of *Votes for Women* when Christabel fled to Paris and Mrs. Pankhurst and Mrs. Pethick-Lawrence were tried for conspiracy. See “A Suffragette’s Story,” (n.p., n.d.), Women’s Library, London.

<sup>427</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>428</sup> As reproduced in *Votes for Women*, 25 June 1908.

of thousands and thousands of ladies in gayest summer attire combined to banish any suggestion of drab monotony.”<sup>429</sup> *Votes for Women* recalled that the predominance of the white dresses enhanced “the value of the colours on banners and badges, and any one with an artist’s eye must have enjoyed the spectacular effect of the seven processions, white, purple, and green, against the green of the park trees and with the blue of a summer sky above.”<sup>430</sup> The *Daily News* saw “Women’s Sunday” as a “beacon day in the women’s movement.... They saw a city converted, their sex justified, a day of triumph truly.” Describing the spectacle, the newspaper went on to say that the women who wore white dresses accented with WSPU colors of purple and green gave “to the streets of London through which they marched under their silken banners a richness and refinement of colour such as the grandest of military pageants has never supplied.”<sup>431</sup>

These descriptions of “Women’s Sunday” by the press begin to point to a paradox in the militant Suffragettes’ own representation of themselves, and one that would initially further and then later hinder their cause. On the one hand, the militant movement was a particular female and feminine politics. The WSPU argued for the vote based on differences in women’s roles and experiences as daughters, wives, and mothers. They claimed that the domestic home was simply the microcosm of the nation as home. By claiming that women had the right to occupy the space of politics previously only occupied by men because they *were women*, they attached great

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<sup>429</sup> Ibid., 25 June 1908.

<sup>430</sup> *Votes for Women*, 30 July 1908.

<sup>431</sup> As reproduced in *Votes for Women*, 25 June 1908.

significance to representing themselves as “womanly women” or feminine in a conventional way. For example, the WSPU colors white, green, and purple stood for “purity in private and public life”, “hope...that has entered into the world with the woman’s movement, and of the spring that has wakened in women’s hearts”, and “the royal blood that runs in the veins of every suffragette, the instinct for freedom and for dignity.”<sup>432</sup> The purple and green were always the “accents” to the purifying, flowing, feminine white dresses worn by Suffragettes. According to Joel Kaplan and Sheila Stowell, for the WSPU “dressing fashionably became a political act.” By using the “vocabulary of fashionable dress”, they believed that whatever was modish would be accepted as feminine, and ultimately would lead to the modishness or acceptance of women in politics. In other words, “suffrage feminists opted to dress ‘conventionally’ in unconventional circumstances.”<sup>433</sup> Just as the Angel-in-the-City had used fashion and conventional femininity to carve out independence in the modern, urban world, now too did the Modern Woman to carve out a space in the modern, political world.

The Modern Woman embodied in the militant suffragist also tapped into the modern, urban consumer culture to advocate for the cause, continuing Victorian notions of women as natural shoppers.<sup>434</sup> Beginning with the “Women’s Sunday” procession to Hyde Park in 1908 and continuing until the First World War, scarves, waistbands, hatbands, handkerchiefs, badges and ribbons in WSPU colors were sold

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<sup>432</sup> *Votes for Women*, 30 July 1908.

<sup>433</sup> Kaplan and Stowell, *Theatre and Fashion*, 153-55.

<sup>434</sup> Brewer and Porter, *Consumption and the World of Goods*; Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure*.

in stores all over London. This material advertising of the cause was cleverly directed towards women. Militants made shopping a political act and thus helped to raise a political awareness for those Angels-in-the-City who already engaged London's consumer culture. For example, Grace Roe had longed to become involved with the suffrage movement ever since hearing of Christabel's and Annie's arrest in Manchester in 1905. It was not until three years later, however, while shopping in London that she was able to gain more information and directly engage in the movement.

It was not until the middle of June, 1908 that I went on a shopping spree with my favourite aunt to Kensington High Street, at the height of the sales, when suddenly I saw, opposite Derry and Toms, a woman chalking on the pavement. A nice burly policeman was attempting to stop her—women seemed to be shunning her and drawing their skirts away. I saw the words Votes for Women being chalked on the pavement. “Are you a Suffragette?” I said, half-running towards her. “I'm simply longing to meet a Suffragette.” Immediately another woman stepped forward...graciously gave me a handbill and invited me to join the Kensington Contingent at the big Hyde Park Demonstration which was to take place on the 21<sup>st</sup> of June and “wear the colours—purple, white and green.” She spoke also of *Votes for Women* which I had no idea was a newspaper!<sup>435</sup>

As Lisa Tickner argues, manufacturers and retailers “may have been politically sympathetic, but they were also commercially astute.”<sup>436</sup> Although the final numbers were not known until after the great demonstration, the assumption that between 40,000-250,000 women would need white dresses and WSPU accessories presented a sizable market. Before the great procession, various drapers' establishments that sold

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<sup>435</sup> “A Suffragette's Story,” 2. Upon attending the “Women's Sunday” march on June 21, 1908, Grace Roe became completely committed to the movement.

<sup>436</sup> Tickner, *The Spectacle of Women*, 93.

these items were sold out before the demonstration even took place.<sup>437</sup> As the movement gained force, the popular and successful department store, Selfridges on Oxford Street in downtown London became an ardent supporter of the suffrage movement and the *Modern Woman*, as it was of musical comedies and the *Angel-in-the-City*.<sup>438</sup>

...[N]o firm has been quicker to seize the possibilities of the Suffrage movement than Selfridges. At the great establishment in Oxford Street a large amount of goods is being specially prepared to meet the demand for articles in the colours. Thus, there is a promise of blouses in a silk which is being made with the familiar purple, green and white in delicate stripes. Ribbons and badges are also being got ready. In the meantime there are some dainty wrist bags, in which kid is broken by stripes of suede in heliotrope and green.<sup>439</sup>

The WSPU vigorously went after those *Angels-in-the-City*, who participated in urban life as workers and consumers, in order to recruit them to the movement, with the implicit promise of becoming *Modern Women*. When realizing that many women who worked long hours such as shop girls and waitresses might be interested in the suffrage movement, but did not have free time to attend meetings, militants went to the stores and restaurants and brought the cause to them. “Many women are taking one and some two meals a day in teashops. Between now and [June 21, 1908] they might make a point of taking each meal in a different place” so that “a whole thoroughfare or even district might be so covered and thousands of women thus reached. The same applies, of course, to all shops where there are women assistants....”<sup>440</sup> It appears that the WSPU was successful in this crusade since there

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<sup>437</sup> *Votes for Women*, 25 June 1908.

<sup>438</sup> See Chapter 3 for Gordon Selfridge’s role in supporting musical comedies.

<sup>439</sup> *Votes for Women*, 14 January 1910.

<sup>440</sup> *Ibid.*, 11 June 1908.

was a confederation of shop assistants that walked in the procession to Hyde Park on “Women’s Sunday.”<sup>441</sup>

Moreover, Suffragettes used feminine dress to overturn previous depictions of political women (i.e. New Women of the 1890s) as being masculine, and to maintain middle-class notions of femininity that highlighted the connection between dress and respectability.

It is not so very long ago that, in the popular mind, the woman who wanted the vote figured as the extremely unpleasant person, a “frump”....The Suffragette of to-day is dainty and precise in her dress; indeed, she has a feeling that, for the honour of the cause she represents, she must “live up to” her highest ideals in all respects. Dress with her, therefore, is at all times a matter of importance, whether she is to appear on a public platform, in a procession, or merely in house or street about her ordinary vocations.<sup>442</sup>

Actress, writer and suffragist, Cicely Hamilton wrote that the WSPU was peculiar in its insistence on appearing feminine.<sup>443</sup> “There was no costume-code amongst non-militant suffragists,” but for the WSPU, “all suggestion of the masculine was carefully avoided, and the outfit of a militant setting forth to smash windows would probably include a picture-hat...[T]he legendary idea of the suffragette, as masculine in manner and appearance—many of the militants were extraordinarily touchy on that point.”<sup>444</sup>

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<sup>441</sup> Ibid., 11 June 1908.

<sup>442</sup> Ibid., 30 July 1908.

<sup>443</sup> Cicely Hamilton was an actress, playwright, and writer. Although being a member of both the WSPU and WFL, she left these societies to join the nonpartisan AFL and the Women Writers’ Suffrage League (WWSL). In these societies, she fought for suffrage by writing such plays as *Diana of Dobson’s*, *How the Vote Was Won*, and *A Pageant of Great Women*.

<sup>444</sup> Hamilton, *Life Errant*, 75. Constitutionalist suffragists were not as insistent on feminine dress because they did not violate middle-class ideas of gendered behavior through their political protest as militants did. Although there was no costume for non-militants, overtime they did adopt their own colors and uniforms for certain occasions like the NUWSS Pilgrimage in 1913.

On the other hand, the *Daily News* remarked and the Suffragettes themselves proclaimed that while being concerned with femininity, the WSPU also was designed and perceived to be a type of military organization. In addition to the “militant pageant” that they provided in processions like that on “Women’s Sunday,” their arguments and tactics were often militaristic or war-like providing a stark contrast to what was considered appropriate feminine behavior. This belligerence on the part of their organization and methods, which continued to escalate until the First World War, was again a conscious and justified form of agitation, but also went against middle-class notions of femininity. According to Mrs. Pankhurst, “we adopted Salvation Army methods.... We threw away all our conventional notions of what was ‘ladylike’ and ‘good form,’ and we applied to our methods the one test question, Will it help?”<sup>445</sup> The WSPU saw themselves as a “suffrage army in the field.” Any woman could become a member by paying a shilling and signing a declaration of loyalty to the WSPU policy and pledging not to work for any other political party until women’s suffrage was won. It was seen as a purely “volunteer army” and no one was obliged to remain in it if they did not believe in the cause or the methods of the WSPU.<sup>446</sup>

One week before the great pageant in Hyde Park, in *Votes for Women*, Christabel Pankhurst called upon all women to take part in the “great fight,” which could not be won solely by the “blowing of trumpets, the beating of drums, or the splendour of banners..... The battle where we meet our foe in grim earnest is another

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<sup>445</sup> E. Pankhurst, *My Own Story*, 62.

<sup>446</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

thing altogether.”<sup>447</sup> *Votes for Women* frequently ran articles glorifying the physical prowess of women highlighting the paradoxical image of the Suffragettes. Writers evoked a heroic past by chronicling women warriors of the ancient world and the Middle Ages to counter anti-suffrage arguments that women were not fit to fight in battle, even a political battle.<sup>448</sup> Putting this discourse into action, in 1913, Gertrude Harding organized an armed bodyguard of women to protect Mrs. Pankhurst from the rough treatment by police throughout her continuous arrests.<sup>449</sup> Simultaneously, the WSPU asked women to approach shopping—a conventional activity for women—with the precision, force and single purpose of a military campaign.

Many of the most highly reputed firms advertise weekly in the columns of *Votes for Women*. These firms are not philanthropic societies....If they find it pays them to advertise in *Votes for Women* they will advertise—if they find it doesn't, they won't. The more money that flows into...our advertisement department the better our paper can be made, the wider its circulation becomes, the further its influence reaches. Therefore, let every woman who believes in this cause never enter a shop that does not advertise in *Votes for Women*, and let her deal exclusively with those first who do, and inform them why.<sup>450</sup>

Evelyn Sharp recalled that this militaristic camaraderie and *esprit de corps* was something that bonded Suffragettes years later, much as it did for soldiers. “With one's fellow Suffragettes the tie...was unbreakable. You have a different feeling all your life about the woman with whom you eluded the police sleuth and went forth to break windows in Whitehall, or to be mobbed in Parliament Square, or ejected from a

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<sup>447</sup> *Votes for Women*, 18 June 1908.

<sup>448</sup> *Ibid.*, 7 January 1909; 14 January 1909.

<sup>449</sup> Wilson, *With All Her Might*, 131.

<sup>450</sup> *Votes for Women*, 2 June 1911.

Cabinet Minister's meeting."<sup>451</sup> The emotional devotion to WSPU leaders and the movement not only attracted new members, but maintained and strengthened women's commitment to the cause. Mary Richardson stated that the *esprit de corps* that she experienced at a WSPU meeting at the Royal Albert Hall in London changed her life.<sup>452</sup> On June 18, 1910, 15,000 women packed the hall to hear Mrs. Pankhurst and Annie Kenney speak. According to Mary, Mrs. Pankhurst was more "intellectual; she convinced with arguments and left us with an unshakable determination to continue the fight." Annie, on the other hand, was more "emotional. Her words went to our hearts." The entire experience turned Mary, a self-proclaimed "weak-kneed" girl, into a "strong" and "convinced" militant.

...I cannot remember a single word of what was said on that, for me, so memorable occasion. But at the time the words did not seem to matter. In some strange way I was inspired by the atmosphere of the great gathering. "We will fight," I kept repeating to myself. "We will fight." I was so spellbound looking up at Mrs. Pankhurst, so lost in my own wild emotions that I had to be reminded that I was one of those who had to pass round the collection plate....As my collection plate began to be piled up with jewellery I realized what devotion and determination there were behind our movement. And when a Chelsea pensioner...dropped a small bag of copper on my plate...I knew...I had enlisted in a holy crusade.<sup>453</sup>

This paradoxical nature of the militant Suffragettes—as conventionally and unconventionally feminine—would become more complex and convoluted as their

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<sup>451</sup> Sharp, *Unfinished Adventure*, 136.

<sup>452</sup> Mary Richardson was a middle-class girl who moved from Lake Ontario, Canada to London when she was sixteen years old. She began a career as a writer, but almost immediately became involved in the militant movement when she helped Mrs. Pankhurst's son evade an angry mob in central London. She then went to the Royal Albert Hall meeting, which secured her passion for militancy throughout the rest of her life. Involved in many of the key events throughout the movement, Mary's most renowned militant act was the attack on Velasquez's "Rokeby" Venus in the National Gallery in 1914. See Richardson, *Laugh a Defiance*.

<sup>453</sup> *Ibid.*, 4-6.

militancy escalated to window-breaking, hunger-striking, and arson. According to historian Sophia van Wingerden, the issue of how to define Suffragette's crimes in court was wrapped in the confusing nature of their gender.

[S]uffragettes were ordinary criminals because their vigorous and violent public protest clearly contradicted what was expected of them as women. On the other hand, however, the suffragettes equally clearly fulfilled their expected roles in other respects. They were often well-educated and well-dressed women of respectable families, not conforming to the type of female criminal who was ordinarily arrested. Thus, when the suffragettes appeared before the courts, the magistrates were often unsure of how to punish them appropriately and effectively....<sup>454</sup>

Expanding on Wingerden's claim, I argue that this confusion was more about prescribed notions of femininity as dictated by middle-class values. Being "well-educated," "well-dressed" and "respectable" indicates middle-class notions of femininity that Suffragettes undermined in their violent, militant protests. As middle-class women attempted to redefine what it meant to be a woman—her roles, her behavior, her femininity—they became active agents of modernity. Although the WSPU deliberately presented itself as a spectacle in order to control its message and image, this strategy in the end did not guarantee control over the meanings produced. The resulting uneasiness about the Modern Woman sometimes benefited the cause, but at other times, negated the image and message all suffragists wanted to convey.

The first major event to highlight this paradox and begin to segregate the WSPU from other suffrage societies was the first act of violent militancy. Shortly after the successful display of peaceful militancy on "Women's Sunday," at the end of June 1908, Mrs. Pankhurst led a group of twelve women from Caxton Hall to the

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<sup>454</sup> van Wingerden, *The Women's Suffrage Movement in Britain*, 79.

House of Commons where Prime Minister Asquith refused to see them. The deputation meant to go peacefully, but were prepared to be arrested and “knew that there were women in the hall who would take up the battle, and carry it on till it was won.”<sup>455</sup> Outside Parliament, a massive crowd gathered as the group of women tried to address the mob. Twenty-seven women were arrested, charged with resisting the police, but what was new were two arrests for breaking windowpanes. On their own initiative, Edith New and Mary Leigh threw small stones at the lower windows of 10 Downing Street. They were sentenced to two months imprisonment in the Third Division, the harshest sentence to date.

This sentence shocked suffragists, anti-suffragists, and by-standers because up to this point, the WSPU had inflicted no violence at all. Because of this violence, Mrs. Fawcett and the NUWSS formally broke away from any alliance with the WSPU. Mrs. Fawcett recalled, “stone-throwing, window-breaking, and other forms of violence were organized by the WSPU, and we felt we had no choice but to publish protests against everything of this kind.”<sup>456</sup> In addition, whereas previously militants and non-militants could belong to both societies, now militants were excluded from the NUWSS. Fawcett claimed that violent militancy was a poor tactic because it just angered and irritated the government, but was not strong enough to make the government institute change. On the other hand, constitutionalist suffragists like the NUWSS, “were convinced that our job was to win the hearts and minds of

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<sup>455</sup> *Votes for Women*, 2 July 1908.

<sup>456</sup> Fawcett, *What I Remember*, 192.

our countrymen to the justice of our cause, and that this could never be done by force and violence....”<sup>457</sup>

And yet, still at this phase of the movement, militants continued to have supporters. The *Daily Chronicle* wrote, “the smashing of windows is a time-honoured form of showing popular displeasure, and is not a monopoly of women agitators....”<sup>458</sup> The *Manchester Dispatch* argued, “Why...bring a storm of hate and disgust and violence into being? The women are doing this because, as citizens, they are inarticulate. They are working to convince the Government that votes for women is a pressing question....”<sup>459</sup> Likewise, *The Globe* wrote, “It is by no means probable that the National Women’s Social and Political Union have done much good to their cause by making themselves the prime agents in last night’s disturbances....It cannot be disguised, however, that a good deal of the responsibility of the disturbance lies with the Prime Minister himself.”<sup>460</sup>

Violent militancy increased throughout 1909 furthering the contradictory gendered image of the Suffragettes evidenced in the government’s response to their tactics. One issue that became bound up in the escalation of violent militancy was the status of Suffragettes in prison. Suffragettes claimed that they should be treated as political prisoners and thus be placed in the First Division, which greatly impacted an offender’s experience in prison. In the First Division, prisoners were allowed privileges such as books and newspapers, frequent visits, letters and the right to be

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<sup>457</sup> Ibid., 192.

<sup>458</sup> As reproduced in *Votes for Women*, 9 July 1908; see also E. Pankhurst, *My Own Story*, 119.

<sup>459</sup> Ibid., 9 July 1908.

<sup>460</sup> Ibid., 9 July 1908.

placed in a better cell. Second Division, by contrast, was harsher. Corroborated by individual accounts of Kitty Marion, Evelyn Sharp, Mary Richardson, Lady Constance Lytton, Helen Gordon and others, *Votes for Women* described conditions in the Second Division in which prisoners “wear prison dress, eat prison food, are in their cells in solitary confinement for 23 hours out of 24, have no access to one another, are not allowed papers or letters or visits from their friends.”<sup>461</sup> It was up to the court’s discretion based on the nature of the crime to determine where Suffragettes were placed. As militancy turned violent, however, all Suffragettes were sent to the Second, or even the Third Division.<sup>462</sup> Placing Suffragettes in such prison conditions clearly expressed an anxiety about these women who violated the middle-class feminine code of behavior. Not only were these women engaging in the political sphere to which they were not seen as legitimate players, but they were also participating in that sphere in an aggressive and unconventionally feminine manner.

This issue of political prisoner status led to one of the most significant events in the WSPU campaign: the hunger strike and the governmental response of forcible feeding. On July 24, 1909, artist and Suffragette Marion Wallace Dunlop stamped on the wall of St. Stephen’s Hall in the House of Commons a quote from the 1689 Bill of Rights: “It is the right of the subject to petition the King, and all commitments and

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<sup>461</sup> *Votes for Women*, March 1908. See also the Kitty Marion Papers; Sharp, *Unfinished Adventure*; Richardson, *Laugh A Defiance*; Lytton, “A Speech by Lady Constance Lytton”; Helen Gordon, “The Prisoner: An Experience of Forcible Feeding,” 1911 in *The Militants: Suffragette Activism*, eds. Marie Mulvey Roberts and Tamae Mizuta (London: Routledge/Thoemmes Press, 1994), 1-75.

<sup>462</sup> As one governmental official stated, “a prisoner in the third division is classed with thieves, prostitutes, and other bad characters, while the second division is reserved for prisoners whose previous character is good.” According to Ian Fletcher, the British state classified prisoners based on penal and moral criteria. See Ian Fletcher, “‘A Star Chamber of the Twentieth Century’: Suffragettes, Liberals, and the 1908 ‘Rush the Commons’ Case,” *The Journal of British Studies*, 35, no. 4 (October 1996), 510.

prosecutions for such petitioning are illegal.” She was arrested and sentenced to one month’s imprisonment in the Second Division. Thus being refused the status of political prisoner, on her own initiative, she began a hunger strike and after ninety-one hours, the prison officials at Holloway let her go. Other Suffragettes quickly seized on this new tactic, and by August, it was a regular practice.<sup>463</sup> After hunger-striking in Holloway, Evelyn Sharp concluded, “...my experience...gave me an insight into the ordeal of the hunger strike that helped me to understand why it is not adopted by the ordinary delinquent....Only the sense of fighting for a cause for which one is prepared to die could give anybody the strength or the will to go on with it after the first day or two.”<sup>464</sup> Militants, therefore, used the “personal as political” to embody a modern, feminist, collective identity.<sup>465</sup>

As imprisoned Suffragettes continued to go on hunger strike, the government’s response of forcible feeding strengthened this collective identity. Mary Leigh was the first Suffragette to be forcibly fed. Her description, corroborated by other victims like Kitty Marion, Mary Richardson, Lady Constance Lytton, Helen Gordon and others, portrayed the treatment as dangerous, brutal, and inhumane.<sup>466</sup>

On Saturday afternoon, the wardresses forced me on the bed and the two doctors came in with them, and while I was held down a nasal tube was inserted. It is two yards long, with a funnel at the end—there is a glass junction in the middle to see if the liquid is passing. The end is put up the nostril, one one day, and the other nostril, the other. Great pain is experienced during the process, both mental and physical. One doctor inserted the end up

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<sup>463</sup> Tickner, *The Spectacle of Women*, 104.

<sup>464</sup> Sharp, *Unfinished Adventure*, 147.

<sup>465</sup> See the Introduction for more about the feminist slogan, “the personal is political.”

<sup>466</sup> See also the Kitty Marion Papers; Sharp, *Unfinished Adventure*; Richardson, *Laugh A Defiance*; Lytton, “A Speech by Lady Constance Lytton”; Gordon, “The Prisoner: An Experience of Forcible Feeding.”

my nostril, while I was held down by the wardresses, during which they must have seen my pain, for the other doctor interfered (the matron and two of the wardresses were in tears), and they stopped and resorted to feeding me by the spoon, as in the morning. . . . On Sunday [the doctor] came in and implored me to be amenable and have food in the proper way. I still refused.<sup>467</sup>

The issue was a complex one politically, legally, morally, and clinically. The government felt that by allowing women to end their own prison sentences by hunger striking, they were in effect making a mockery of the law. On the other hand, in preventing death by starvation or suicide or to avoid making martyrs to the cause, they used inhumane means and made martyr-victims of the Suffragettes. The issue was complicated further by the passing of the Prisoners' Temporary Discharge for Ill-Health Bill in 1913, known as the "Cat and Mouse Act." This bill instructed prisoners to be released when they became ill from hunger-striking, instead of being forcibly fed. Once healthy, they would then be returned to prison. The resulting chase of "cat and mouse" was an attempt on the part of Suffragettes to undermine the power of the courts by controlling their length of punishment.

As the arguments and tactics of the WSPU were gendered, women's accounts of forced feeding suggested a gendered violence or reaction by the government as well. Such descriptions evoke images of sexual assault and rape that would not have been experienced by male militants, and imply a great apprehension felt by the government and the police about these women who were contradictorily both feminine and unfeminine in their tactics. More accounts of gendered violence

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<sup>467</sup> Leigh, "Fed by Force," 2-3; see also *Votes for Women*, 15 October 1909, 34.

towards female militants came after the infamous confrontation on “Black Friday,” November 18, 1910.

The WSPU had offered a “truce” on militancy during 1910 to join with the NUWSS and WFL to support the Conciliation Bill. The Conciliation Bill would give women the vote based on the municipal franchise they already had, but would exclude female owners, lodgers, university graduates and prevent husband and wife from obtaining two votes for the same property. Although Suffragettes criticized the bill because it still partitioned women and their vote in a separate and unequal class to that of men, they conceded to help constitutional suffragists support it because it would enfranchise one million women.<sup>468</sup> When the defeat of the Conciliation Bill was imminent, the WSPU declared that the truce and subsequent defeat of the bill showed the “absolute necessity of militancy.” It was “no time for rosewater and kid glove methods.”<sup>469</sup> On November 18, 1910, 300 women marched to the House of Commons in separate intervals and groups, rushed the House, and were continuously resisted by the police.

Testimony and evidence collected by Dr. Jessie Murray on behalf of the WSPU regarding the conduct of the police towards the Suffragettes illustrates a horrific brutality upon the women. They were pushed, hit, thrown to the ground, arms twisted until almost broken, thumbs bent backwards, along with other countless methods of torture.<sup>470</sup> The following account is typical of such violence.

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<sup>468</sup> van Wingerden, *The Women's Suffrage Movement in Britain*, 118-119.

<sup>469</sup> *Times* (London), 15 November 1910, 12c.

<sup>470</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 19 November 1910; *Votes for Women*, 25 November 1910; Jessie Murray and H.N. Brailsford, “Treatment of the Women’s Deputations by the Police,” 1911 in *The Militants: Suffragette*

... We walked straight up to the police cordon. While we were still two yards away they rushed at us. I was pushed, grasped by the back of the neck, and propelled forward with great force. This was followed by an almost stunning blow on the base of the skull, which sent me to my knees... [A] policeman took hold of my motor veil and twisted it round, trying to choke me. When arrested, an official person in plain clothes held me by the muscles of the upper arm, which he twisted and pinched....<sup>471</sup>

Unlike other political clashes between citizens and the police, the methods of terrorizing the Suffragettes went beyond mere violence, but were purposefully perpetrated upon the female body. One young victim recalled the following:

Several times constables and plain-clothes men who were in the crowd passed their arms round me from the back and clutched hold of my breasts in as public a manner as possible, and men in the crowd followed their example. I was also pummeled on the chest, and my breast was clutched by one constable from the front. As a consequence, three days later, I had to receive medical attention... as my breasts were much discoloured and very painful. On the Friday I was also very badly treated by P.C.—... My skirt was lifted up as high as possible, and the constable attempted to lift me off the ground by raising his knee. This he could not do, so he threw me into the crowd and incited the men to treat me as they wished. Consequently, several men who, I believe, were policemen in plain clothes, also endeavoured to lift my dress.<sup>472</sup>

According to Dr. Jessie Murray, the most frequent complaint by the women was the “twisting round, pinching, screwing, nipping, or wringing the breast. This was often done in the most public way so as to inflict the utmost humiliation... [and] intense pain.... The language used by some of the police while performing this action proves that it was consciously sensual.”<sup>473</sup> Accounts like these suggest a gendered violence towards the Suffragettes on the part of the police that was deliberately directed upon their sex. Amidst the struggle for change, there appeared to be an intense uncertainty

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*Activism*, ed. Marie Mulvey Roberts and Tamae Mizuta (London: Routledge/Thoemmes Press, 1994), 1-8.

<sup>471</sup> Murray and Brailsford, “Treatment of the Women’s Deputations by the Police,” 2.

<sup>472</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>473</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

about how to treat militant and political women who appeared to be conventionally feminine in appearance, but masculine in their physical and tactical courage.

Furthermore, these Modern Women defied not only middle-class notions of feminine behavior, but also a middle-class code of political protest. Although police efforts to minimize arrests of Suffragettes had prolonged conflicts in previous demonstrations, the brutality experience on “Black Friday” had not resulted.<sup>474</sup> I argue that the resulting violence on the part of the police indicates a great fear about the instability of middle-class values and women’s roles in the modern world.

H.N. Brailsford, Honorary Secretary of the Conciliation Committee, concluded that the “exhibition of brutality” on “Black Friday” was “calculated not to deter women of spirit, but rather to provoke them to less innocent methods of protest” and “if it were to be tolerated or repeated it would leave an indelible stain upon the manhood and the humanity of our country.”<sup>475</sup> Although the violence against the women seemed to result in part from an order not to arrest the protesters, those who were still arrested were immediately discharged at the word of the Home Secretary, Winston Churchill. Their discharge along with Churchill’s denial of the WSPU’s and the Conciliation Committee’s request for a public inquiry fueled suspicions that the government had somehow been behind the extraordinary violence against the

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<sup>474</sup> Andrew Rosen asserts that at previous WSPU protests, the police called to protect Parliament had been constables of the A division. Many of these men were used to dealing with militant Suffragettes and some had become sympathetic to the cause. This police conduct and sympathy is corroborated by Mrs. Pankhurst, Mary Richardson, and Kitty Marion in their autobiographies. On “Black Friday,” however, Rosen argues that the police guarding Parliament Square were called in from the East End. They had no experience with Suffragette demonstrations and were used to dealing with working-class and poorly-educated people “who were seldom able to make police brutality a *cause célèbre*.” See Rosen, *Rise Up Women!*, 141-2; see also the Kitty Marion Papers; E. Pankhurst, *My Own Story*, and Richardson, *Laugh A Defiance*.

<sup>475</sup> Murray and Brailsford, “Treatment of the Women’s Deputations by Police,” 8.

Suffragettes.<sup>476</sup> According to Barbara Green, however, it was through this extensive documentation of first person accounts of “Black Friday” published and submitted for a public inquiry that the WSPU created an “organized dissent from the experience of their bodies.” These personal accounts shaped a discourse that represented a “feminist body as a civic body,” and thus was a significant element of a modern, female politics.<sup>477</sup>

Adding to the violence done unto themselves through hunger strikes, forced feeding, and police brutality, in 1912, the WSPU adopted a new form of militant violence to fight for the cause. In response to the failure of two Conciliation Bills and the betrayal felt by the introduction of a Manhood Suffrage Bill in 1911, the WSPU took violent action not only against government property, but now also against private businesses. On March 1, 1912, “from every part of the crowded and brilliantly lighted streets” of the West End “came the crash of splintered glass.”<sup>478</sup>

Shortly before six o’clock a band of women carried out such a window-breaking campaign in the principal streets of the West-End as London has never known...Nothing was heard in the Strand, Cockspur Street, Downing Street, Whitehall, Piccadilly, Bond Street or Oxford Street but the fall of shattered glass and the angry exclamations of the shopkeepers.<sup>479</sup>

Corroborated by accounts from Kitty Marion, Mary Richardson and others, an orchestrated protest against private property and retail businesses began. Just before

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<sup>476</sup> van Wingerden, *The Women’s Suffrage Movement in Britain*, 124. The WSPU repeatedly alleged that Winston Churchill had given the police specific orders to attack Suffragettes on “Black Friday” rather than be arrested. Churchill publicly denied this and a surviving letter to the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police validates his wishes that the women be arrested immediately. Churchill later stated in Parliament that the police had acted on orders to limit the number of arrests in effect under Gladstone’s previous term as Home Secretary rather than following Churchill’s new orders. See Rosen, *Rise Up Women!*, 140-1.

<sup>477</sup> Green, *Spectacular Confessions*, 20.

<sup>478</sup> *Daily Mail* quoted in E. Pankhurst’s *My Own Story*, 217.

<sup>479</sup> *Daily Telegraph* quoted in *Votes for Women*, 8 March 1912.

the hour, women pretending to be out strolling and window-shopping, “produced from bags or muffs, hammers, stones and sticks, and began an attack upon the nearest windows.”<sup>480</sup> The WSPU campaign of breaking windows was a spectacular attempt to spark people’s attention that the campaign for women’s suffrage was not just a woman’s concern or a government issue, but also a matter for all citizens. Militants argued that attacking governmental property was not enough because the government did not respond with a legitimate bill for female suffrage. As a result, in 1912, militants believed they must attack other property such as department stores in the West End. These were places where businessmen relied on the support of women consumers to be successful, and who should in turn support women with their voting rights. According to the WSPU, “They are citizens, and, as such the masters and employers of Cabinet Ministers. They have allowed their servants to deal in disgraceful fashion with the question of women’s enfranchisement. Are they not, therefore, to be held responsible? We think they are.”<sup>481</sup>

As no longer Angels-in-the-City, but Modern Women, Suffragettes claimed that shopping was not the only form of emancipation in the modern world. While still desiring to be feminine, militants also wanted the freedom to be heard, to be treated as equals and to make a difference in their society through the vote. As economic supporters of West End retailers, militants believed that in exchange, they should be able to rely on businessmen’s political support. Stores like Liberty’s and Selfridges

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<sup>480</sup> Ibid., 8 March 1912. See also the Kitty Marion Papers; Richardson, *Laugh a Defiance*; and E. Pankhurst, *My Own Story*.

<sup>481</sup> C. Pankhurst, “Broken Windows.”

had supported women's suffrage for years through selling WSPU colors, badges, scarves, etc., and advertising in *Votes for Women*. As a result, militants felt betrayed by a lack of political action on the part of retailers.

Suffragettes bear no grudge against you personally...On the contrary, the women are good friends to you, and without them and their support what would become of that flourishing business of yours?...The women have been having a very hard time in this Votes for Women fight. *What have you done, what are you doing, and what are you going to do to help them?*...This is why your windows have been broken—to make you realize your responsibility in the matter.<sup>482</sup>

The escalation to violent militancy was a conscious decision on the part of the WSPU due to its frustration with the government's brutal response against women's bodies, as well as its failure to produce an approved bill for women's suffrage. It was also a deliberate gendered and modern action. Mrs. Pankhurst claimed that the "argument of the broken pane of glass is the most valuable argument in modern politics." After submitting to verbal and physical assault and injuring their health, militants were still unsuccessful at achieving the vote for women. According to Mrs. Pankhurst, "...we have made more progress with less hurt to ourselves by breaking glass than ever we made when we allowed them to break our bodies."<sup>483</sup> The tide had turned within the militant Suffragette movement from embodied action to violent reaction.

In addition to breaking windows of businesses and offices, the WSPU began a campaign of arson. Bombs were placed in letter-boxes to destroy mail and buildings

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<sup>482</sup> WSPU, "Window Breaking: To One Who Has Suffered," March 1, 1912, Suffragette Fellowship, Norlin Library, University of Colorado-Boulder.

<sup>483</sup> E. Pankhurst, "The Argument of the Broken Pane," 144, 147.

were burned. Mrs. Pankhurst argued that it was not just the government that was complacent, but the average citizens of London and so militancy must go on more vigorously than before. “The struggle had been too long drawn out. We had to seek ways to shorten it, to bring it to such a climax that the Government would acknowledge that something had to be done....”<sup>484</sup> The objective was to cause as much trouble and destruction as possible to both the government and the populace so that suffrage demands would finally be met.<sup>485</sup> In 1913, the *Times* reported at least forty cases of arson, in which many houses and public buildings were destroyed and the perpetrators unpunished.<sup>486</sup>

Although not involving arson, one of the most renowned cases of destruction was the orchid houses at the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew. On February 7, 1913 after the Gardens were closed to the public, Gertrude Harding and her partner Lilian Lenton smashed the glass-paned walls of the orchid house and went pot to pot, ripping the orchids out by their roots.<sup>487</sup> Along with the destruction, they left behind a piece of paper stating, “Orchids can be destroyed but not woman’s honour.” The *Daily Chronicle* reported, “the perverse ingenuity of the militant Suffragettes has discovered a new way of making the life of the public unendurable” with the damage

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<sup>484</sup> E. Pankhurst, *My Own Story*, 256.

<sup>485</sup> After successive failures in passing a reform bill on women’s suffrage, in 1913, Mrs. Pankhurst declared war. “One thing we will regard as sacred and that is human life. But short of that we are warranted in using all methods that are resorted to in time of war. But while we are not going to injure human beings, if it is necessary to win the vote we are going to do as much damage to their property as we can.” *Times* (London), 28 January 1913, 6c.

<sup>486</sup> van Wingerden, *The Women’s Suffrage Movement in Britain*, 144.

<sup>487</sup> Records are scarce, but what is known of Lilian Lenton is that she was a dancer from Leicester, who joined the WSPU in 1912. Upon being arrested for burning the tea pavilion at Kew Gardens, she went on hunger-strike, was forcibly fed, and almost died in the process. See Jill Liddington, *Rebel Girls: Their Fight for the Vote* (London: Virago, 2006), 267-69.

estimated “at anything between two hundred pounds and thousands of pounds.”<sup>488</sup> At a WSPU meeting the next day, the *Times* reported Mrs. Pankhurst as stating, “They were not destroying orchid houses at Kew, ...breaking windows, and damaging golf greens in order to win the approval of the people who were attacked. It was not intended that the public should be pleased....”<sup>489</sup> As proof, the next week, Lilian Lenton returned to Kew Gardens and set fire to the tea pavilion for which she was arrested.

Accounts of Kitty Marion, Mary Richardson, Gertrude Harding and others emphasize the extreme necessity of the action that was felt by militants, and importance of the violence perpetrated against property not people. Mary Richardson argued that by continuously setting fire to buildings, the insurance companies would be forced to pressure the government into giving women the vote. “When a small minority must struggle against a great power it must bring what pressure it can to bear from whatever quarter. But I must say again that only empty buildings were attacked and these only after a most careful survey had been made so as to make sure that there was...no risk to human life.”<sup>490</sup>

The insistence on the value of human life through no bloodshed was an essentialist female and modern argument employed by the militant Suffragettes, even while contradicting their earlier goals of nonviolence. Militancy escalated in response to critics who argued that if women desperately wanted the vote, they would

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<sup>488</sup> As quoted by Wilson in *With All Her Might*, 104.

<sup>489</sup> *Times* (London), 11 February 1913.

<sup>490</sup> Richardson, *Laugh A Defiance*, 128.

do what men did: destroy property and engage in bloodshed. In response, the WSPU borrowed male tactics, but made them female and modern. They would cause destruction, but they would not instigate violence against any human being unless it was to their own bodies. The WSPU asserted that women, more than men, understood the value of human life since it was women who risked their lives to bring boys and girls into this world through childbirth and then raised them to be upstanding men and women.<sup>491</sup> Upon this gendered argument, came a gendered, modern, militant tactic of violence without bloodshed. At a WSPU meeting in 1912, Mrs. Pankhurst asserted the following:

Ladies and gentlemen, the only recklessness the militant suffragists have shown about human life has been about their own lives and not about the lives of others, and I say here and now that it has never been and never will be the policy of the Women's Social and Political Union recklessly to endanger human life. We leave that to the enemy. We leave that to the men in their warfare. It is not the method of women. No, even from the point of view of public policy, militancy affecting the security of human life would be out of place. *There is something that governments care far more for than human life, and that is the security of property, and so it is through property that we shall strike the enemy.*<sup>492</sup>

Although society was supportive of throwing stones against government property to provoke change in 1909, as well as sympathetic to the brutality experienced by the Suffragettes through forced feeding and on “Black Friday,” the press no longer sanctioned this new fervor against private property. When militancy

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<sup>491</sup> Emmeline Pankhurst, “Defense, May 21, 1912,” in *Suffrage and the Pankhursts*, ed. Jane Marcus (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987), 149. In her defense in court, Mrs. Pankhurst also recalled, “...I have never felt a prouder woman than I did one night when a police constable said to me, after one of these demonstrations, ‘Had this been a man’s demonstration, there would have been bloodshed long ago.’ Well, my lord, there has not been any bloodshed except on the part of the women themselves—these so-called militant women. Violence has been done to us...”

<sup>492</sup> E. Pankhurst, *My Own Story*, 265-5.

turned violent, so too did the press's criticism of the WSPU. As private property began to be destroyed through window-breaking and arson campaigns, the *Times* wrote, "None of [the WSPU's] previous follies has been so thoroughly calculated to discredit the suffragist cause."<sup>493</sup> The *Manchester Guardian* recalled, "the madness of the militants...the small body of misguided women who profess to represent the noble and serious cause of political enfranchisement of women, but who, in fact, do their utmost to degrade and hinder it."<sup>494</sup> Similarly, the *Morning Post* declared of the new militant strategy, "Nothing could indicate more plainly their lack of fitness to be entrusted with the exercise of political power."<sup>495</sup> Furthermore, the *Weekly Dispatch* claimed that "decent Englishwomen" had been transformed into a "wild tribe of Outragettes."

A new kind of woman has been created by the present Government, and the sooner she disappears the better for law and order and national dignity. This new woman is the Outragette. She began simply as one asking that women should have votes. Later she became a Suffragette and then a Militant, and finally, exasperated by the pettifogging evasions which are possible under our so-called system of representative government, she became an Outragette, a window-smasher, a rioter, wrecker, and incendiary.<sup>496</sup>

It seemed that the paradoxical nature of the militant campaign began to catch up with their spectacular politics and initial public support. The new intensified campaign of window-breaking and arson not only went against its principles of non-violent militancy, but also against any established notion of femininity. While claiming to be

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<sup>493</sup> *Times* (London), 2 March 1912.

<sup>494</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 2 March 1912.

<sup>495</sup> *Morning Post*, 2 March 1912.

<sup>496</sup> *Weekly Dispatch*, 13 April, 1913. Although the overall article supports giving the vote to women, it lambastes the WSPU's "organized attack on society" and the general unfeminine conduct of the "Outragettes."

feminine according to Victorian, middle-class notions of femininity that emphasized beauty, fashion and decorum, the Suffragettes then countered this image by smashing windows, setting fires, and going to jail. By attacking department stores, in particular, Suffragettes attacked the “natural feminine activity” of shopping and defied the material and commercial aspects of middle-class femininity made popular by George Edwardes’ musical comedies. Although militants claimed that violence without bloodshed fell in line with their modern, female, middle-class politics, the damage had already been done. The paradoxical representation and political performance of the WSPU turned public support and some Suffragettes themselves away from militancy and confused others about the campaign’s image and even the necessity of women’s suffrage.

#### The Middle-Class Paradox: Tensions within the Movement

The cost of the WSPU’s militance was a loss of press’s favor and the support of other suffrage societies. Even before violent militancy began in 1912, other suffrage groups (both constitutional and militant) had criticized and attempted to separate themselves from the Suffragettes in the public eye. Many of the factions within the suffrage movement can be attributed to the paradoxical values of the WSPU. A perception that the WSPU undermined the middle-class core of the movement grew, and forced many women to leave and join other suffrage organizations. Once militant tactics turned violent, they completely violated the

middle-class values upon which the entire women's suffrage campaign was based and divided the movement even further.

In spite of claims that the women's suffrage movement was a crusade that unified women of all classes, in actuality, the leadership, arguments, tactics and majority of the membership were middle-class. Although some working-class women did become involved (primarily within the WSPU), committing time to the cause was especially difficult for single women who worked full-time and was seen as "self-indulgent" by many. Although militants argued that the cause should permeate every aspect of one's life, this was impossible for married working-class women who had to balance housework and piecework with caring for the family, and actively participating in the suffrage campaign.<sup>497</sup> In contrast, married middle-class women often had servants they could seek out to help with domestic duties while those who were single often replaced their previous profession with a new one: "the Cause."<sup>498</sup>

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<sup>497</sup> Liddington and Norris, *One Hand Tied Behind Us*, 20-30, 210. In the second half of the nineteenth century, there were more than one million "surplus women" making the majority of the female workforce single women. Those who did marry, however, often had to contribute to the household with a job outside the home in order to make ends meet. On top of their grueling housework and child-rearing duties, many working-class women did piece work such as shirt-making, umbrella-covering, and tailoring.

<sup>498</sup> June Purvis, "'Deeds not words': daily life in the Women's Social and Political Union in Edwardian Britain," in *Votes for Women*, eds. June Purvis and Sandra Stanley Holton (London: Routledge, 2000), 141-2. Hannah Mitchell, a working-class suffragist for the WSPU and WFL, argued that working men who were socialists were often still conservative with regard to women and their roles. While public disapproval could be faced by women, "domestic unhappiness" was much more difficult for working women who were suffragists and many gave up political life in order to pacify their home life. See also Liddington and Norris, *One Hand Tied Behind Us*, 224. Kitty Marion, Mary Gawthorpe, Millicent Price and Mary Richardson also talk about giving up their jobs, in order to be engaged full-time in the movement. See also the Kitty Marion Papers; Gawthorpe, *Uphill to Holloway*; the Millicent Price Papers; Richardson, *Laugh A Defiance*.

Although the suffrage movement as a whole attempted to unify women on the basis of a “sex class,” the differences in economic status and social values could not be masked, and therefore solidified the middle-class nature of the campaign. Although the Pankhursts initially were aligned with the Independent Labour Party (ILP), by 1906, they severed this socialist association. The WSPU began this steady move away from a mass participation of working-class women in the suffrage campaign because according to Christabel Pankhurst, “...it was evident that the House of Commons, and even its Labour members, were more impressed by the demonstrations of the feminine bourgeoisie than of the feminine proletariat.”<sup>499</sup> Alice Milne reaffirms that working-class women increasingly felt out of place in the WSPU. Visiting the London WSPU office in October 1906, she described “the place full of fashionable ladies in silks and satins. Tea and cakes were handed round and then the organizers made a speech....What a fervor our Union Members in Manchester would have been in if such Ladies made a descent on us.”<sup>500</sup> This sentiment already implies the uncharacteristic nature of the WSPU, creating a spectacle by using working-class actions in a middle-class movement.<sup>501</sup> This

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<sup>499</sup> Christabel Pankhurst, *Unshackled: The Story of How We Won The Vote* (London: Hutchinson & Co., Ltd., 1959), 66-67. Christabel implies that by engaging in militant behavior that went against middle-class notions of femininity (demonstrating in the streets, etc.), the WSPU was able to create a bigger spectacle. The paradox was that even while aligning with middle-class women and drawing from their membership, by engaging in militancy, the WSPU just confused perceptions of its goals and values, creating division within the movement and losing support for the cause.

<sup>500</sup> Liddington and Norris, *One Hand Tied Behind Us*, 211.

<sup>501</sup> Holton, *Feminism and Democracy*, 35-6. Holton argues that militancy was viewed as a “specifically working-class initiative” on the part of constitutionalist suffragists. Suzanne Romaine argues that militancy used in connection with political activity was new in the twentieth century. Militant tactics of direct action and demonstrations as a way to enable change was seen as an element of trade unionism, and thus a working-class initiative. See Romaine, *Communicating Gender*, 143. I argue that this combination of middle-class and working-class values and images among the militants

inherent paradox already marked the beginning of its demise because simultaneously, their arguments and tactics also reflected middle-class notions of femininity founded in separate spheres ideology. The WSPU highlighted women's different experiences as wives and mothers as a basis of the vote, and used conventional ideas about women's domesticity and consumerism to garner support for the cause. Their primary argument was that it was women's right *as women* to occupy a previously owned male space of politics. Being aware of society trying to define and control their actions as "unwomanly", they reciprocally sought to control their own image through a performative spectacle.

For example, in their effort to prove their own femininity amidst militant political tactics, they dressed in conventionally feminine ways to highlight their womanliness. Militants wore purifying white dresses, decorated with feminine accessories of hats, scarves, badges and sashes in the WSPU colors of purple and green while demonstrating in the streets of London. The Suffragettes organized the first Women's Exhibition in 1909 held at the Prince's Skating Rink in Knightsbridge, which offered information and literature about the history, beliefs, and tactics of the WSPU alongside stalls that advertised and sold women's "feminine talents": millinery, flower-arranging, needlework, painting and sculpture and porcelain domestic crafts. Not only did such spectacle center on middle-class femininity, but also middle-class consumerism. Only middle-class women could afford to

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ultimately would puzzle not just other suffragists, but the whole public causing the WSPU to lose popularity and the NUWSS to gain support throughout the movement.

continuously buy such badges of honor, especially as militancy turned violent and dresses, sashes and hats were often torn in multiple confrontations with the police.<sup>502</sup>

This emphasis on middle-class femininity and middle-class values, originally defined by the Victorian ideology of separate spheres, was a conscious effort on the part of militants to further their message through a re-imagination of the political sphere, all in the name of modernity. This purpose is made clear in the program of the Women's Exhibition. Alongside a section on militant tactics, the WSPU wrote:

What the woman has effected in the world of the home she will effect in those spheres which are now opening to her. She will bring her artistic sense, her ritual of order and beauty to dignify and enrich the man-made schemes of things, and this she will effect not only in the political but in the professional and the commercial world and in the world of adventure and research.<sup>503</sup>

By 1911, *Votes for Women* appeared to think that this “battle” between the public's image of the WSPU and their own had in part been won. “Suffragette of the shorn locks, billycock hat, ill-fitting skirt, masculine habit, collar and tie—Beloved of the Caricaturist—where art thou? Vanished with the back numbers, if ever thou didst exist? Behold the present-day Suffragette pondering fashions side by side with political problems, for she is an essentially up-to-date being.”<sup>504</sup> This paradox of middle-class femininity combined with the perception of militancy as working-class was part of the performance of modernity—that struggle between old and new and

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<sup>502</sup> Les Garner argues that the advertisements in *Votes for Women* and the *Suffragette* urged women to shop at the upscale store Derry & Toms, or buy fur coats for 195 guineas—“on a rough calculation about eight years' earnings on a working woman's average wage” in 1912. See Les Garner, *Stepping Stones to Women's Liberty: Feminist Ideas in the Women's Suffrage Movement 1900-1918* (London: Heinemann, 1984), 47.

<sup>503</sup> W.S.P.U., “The Women's Exhibition Programme” (London: The Women's Press, 1909), 14, Pankhurst Papers, Norlin Library, University of Colorado-Boulder.

<sup>504</sup> *Votes for Women*, 7 July 1911.

progress and destruction—as women entered the male sphere of politics and attempted to redefine this sphere.<sup>505</sup>

It was not just the confusion caused by the Suffragettes' middle-class femininity juxtaposed to their working-class militancy, but also their disregard for democratic principles within the organization that planted the seed for later tension as militancy escalated. In 1907, dissent among WSPU members grew as the organization expanded and concern was raised about whether it would operate under a democracy or autocracy. When a draft constitution was offered, Mrs. Pankhurst dramatically and symbolically tore it up. She informed the assembly that the WSPU would be a “suffrage army in the field” and that she was the “permanent Commander-in-Chief.”<sup>506</sup> Those in favor of a democratic constitution, led by Charlotte Despard, Teresa Billington-Greig, and Edith How Martyn, split from the WSPU and formed the WFL.<sup>507</sup> According to Teresa Billington-Greig, the women's demand for democratic rights in the national government undermined the cause if the organization of the movement itself was undemocratic. Furthermore, only through direct participation could women acquire knowledge and develop a sense of

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<sup>505</sup> While a militant, female politics grew, so did a militant Labour movement. Syndicalists staged strikes such as the 1911 Railway Strike and the 1912 Coal Strike that employed similar militant tactics like those used by Suffragettes.

<sup>506</sup> E. Pankhurst, *My Own Story*, 59; Teresa Billington-Greig, “The Birth of the Women's Freedom League,” in *The Non-Violent Militant: Selected Writings of Teresa Billington-Greig*, eds. Carol McPhee and Ann FitzGerald (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987), 106.

<sup>507</sup> Teresa Billington-Greig was a schoolteacher in Manchester and a friend of the Pankhursts, joining the Independent Labour Party and then the WSPU. She married Frederick Greig in 1907, hyphenating her name as a symbol of her independence as a woman. Edith How-Martyn was another educated woman, becoming a lecturer in mathematics before marrying Herbert Martyn and joining the WSPU in the early years of its existence.

agency.<sup>508</sup> Cicely Hamilton remarked in 1935, “not the Fascists but the militants of the Women’s Social and Political Union first used the word ‘Leader’ as a reverential title; and the *Führerprinzip*, the principle of leadership was carried something like idolatry by the wearer’s of the purple, white, and green.”<sup>509</sup> For the WFL, as well as the NUWSS, democratic principles were not only the foundation of the women’s suffrage movement, but also an inherent middle-class value that the WSPU violated through its dictatorial leadership under the Pankhursts.<sup>510</sup>

In its motto, “Dare to be Free,” the WFL indicated wider visions of women’s emancipation than just the vote, similar to nineteenth-century feminists’ campaign for social reform. Although the WFL sought the women’s vote, they also campaigned on issues that closely resembled long-standing middle-class concerns such as education, health, domestic violence, marriage, divorce and Poor Law reform, and women’s employment, working conditions and pay. Like the NUWSS and the WSPU, the WFL mostly was made up of the middle class and was the smallest of the three main women’s suffrage organizations. It also emphasized the conventional femininity of its members through pictures of “Suffragettes at Home,” and articles about shopping and domestic matters in the *Vote*. Next to a picture of her making jam, Edith How

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<sup>508</sup> Billington-Greig, “The Birth of the Women’s Freedom League,” 107.

<sup>509</sup> Hamilton, *Life Errant*, 68.

<sup>510</sup> Lawrence James argues that the middle class were hostile towards anything that resembled aristocratic privilege, and by mid-nineteenth century, they had “successfully accommodated themselves to democracy.” See James, *The Middle Class*, 243-4, 278. Constance Rover argues that although female suffragists (both constitutional and militant) did not want universal suffrage (but rather suffrage on the “same terms as men”), this was not undemocratic. The logic was that the barrier between the sexes needed to be broken as soon as possible, and any extension of the franchise was in itself a democratic measure. The hope was that the enfranchisement of some would lead to the enfranchisement of all, and ultimately extend to other social and political reforms as well. See Rover, *Women’s Suffrage and Party Politics in Britain*, 208.

Martyn wrote, “Many of us, and I am not ashamed to be among the number, have a real liking for some domestic duties—it is a great pleasure...to have a guest ask for the recipe of one’s own special blackberry jelly, to adorn the house with one’s own handiwork in embroidery....”<sup>511</sup> Much like the WSPU, the WFL also saw the feminine act of shopping as a vital part of the militant crusade, printing shopping guides to stores that sold items like the “W.F.L. Hat.” The result was a particular middle-class and feminine approach to political campaigning.

Every good suffragist who is a member of the W.F.L. takes in *The Vote*, the organ of our League, and we all recognise that every advertiser who supports our organ is helping forward the progress of our cause. We know that, without a good advertising revenue, to give it financial support, our paper could not succeed; therefore, we all make it a point of honour to supply our needs in the way of food, clothes, dress and other commodities through *The Vote* advertisers.<sup>512</sup>

Unlike the NUWSS and the WSPU, however, the WFL practiced non-violent militancy and expanded the repertoire and degree of autonomy within militant tactics.<sup>513</sup> The WFL’s mission was to refuse to be governed by the patriarchal institutions and instruments of male authority until women were granted equality. According to Teresa Billington-Greig, “Woman is denied the rights of citizenship. She is an outlaw. Thus logically and justly she ought to be a rebel.”<sup>514</sup> As a result,

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<sup>511</sup> *Vote*, 26 March 1910.

<sup>512</sup> *Ibid.*, 6 May 1911.

<sup>513</sup> Frances, “‘Dare to be Free!’”, 181-202.

<sup>514</sup> Teresa Billington-Greig, “The Militant Policy of Women Suffragists” in *The Non-Violent Militant: Selected Writings of Teresa Billington-Greig*, eds. Carol McPhee and Ann FitzGerald (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987), 114. Teresa Billington-Greig would later leave the WFL in 1910 because she believed that the campaign for the vote was obscuring greater issues like eliminating continuing conventions of femininity, which prevented women from self-expression in all forms. In the years before the First World War, she would become a radical figure condemning the entire suffrage movement, but especially militancy, for its focus on “advertisement” and “consumerism,” i.e. spectacle. See the Teresa Billington-Greig Papers, Box 399, Women’s Library, London.

the WFL chose to rebel against the legal, economic and political institutions that prevented women from participating fully in society. The tax system, the census, the courts of law and the ballot box all became symbolic sites for nonviolent, militant resistance.

Although the WFL was militant, its emphasis on nonviolence and wider demonstrations against male institutional authority portray a middle-class sensibility present among nineteenth-century feminists, and even among the constitutionalist suffragists of the twentieth century.<sup>515</sup> When the WSPU began its extreme militancy in 1912 smashing windows and setting fire to private property, the WFL further clarified its principles of “passive resistance” with a declaration that militant actions involved “any protest involving the risk of imprisonment.”<sup>516</sup> Charlotte Despard accurately described the WFL as being in the middle between the violent militancy of the WSPU and the constitutional methods of the NUWSS. “We occupy a unique and peculiarly difficult position, but a useful one.... We are in the middle of two opposing principles.... Militancy to the WFL is an elastic weapon... We can use it or we can refrain. When we use militancy we put forward the logic behind it.”<sup>517</sup>

In contrast, the NUWSS was the most consistent in its rejection of militancy, whether violent or nonviolent, but still struggled to define themselves in the public amidst a new, modern, female politics created by militants. While trying to adopt

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<sup>515</sup> Frances, ““Dare to be Free!””, 192-98.

<sup>516</sup> Claire Eustance, “Meanings of Militancy: the Ideas and Practice of Political Resistance in the Women’s Freedom League, 1907-14,” in *The Women’s Suffrage Movement: New Feminist Perspectives*, eds. Maroula Joannou and June Purvis (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), 59.

<sup>517</sup> *Vote*, 3 February 1912.

some aspects of modern politics such as marching in the streets, creating colors, badges and newspapers, simultaneously, the constitutionalist NUWSS would not adopt any form of militant tactics. Suffragists in the WFL and WSPU who interrupted ministers in the House of Commons, chained themselves to railings outside Parliament, refused to pay taxes, damaged property, went to jail or engaged in hunger-striking were seen as a detriment to the foundation of the cause because their militant “campaign ran against the grain of traditional middle-class political protest....”<sup>518</sup> The NUWSS formal separation from militants was in 1908 when two members of the WSPU broke windows at 10 Downing Street during a deputation to Parliament. The NUWSS sent M.P.’s and the press a letter making their disapproval of militant methods clear.

We deeply regret [the recent disturbances], and are convinced that our great cause, the basis of which is justice and not force, does not require such methods for its advocacy. They are completely at variance with the policy of the National Union of Women’s Suffrage Societies, which is one of steadfast adherence to lawful and constitutional methods of agitation.<sup>519</sup>

Much of the newsworthy, theatrical spectacle created by militants, however, made it difficult for the NUWSS to push forward its same message of “Votes for Women” using lawful methods. Time and time again, the NUWSS circulated resolutions and press releases that indicated their differences from militant societies like the WSPU and the WFL, simultaneously depicting their middle-class values. In 1909, it sent the resolution “that the NU of WSS strongly condemns the use of

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<sup>518</sup> James, *The Middle Class*, 355.

<sup>519</sup> Circular letter to the Members of the House of Commons from the NUWSS, November 9, 1908, NUWSS, Box FL303, Women’s Library, London.

violence in political propaganda” to each of its affiliates along with a letter to the press reiterating the difference between constitutionalists and militants.<sup>520</sup>

The recent developments...of the Women’s Social and Political Union have made it necessary for us to reiterate our deep and abiding disapproval of the tactics of violence and disorder which appear to us as wicked as they are foolish....We see with infinite regret that the Women’s Social and Political Union have abandoned the belief that the cause can be won by moral force, they have resorted to physical force and have turned their splendid enthusiasm and self-devotion in a direction which can only lead them to disaster. We repeat that there is a fundamental difference in principle between the methods of the two societies....We disapprove of violence, and therefore we disapprove of individual acts of violence.<sup>521</sup>

The constitutionalists’ focus on “moral force” versus militants’ “physical force” underscores an understanding that the former was a middle-class value whereas the latter was perceived as a working-class ideal.<sup>522</sup> This perception arose out of the syndicalist strikes in the early twentieth century, which used similar tactics as the militancy employed by the WSPU. Furthermore, the WSPU highlighted the association between their methods and those of syndicalists in articles in *Votes for Women*. In one article, the WSPU wrote that as miners “struck at the national food, light, and fuel” to bring about higher wages, so too did Suffragettes strike “at tradesmen’s windows” to bring about votes for women. The article continued by claiming that the only difference between Suffragettes and syndicalists was that

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<sup>520</sup> Circular Memo to NUWSS from Marion Phillips, NUWSS Secretary, September 30, 1909, Autograph Letter Collection, Women’s Suffrage, Box 1, Women’s Library, London.

<sup>521</sup> Circular letter to the Press from the NUWSS, September 30, 1909, Autograph Letter Collection, Women’s Suffrage, Box 1, Women’s Library, London.

<sup>522</sup> Holton, *Feminism and Democracy*, 9-28.

women were being imprisoned for their actions whereas the government was trying to negotiate a compromise between workers and employers in reaction to the strikes.<sup>523</sup>

Once the WSPU engaged in “extreme militancy” in 1912, the NUWSS was even more insistent about its lawful and constitutional methods viewed as reflections of a middle-class ideology. The difficulty for the constitutionalists was that they needed to engage in the new modern, female politics that involved spectacle in order to be acknowledged by society, but they had to do so in a way that separated them from militants who thrived off the dramatic value of confrontation and violence. The NUWSS Pilgrimage in 1913 was an attempt to do both. This was a constitutionalist campaign where federations in seventeen large cities across the country marched to London. While hoping to raise money and show insurmountable evidence that women wanted the vote, the NUWSS also wanted to demonstrate that the law-abiding, constitutionalist wing of the movement had greater support than the militants. According to Mrs. Fawcett, the public needed to witness that “the great majority of women who are asking for the vote are opposed to violence, and...firmly believe that women’s suffrage can only be won by peaceful and orderly methods of propaganda *by appeals to reason*, not to force.”<sup>524</sup> The Pilgrimage was a way of advertising the NUWSS and the cause, while still subduing the spectacle made famous by Suffragettes. As the Pilgrimage illustrated, the NUWSS had learned to put themselves on display to be part of this modern, female politics, but at the same time, they appealed to “reason” or discourse rather than representation or spectacle. No

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<sup>523</sup> *Votes for Women*, 29 March 1912.

<sup>524</sup> As quoted by Tickner in *The Spectacle of Women*, 142.

banners were waved, the dress consisted of coats and dresses of white, grey, black or navy with only a “Raffia” badge dyed to the NUWSS colors of red, white, and green, and the climax of the event were the final speeches given in London.<sup>525</sup>

Historian Lisa Tickner argues that whereas militants used a spectacle that often entertained to gather attention, constitutionalists, on the other hand, wanted to convert a mass of individuals to the cause.<sup>526</sup> The difference between creating a collective political identity through a performative spectacle at the expense of the individual versus converting a mass group of individuals to unite in a single cause came down to a quintessential middle-class belief about how to promote change within society. The WSPU’s claim that they were a “suffrage army in the field” stripped away the individuality of its members in order to unite behind the leadership of Mrs. Pankhurst and soldier forth under one order: “Votes for Women” through “Deeds not Words.” The devotion to mass identity and aggressive demonstrations portrayed working-class and syndicalist beliefs about how to promote change. When militancy escalated to violence, however, there was a further rebellion by many middle-class suffragists. For example, Cicely Hamilton, who was initially a member of the WSPU and the WFL, explains her departure. “...[I]t seemed to me there was a lack of logic in the militant belief in violence. The acceptance of violence as the best

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<sup>525</sup> Women’s Suffrage Pilgrimage Circular from Mabel Crookenden, NUWSS, May 9, 1913, Millicent Garrett Fawcett Papers, Box 89, Women’s Library, London. See also the *Common Cause*, 13 June 1913. See the *Common Cause*, 20 June 1913 and 25 July 1913 for advertisements of Swan & Edgar’s skirts, coats, and hats “for the pilgrimage...trimmed with ribbon in N.U. colours,” and Burberry’s “the ideal coat for the Pilgrimage.”

<sup>526</sup> Tickner, *The Spectacle of Women*, 146.

means of obtaining political ends implied a secondary importance for the vote itself.”<sup>527</sup>

In contrast, the NUWSS and WFL, while focused on the franchise as the primary means to provide agency, were also concerned with other issues of social reform for women and children like the Victorian, middle-class philanthropists who had preceded them. Furthermore, the NUWSS united a mass group of individuals around the issue of the franchise through its methods, which sought change through the legal and constitutional institutions that the middle class had established. According to Evelyn Sharp, the difference between militant suffragists and constitutional suffragists was based on whether one believed in revolution or evolution to foster change.<sup>528</sup> “Either you saw the vote as a political influence, or you saw it as a symbol of freedom. The desire to reform the world would not alone have been sufficient to turn law-abiding and intelligent women of all ages and all classes into ardent rebels.” The difference between constitutionalists and militants was “the difference between those who, having waited and worked so long...could wait a little longer, and those who, suddenly aware of an imperative need, could not wait another minute.”<sup>529</sup> Although the militant impatience and desire for political equality created a dramatic political spectacle and initially gained support, over time, it seemed to violate middle-class ideals. The acts of window-breaking and arson between 1912

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<sup>527</sup> Hamilton, *Life Errant*, 66.

<sup>528</sup> *Votes for Women* often ran articles about the revolutionary nature of the WSPU. In one article, Mrs. Pethick-Lawrence challenged readers whether they wanted “Evolution or Revolution?” implying that evolution (the constitutionalists) had failed in the nineteenth century, and only through revolution (militancy) would votes for women become a reality. See *Votes for Women*, 14 October 1910.

<sup>529</sup> Sharp, *Unfinished Adventure*, 128.

and 1914 were viewed as breaking a middle-class code of political protest. Viewed perhaps as the most “middle-class” of all suffrage organizations, the NUWSS became the largest of societies. By 1914, there were 480 societies with 53,000 members.<sup>530</sup>

As violent militancy became the new tactic in 1912, even the most ardent supporters of the organization split from the WSPU. After Mrs. Pankhurst and her daughter Christabel relayed their plan to begin a wide-scale attack on private property, Mrs. Pethick-Lawrence and her husband were shocked. According to Mrs. Pethick-Lawrence, she and her husband considered “it sheer madness to throw away the immense publicity and propoganda value” that had grown through public demonstrations and the sympathy caused by forced feeding, “Black Friday,” and the 1912 conspiracy trial.<sup>531</sup> Attacking private property seemed to eliminate a basic constitutional right, and therefore was seen as damaging to the cause.<sup>532</sup>

Where I think she was fundamentally wrong is in supposing that a more revolutionary form of militancy, with attacks directed more and more on the

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<sup>530</sup> Formation and Growth of the National Union of Women’s Suffrage Societies Report, 1914, NUWSS, Box FL 303, Women’s Library, London. Although membership records cease to exist, it appears the WSPU membership and income declined sharply in 1913. New subscriptions fell from 4,459 in 1909-10 to 923 during the first eight months of 1913. See Pugh, *The March of Women*, 210.

<sup>531</sup> E. Pethick-Lawrence, *My Part in a Changing World*, 277. Mrs. Pankhurst and Mrs. Pethick-Lawrence were charged with conspiracy to commit offenses against the law after the organized window-smashing campaign in London’s West End. Before this event, they had announced a demonstration to take place on March 4, but had not mentioned the window-smashing to take place on March 1. This organized protest over the course of two days where 200 women were arrested caused suspicion in the government. As a result, the government seized the leaders of the WSPU to be tried on the count of conspiracy. Christabel Pankhurst escaped to Paris, but Mrs. Pankhurst and Mrs. Pethick-Lawrence were tried, found guilty, and sentenced to nine months imprisonment. See “Transcript of the 1912 Conspiracy Trial” in *Speeches and Trials of the Militant Suffragettes: The Women’s Social and Political Union, 1903-1918*, ed. Cheryl R. Jorgensen-Earp (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1999), 153-267.

<sup>532</sup> According to Pierre Bourdieu, “every material inheritance is, strictly speaking, also a cultural inheritance.” Building upon this idea, Simon Gunn argues that since the middle-class diffused its property and assets across the family (versus the aristocratic practice of primogeniture), any material inheritance (houses, furniture, books, money, etc.) was crucial to maintaining a middle-class identity. See Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 76; Gunn, “Translating Bourdieu,” 56-57.

property of individuals, would strengthen the movement and bring it to more speedy victory. So long as we attacked the Government, and even when we attacked Government property, we won wider and wider public support....The further attacks on private property that developed in the course of the following two years roused a great deal of hostility....<sup>533</sup>

This split along with the forced departure of the East London Federation of the WSPU, headed by Sylvia Pankhurst, portrays the underlining paradox of WSPU tactics and resulting schism within it and within the overall suffrage movement. Although created out of the Labour movement, yet contradictory in its class values throughout its existence, at the very end, the WSPU was guided by middle-class attitudes. It did not want to be “mixed up” with the East London Federation. Christabel argued, “You have a democratic constitution for your Federation; we do not agree with that....[A] working women’s movement was of no value: working women were the weakest portion of the sex....We want picked women, the very strongest and most intelligent!”<sup>534</sup>

Although the suffrage movement had split into factions on the eve of the First World War, all three main societies envisioned themselves as leading a middle-class politics. It was their different perspectives about what constituted middle-class values and what the boundaries were for protecting these beliefs that led to paradoxical visions and ultimately divisions within the movement. The WSPU wanted intelligent and talented women to embark on a spectacular campaign identified by middle-class femininity through dress, banners and artwork. Their violence adhered to middle-

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<sup>533</sup> E. Pethick-Lawrence, *My Part in a Changing World*, 284.

<sup>534</sup> E. Sylvia Pankhurst, *The Suffragette Movement: An Intimate Account of Persons and Ideals* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1931), 517.

class ideals, they claimed, because it was directed towards property and not human life. The WFL wanted a democratic, militant, but non-violent organization that sought not only the vote, but also the reform of other social problems affecting women through passive resistance. The NUWSS wanted professional and educated women to join in gaining the vote and other social reforms through law-abiding, constitutional means appealing to reason and not spectacle. Mary Jean Corbett argues that within the suffrage movement, women fought not only for the vote, but for “their own visions of what constituted women’s political ‘good,’ and that their conceptions of the ‘good’ imply particular modes of subjectivity.”<sup>535</sup> Although united in a single cause, these different visions of the “political good,” shaped by their own conceptions of middle-class ideals, ultimately tore the movement into discord and ceased to be a central issue for the government just before the start of the First World War.

### Conclusion

The making of a middle-class, female politics through the politicization of the female experience was a key aspect of modernity. Although the general public and other suffragist organizations struggled with the methods of the WSPU, the action and reaction among these groups illustrate a society in transition and thus a modern response. The gendered patterns of behavior between the sexes began to shift once again as middle-class women attempted to enter the male space of politics, and the tug of war between old and new, progress and destruction, man and woman, and

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<sup>535</sup> Corbett, *Representing Femininity*, 151.

public and private was revived. The performance of a middle-class, female politics—marching in demonstrations, selling newspapers, chalking sidewalks, being arrested, hunger-striking, breaking windows, committing arson—was a performance of modernity. Militants used the symbols of modernity—consumerism, advertisements, mass entertainment, technology—to create this spectacular, performative politics. By combining conventional and modern middle-class notions of femininity personified in the “womanly woman” and the Angel-in-the-City, the Suffragettes also created a new, modern, middle-class image of femininity. The Modern Woman was “womanly,” but also politically conscious. The Modern Woman possessed a “worldly knowledge” acquired through education, employment, consumerism and politics, i.e. participating fully in a public, urban and modern culture. For example, in an article in the *Vote* in 1910, suffragist Louisa Thomson-Price described this Modern Woman as the “new ‘womanly’ woman.”

The “womanly” woman is she who holds her soul her own, who bravely claims her rightful place beside the manly man, conserving the interests of the home, the children, and the State; who seeks by direct and honourable representative power to free the industrial woman slave from sweated labour, to lead out of the paths of despair the victims of betrayal, and to bring a cleaner, purer, sweeter atmosphere into political and social life. Surely if in aiming to accomplish these things woman has sometimes to lay aside the garments of old-time respectable conventions and to adopt the attitude of revolt, she is at least earning for the word “womanly” a finer and a grander meaning than it has hitherto borne.<sup>536</sup>

Not only militants, but all suffragists attempted to feminize the male, public space. By emphasizing women’s different experiences *as women* as a basis for the vote and equal rights, all suffragists shared the middle-class belief in what Gerda

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<sup>536</sup> *Vote*, 8 October 1910.

Lerner calls “women’s emancipation feminism.”<sup>537</sup> The modern, female, middle-class politics designed by suffragists in the early twentieth century went beyond the campaign for equal rights through the franchise. According to Sandra Holton, militants and constitutionalists alike sought to politically and culturally transform society to a female centered system.<sup>538</sup> I argue that by campaigning for the vote, these Modern Women attempted to redefine the male sphere of politics, and the male, public sphere of authority, institutions and traditions as not only woman-centered, but also middle-class. According to suffragist Charlotte Despard, “In the impending reconstruction of society, woman, as an integral part of society, must do her share.... We maintain that one of the rights we are insistently demanding is the right to come in living touch with our own work....”<sup>539</sup> Similarly, for Suffragettes like Mary Richardson, the movement was about more than just “Votes for Women.”

We were women in revolt, led and financed by women. We were inaugurating a new era for women and demonstrating for the first time in history that women were capable of fighting their own battle for freedom’s sake. We were breaking down old senseless barriers which had been the curse of our sex, exploding men’s theories and ideas about us.... We shall be remembered as women who opened the door to complete freedom, women who taught the women of the world what a true, and genuine woman, really was!<sup>540</sup>

Although the women’s suffrage movement splintered and failed to achieve the vote by 1914, it was not entirely unsuccessful. Suffragists feminized the theatre. They took an established sphere of mass entertainment that already accepted women in part and began to reshape this institution to make it even more modern, woman-

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<sup>537</sup> Gerda Lerner, *The Majority Finds Its Past* (Oxford, 1979), 48-62.

<sup>538</sup> Holton, *Feminism and Democracy*, 18.

<sup>539</sup> *Vote*, 20 May 1909.

<sup>540</sup> Richardson, *Laugh A Defiance*, 103-4.

centered, and middle-class. Actresses who were also suffragists transferred the performance of female politics from the street to the stage. Through acting, writing and directing their own plays, suffragists performed a modern, female, middle-class politics on the stage. Through this Suffrage Drama, constitutionalists and militants alike were able to transform the space of the theatre into a modern, political, middle-class and woman-centered institution.

## Chapter Five

### Performing Female Politics: Staging the ‘Modern Woman’

As part of the artistic and spectacular politics dramatized on the streets of London, female performers, who were also suffragists, turned to the theatre to add to this political performance. Well before the modern debate about whether women should participate in the public sphere, English theatre had a long-standing tradition of offering women a career on the public stage as performers.<sup>541</sup> In the early twentieth century, many female performers like Elizabeth Robins, Cicely Hamilton, Kitty Marion and Eva Moore cited this experience of working on stage alongside men as the impetus for shaping their political consciousnesses. In their attempt to create a middle-class, feminist politics and a woman-centered society, I argue that female suffragists succeeded within the space of the theatre.<sup>542</sup> Using plays as propaganda, suffragist actresses and playwrights went beyond campaigning for the vote by showing the reality of Modern Women’s lives in Suffrage Drama.<sup>543</sup> Highlighting middle-class women’s experiences of working in the city and achieving economic

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<sup>541</sup> After the restoration of the monarchy in 1660, English theatre offered women a career as performers. The theatre, however, was not viewed as a respectable place for women, but it still provided actresses a certain degree of independence.

<sup>542</sup> Although suffragists did not use the term “feminist,” they argued that political power through the vote would enable them to achieve other social, economic, and political reforms. In this sense, they were engaged in “feminism” as defined by bell hooks as “a struggle to end sexist oppression.” See hooks, “Feminism: A Movement to End Sexist Oppression,” 51; see also the Introduction. For more on a modern, middle-class, and female politics and its goal of a woman-centered society, see Chapter 4.

<sup>543</sup> The term Suffrage Drama refers to the conditions under which these plays were produced (i.e. the women’s suffrage movement), not their specific content. Suffrage plays often went beyond dealing with the women’s vote to examining women’s social and economic conditions, their relationships to men, and to insist that women had the right to define themselves within a re-imagined political and social system. See Stowell, *A Stage of Their Own*, 42.

independence, Suffrage Drama expanded the arguments for women's suffrage beyond the ideas of social justice or women's unique perspectives as women. With the formation of the non-partisan AFL, these actress-suffragists declared they would not advocate or condemn constitutional or militant tactics, but would support all suffragists and the cause by utilizing their unique theatrical profession. By using their art, these female suffragists, actresses, writers and managers therefore resolved the divisiveness within the suffrage movement. Furthermore, they created a middle-class, feminist and political institution within the Woman's Theatre as a space to re-imagine a new woman-centered society within the modern world. I argue that the experience of the actress, the formation of the AFL, the creation of Suffrage Drama, and the establishment of the Woman's Theatre all intersect to illuminate the powerful contribution of the theatre (as a cultural and performing art form) in raising consciousness and forming a modern, gendered and political identity.

Beginning in the late nineteenth century, there was an attempt to raise the status of the theatre as a respectable space for women on stage and in the audience. Legitimizing this theatrical space led to a legitimacy of a theatrical career, with a significant increase of female performers, and later female writers and managers.<sup>544</sup> Many of the new female performers in the late nineteenth century were from the educated middle classes. Although few had their family's blessing, they nevertheless were able to achieve fulfilling social and economical autonomy. Vivien Gardner argues, "the very lack of conventionality that was still part of the image of the stage

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<sup>544</sup> In 1841, there were approximately three male actors to one female actress; 2:1 in 1851; by 1891, female actresses were in the majority. Gardner and Rutherford, *The New Woman and Her Sisters*, 8.

may have been part of the attraction.”<sup>545</sup> In a society that excluded women from public discourse, in the theatre, women were put on public display, but often in positions of physical or emotional intimacy with men who were not their husbands or fathers. The paradox, however, was that this unconventionality was the catalyst for the conventionality of attitudes towards middle-class women at the *fin-de-siècle*.

By the 1890s, the ambiguous position of the actress was further complicated by her association with the New Woman and the political campaign for gender equality.<sup>546</sup> Actresses were increasingly aware of the profound irony displayed by their roles as New Women on stage. These actresses were conspicuously independent (i.e. New Women) on the stage of London simply by working, which transgressed social boundaries defined by separate spheres ideology that required middle-class women to be socially and financially dependent on their closest male relative. Yet on the stage of London’s theatres in the 1890s, they played roles “diametrically opposed to the reality of their own lives, roles that denigrated women who crossed conventional boundaries....”<sup>547</sup> For example, in Sir Arthur Wing Pinero’s play, *The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith* (1895), New Woman, Agnes Ebbsmith, abandons all her emancipated principles to live a contemplative, but austere religious life. Mrs. Patrick Campbell, who played the titled role, wrote that the last act broke her heart.

I knew that such an Agnes in life could not have drifted into the Bible-reading inertia of the woman she became in the last act. I felt she would have risen a phoenix from the ashes. That rounding off of plays to make the audience feel comfortable is a regrettable weakness....In those days...she was a new and

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<sup>545</sup> Ibid., 8; see also Holledge, *Innocent Flowers*, 7-32.

<sup>546</sup> Ibid., 7; see also Davis, *Actresses as Working Women*. For further discussion on the multiple representations of the New Woman, see Chapter 2.

<sup>547</sup> Ibid., 3.

daring type, the woman agitator, the pessimist, with original, independent ideas—in revolt against sham morals....Did Sir Arthur Pinero miss an opportunity, or was he right, the time was not yet ripe? The suffragette, with her hammer in her muff, had not yet arisen on the horizon.<sup>548</sup>

Julie Holledge asserts that the conventional femininity in the New Drama produced on stage mirrored the tactics and arguments of the women's suffrage movement in the late nineteenth century. "It is significant that when the 'New Woman' plays were in vogue in the 1890s, the suffrage campaign was making little headway in parliament....The new woman plays reflected this reaction against the women's rights movement by showing women struggling for sexual freedom, not legal equality."<sup>549</sup> As a result, many popular actresses who played New Women on stage in the 1890s including Ellen Terry, Elizabeth Robins, and Lena Ashwell joined the suffrage movement by the early twentieth century.

As the methods of the women's suffrage movement shifted in the early twentieth century, so too did theatrical representations of femininity and female sexuality, illustrated in Suffrage Drama. According to Mrs. Pankhurst, the WSPU was militant because women "have tried all other available means and have failed to secure justice...."<sup>550</sup> A similar aggressive stance was taken by female performers and suffragists in the theatre. Actress, writer and suffragist Elizabeth Robins claimed,

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<sup>548</sup> Campbell, *My Life and Some Letters*, 98-100. For more analysis of Sir Pinero's *The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith*, see Chapter 2. Although it appears Mrs. Patrick Campbell was not a formal member of the AFL or any other suffrage society, many female performers indirectly supported the cause through their talents. Mrs. Campbell, for example, did star in Cicely Hamilton and Christopher St. John's suffrage play, *How The Vote Was Won* at the WFL's "Green, White, and Gold Fair" at Caxton Hall, London, April 15-17, 1909. See *Woman*, 14 April, 1909.

<sup>549</sup> Holledge, *Innocent Flowers*, 35-6.

<sup>550</sup> Emmeline Pankhurst, "Why We Are Militant [1913]," in *The Militants: Suffragette Activism*, eds. Marie Mulvey Roberts and Tamae Mizuta (London: Routledge, 1994), 5-6.

“The stage career of an actress was inextricably involved in the fact that she was a woman and that those who were masters of the theatre were men. These considerations did not belong to art; they stultified art.”<sup>551</sup> In order to escape the paradox of independent female actresses representing conventional women on stage, female performers created a new role for women in the theatre: the actress-manager. By creating female managers who ran their own companies, actresses could have more choices in the parts they played, in the representations of women that were portrayed, and in the creative and financial processes as a whole. Therefore, it was up to these actress-managers and female playwrights who emerged in the Edwardian period to portray not only the ideology of the women’s suffrage movement, but the social reality of Modern Women’s lives. As a result, I maintain that the AFL posed solutions to conflicts within the suffrage movement through the performance of Suffrage Drama, and completed the legitimization of the theatre by establishing the Woman’s Theatre as a middle-class and feminist institution.

In contrast to the New Drama of the 1890s, Suffrage Drama, written and performed by members of the AFL, portray emancipated women as heroes and champions of female politics and a feminist society. Whereas New Drama depicted women’s struggle for gender equality, Suffrage Drama focused on women’s struggle for legal equality. The New Drama of the 1890s revealed an anxiety about how increased education and independence affected middle-class women’s femininity and sexuality. Suffrage Drama, on the other hand, emphasized women’s growing

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<sup>551</sup> Elizabeth Robins, *Theatre and Friendship: Some Henry James Letters* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1932), 29-30.

independence and education as an argument for political and legal equality. I argue that these plays reflect a feminist agenda by emphasizing the growing social, economic and political roles of middle-class women, the quality of relationships between the sexes, and the choices about marriage for middle-class women who were educated or financially independent. In contrast to the New Drama of the 1890s, female transgression is no longer an issue in Suffrage Drama, and the “woman-with-a-past” character, if used at all, is used only to show a change in attitudes and assumptions about liberated women and their femininity. Similarly, happiness in these plays is not found in true love, but in finding the confidence to be oneself and to stand for one’s convictions.

The plays, *Votes for Women!*, *Diana of Dobson’s*, *How the Vote was Won*, *A Woman’s Influence*, *A Pageant of Great Women*, and *A Chat with Mrs. Chicky*, discussed here were chosen because women wrote, directed, produced and performed them, and because both supporters and non-supporters of the cause attended these plays and reviewed them. Generally well-received, they were performed numerous times between 1907 and 1914 and offer dramatic and comedic entertainment on a variety of feminist issues. Most importantly, the AFL created a space within the theatre where women could work, collaborate and inspire each other. These plays not only were written, directed, produced and acted by women, but it was also primarily women who came to the theatre to see these plays. The plays, the roles and the audience all joined to create a woman-centered space and to raise a feminist consciousness for middle-class women, inspiring the conception of the Woman’s

Theatre. In other words, these examples of Suffrage Drama, the formation of the AFL, and the design of the Woman's Theatre illustrate the intersection of politics, performance, feminism, femininity and middle-class values, making them performances of modernity.

It was Elizabeth Robins' play, *Votes for Women!*, which "heralded the beginning of the suffrage theatre."<sup>552</sup> She was among the first to see the potential of the theatre as a platform for women's suffrage. The emergence of a mass suffrage movement, visualized and dramatized by the militant Suffragettes, created a natural relationship with actresses who could add to the performative spectacle of a modern, female politics. Elizabeth worked to change the male-dominated London theatre and to organize actresses as extensions of her involvement in the WSPU. She wanted to create new and exciting roles for women in the theatre, and believed that seeing innovative female characters on stage would help to promote the acceptance of their presence off stage as well. For Elizabeth, the publicity and attention that women were receiving through their involvement in the cause was important and not negative upon their character. She argued that traditionally, the difference "between doing work on the stage and doing it in the political arena" was the difference between an individual's ambition and an ambition to work on behalf of others. "There is something civilizing, ennobling, in giving up your life to the furtherance of a great impersonal object. When women, such as these I speak of, stand up in public to talk reform, their high earnestness, their forgetfulness of themselves, lends them a

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<sup>552</sup> Holledge, *Innocent Flowers*, 46.

dignity....”<sup>553</sup> Like so many suffragists, Elizabeth reveals the conventional, middle-class core of the movement by describing Modern Women as “civilizing,” “enobling,” and possessing “earnestness” and “dignity.”<sup>554</sup> In the modern world, however, she and other performers developed a feminist drama and theatre that combined the ambitions of the performer and the middle-class suffragist by illustrating the reality of emancipated women’s lives in order to seek improvement versus society’s caricature of independent women meant to maintain the gendered status quo. As such, Suffrage Drama united the collective and individual experiences of women into a performative politics, and thus produced a double consciousness for women who were actresses and suffragists.<sup>555</sup>

In *Votes for Women!*, first performed at the Court Theatre, London, in 1907, Vida Levering is the archetype of the “smart” Suffragette, who is conventionally feminine in appearance and manners although her fashion is a political statement for the campaign. When Vida Levering first enters on stage, the stage directions describe her as “an attractive, essentially feminine, and rather ‘smart’ woman of thirty-two...with a parasol over her shoulder.” Robins goes on to write that Vida is the kind

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<sup>553</sup> Robins, *Way Stations*, 40.

<sup>554</sup> For more on the middle-class nature of the women’s suffrage movement and its emphasis on Victorian notions of femininity, see Chapter 4.

<sup>555</sup> Marvin Carlson argues that the difference between doing an act and performing an act is consciousness. Richard Bauman further argues that all performances have a dual consciousness, between the audience and the performer and between the performance of an action and the model of the action. See Carlson, “What is Performance,” 70-1. I argue that when actresses performed Suffrage Drama on stage and identified themselves as both performer and suffragist, they created for themselves a double consciousness that intertwined politics and performance. Furthermore, I argue that their experiences as not only women, but also middle-class women on the public stage created another dual layer of their consciousness and identity. Emerging from the struggle between old and new that marked the age of modernity, actress-suffragists like Elizabeth Robins, Cicely Hamilton, Ellen Terry, and others in the AFL developed a multi-layered consciousness and identity that combined politics, performance, feminism and middle-class values.

of woman “of whom men and women alike say, ‘What’s her story? Why doesn’t she marry?’”<sup>556</sup> In this initial description, Robins presents Vida as a traditional, middle-class “womanly woman” through her impeccable dress, and whose hand is actively sought in marriage. At the same time, however, Vida appears as a militant Suffragette, defending the actions of the WSPU and highlighting the sexual double standard that makes women suffer more hardship than men. Robins’ description of her as “essentially feminine” suggests that although Vida displays conventional femininity through her manners and dress, she is not entirely traditional because of her public and political activism—a dialectic that Robins and Suffragettes as a whole were in the process of reconciling.<sup>557</sup>

Vida Levering’s cause is introduced right away throughout her playful conversation with St. John Greatorex, a wealthy, Liberal MP of about sixty years old. Mr. Greatorex protests against Vida traveling to London in order to raise money to build baths in a shelter for homeless women in Soho, one of many women’s causes she supports.

Greatorex: ...[W]hat can a woman like you *know* about it?...And we in the act of discussing Italian literature! Perhaps you’ll tell me that isn’t a more savoury topic for a lady.

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<sup>556</sup> Elizabeth Robins, *Votes for Women!* in *How the Vote was Won and other Suffragette Plays*, eds. Dale Spender and Carole Hayman (London: Methuen, 1985), 46; hereafter cited as *Votes for Women!*

<sup>557</sup> Although Robins falls short of fusing traditional femininity with female politics to create a new image of femininity in 1907 (as reviews will show later in this chapter), I argue that both constitutional and militant suffragists do succeed in creating a new representation of femininity personified in the Modern Woman in the years before the First World War. As illustrated within the Suffragette campaign, in particular, this femininity continues the emphasis on fashion as a symbol of beauty and sexual purity associated with Victorian ideas of the “feminine.” However, setting this femininity within a wider public environment for women that includes economic independence and political activism increasingly becomes accepted as it overshadows the emphasis on sexual naïveté. For more on the Modern Woman and the women’s suffrage movement, see Chapter 4.

Miss Levering: But for the tramp population less conducive to savouriness, don't you think, than—baths?

Greatorrex: No, I can't understand this morbid interest in vagrants. *You're* much too—leave it to the others.

Jean: What others?

Greatorrex (*with smiling impertinence*): Oh, the sort of woman who smells of indiarubber. The typical English spinster....

Miss Levering: ...Mr. Greatorrex objects...to the unsexed creatures who—a—

Lord John: ...who want to act independently of men.

Miss Levering: Vote, and do silly things of that sort....

Greatorrex: ...(*with a quizzical affectation of gallantry*): Not people like you....[Y]our frocks aren't serious enough.

Miss Levering: I'm told it's an exploded notion that the Suffrage women are all dowdy and dull.<sup>558</sup>

It is clear from Mr. Greatorrex's comments that Vida Levering looks too much like a "womanly woman" (of marriageable quality) to be interested or know anything about the campaign for women's suffrage. She is "a lady" whose "frocks aren't serious enough," unlike female suffragists who are "typical English spinster[s]," "all dowdy and dull," and "[smell] of indiarubber." In addition to being the primary consumers of fashionable dress, another product middle-class women bought in high quantities in the late nineteenth century was the bicycle, with tires made from Indian rubber. Mr. Greatorrex draws upon the bicycle as the symbol of the nineteenth-century New Woman's unconventional independence and masculinity (because she often wore divided skirts to ride) and applies this symbol to female suffragists in the Edwardian

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<sup>558</sup> Robins, *Votes for Women!*, 46-7.

period. Unlike Miss Levering, “[s]uffrage women” are “unsexed creatures” who “act independently of men.” And yet, Vida’s retort, “I’m told it’s an exploded notion that the Suffrage women are all dowdy and dull” mirrors the tactics of the Suffragettes who highlighted their conventional femininity through dress, and made “dressing fashionably” a “political act.”<sup>559</sup>

Robins reveals that Vida Levering is actually a “woman-with-a-past,” but unlike the New Drama of the 1890s, Robins subverts this convention. Vida is not shunned or uncomfortable in society circles; she is elegant and at ease in the drawing room scene in the first act. She is able to stand up against male prejudice, as seen in her witty quips to Mr. Greatorex, and unlike Sydney Grundy’s *New Women*, she never is shallow or shrill in her political arguments, which are presented as logical.<sup>560</sup> Based on her personal experience, Vida knows what it is like to be penniless, homeless, and have the difficulty of finding work based on the limited education provided to middle-class girls. It is this experience—“Some girls think it hardship to have to earn their living. The horror is not to be allowed to”—that informs her philanthropic and suffrage interests.<sup>561</sup> Vida finds her former lover’s (Geoffrey Stonor) belated proposal of marriage absurd unlike Oscar Wilde’s *Mrs. Erlynne* or Arthur Pinero’s *Paula Tanqueray* who continue to seek male rescue through marriage.

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<sup>559</sup> Kaplan and Stowell, *Theatre and Fashion*, 153-55.

<sup>560</sup> For more analysis of Sydney Grundy’s *The New Woman* (1894), see Chapter 2.

<sup>561</sup> Robins, *Votes for Women!*, 51.

Likewise, far from shunning the “worldly woman” as Wilde’s Mrs. Windermere does, in Robin’s play, Jean Dumbarton (the protagonist) is drawn to her, eager to learn.<sup>562</sup>

Inspired by Vida Levering, Jean goes to a Suffragette rally in the center of London to learn more about the women’s campaign. Audience members understood immediately the originality and excitement of setting the second act at a Suffragette rally in Trafalgar Square, the heart of this new modern, middle-class, female politics. The reviews of this scene and its overall effect upon the drama itself were very favorable. The *Times* stated it was “an admirably managed ‘living picture’ with as realistic a crowd as we have ever seen maneuvered on the stage.”<sup>563</sup> The *Pall Mall Gazette* claimed that the second act was a “unique piece of stage photography. The speakers and the crowd are alike ridiculously real; the interruptions and the oratorical ‘hits,’ the fervour of sentiment and the imitation of reason, are all perfect in their accent and proportion.”<sup>564</sup> The *Era* argued that the Trafalgar Square scene was a “slice out of life” and “the *clou* of the piece.” “The realistic way in which every detail of the scene is done is extraordinary. The coarse humours of the crowd; its insensate and impertinent interruptions, and the clever and painstaking characterization of the whole, are...worthy of the warmest praise.”<sup>565</sup> *The Clarion’s* enthusiastic review went even further. “There never was anything like it...[The]representation of a mass meeting in Trafalgar Square...is an illusion of tumultuous excitement, and a scene more compact of laughs and dramatic thrills than

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<sup>562</sup> For more analysis of Oscar Wilde’s *Lady Windermere’s Fan* (1892) and Sir Pinero’s *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* (1893), see Chapter 2.

<sup>563</sup> *Times* (London), 10 April 1907.

<sup>564</sup> *Pall Mall Gazette*, 10 April 1907.

<sup>565</sup> *Era*, 13 April 1907.

any orthodox theatre in London can now show.”<sup>566</sup> Moreover, the *Illustrated London News* agreed that the scene’s “veritable class of sex-emotions and intellectual arguments, makes better drama than we have had in scores of problem-plays.”<sup>567</sup>

The conversion of Jean to the cause in the second act seems to draw from Robins’ own introduction to the women’s campaign. By her own account, Robins’ conversion happened in 1906 on a “certain memorable afternoon in Trafalgar Square” when she “first heard women talking politics in public.”<sup>568</sup> Robins’ setting of Act Two in the public sphere of the modern city proved to be very important not only in Jean’s conversion (and Robins’ own conversion), but in developing many women’s political consciousnesses. Accounts from Kitty Marion, Mary Richardson, Gertrude Harding, and Katherine Roberts recall first encounters with the Suffragettes while out walking, shopping, or traveling within London transforming these Angels-in-the-City to Modern Women.

More importantly are the middle-class, female arguments for women’s suffrage, which Robins stages in this act. The first to address the gathering is a working-class woman, who uses suffragists’ maternal and domestic arguments by arguing for the franchise based on women’s experiences as wives and mothers. “You say we women ‘ave got no business servin’ on boards and thinkin’ about politics. Wot’s *politics*? It’s just ‘ousekeepin’ on a big scyle.”<sup>569</sup> These arguments are significant because female suffragists did not merely want to enter the male-defined

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<sup>566</sup> As quoted by Stowell in *A Stage of Their Own*, 27-8; See also *The Clarion*, 19 April 1907.

<sup>567</sup> *Illustrated London News*, 27 April 1907.

<sup>568</sup> Robins, *Way Stations*, 40.

<sup>569</sup> Robins, *Votes for Women!*, 61.

sphere of politics, but redefine that sphere. According to historian Sandra Holton, “British suffragists aimed to reform their society by domesticating public life.”<sup>570</sup> Both constitutional and militant suffragists used women’s roles as housekeepers to argue for political rights. As women cleaned the house, so too could women “clean up” society. For female suffragists, social reform was based on moral reform that built upon Victorian notions of femininity where wives and mother were the “guardians of morality.”<sup>571</sup> By focusing on women’s different experiences as women, female suffragists argued for a transformation of the political system (and society) based on women’s values. Robins’ use of a “Working Woman,” as she is known in the play is also an attempt to counter the criticism that the women’s suffrage movement was only comprised of middle-class women. Sheila Stowell claims, however, that this is the only speaker in the play that is not named, implying an element of middle-class sensitivity on the part of Robins.<sup>572</sup>

The rest of the speakers are portrayed as middle-class. The woman that follows the “Working Woman” is Ernestine Blunt, a fictional emulation of Suffragette Christabel Pankhurst. In Ernestine’s speech, Robins’ illustrates the modern, feminist agenda of the suffrage movement by exposing the intersection between economic struggle and sexual exploitation.

...[T]hey say it would be dreadful if we got the vote, because then we’d be pitted against men in the economic struggle. But that’s come about already. Do you know that out of every hundred women in this country eight-two are wage-earning women? It used to be thought unfeminine for women to be

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<sup>570</sup> Holton, *Feminism and Democracy*, 18.

<sup>571</sup> See the Introduction and Branca, *Silent Sisterhood*, 6-7.

<sup>572</sup> Stowell, *A Stage of Their Own*, 28.

students and to aspire to the arts—that bring fame and fortune. But nobody has ever said it was unfeminine for women to do the heavy drudgery that’s badly paid....Oh, no! *Let* the women scrub and cook and wash. That’s all right! But if they want to try to their hand at the better paid work of the liberal professions—oh, very unfeminine indeed!<sup>573</sup>

Like the Working Woman’s argument, here Robins employs the “difference” debate used by suffragists. Both militant and constitutional suffragists claimed that women’s different experiences and perspectives as women entitled them to the vote. However, Robins takes this argument further. She cites not only women’s experiences as housekeepers, but also their experience of being financially independent. As a working woman herself, Robins uses this speech to highlight the experiences of many Angels-in-the-City working alongside men and earning their own money as another argument for political power. Proving that they were no less feminine for working or no less capable than men of earning their own money, actress-suffragists like Robins specifically employed the same experience that shaped these Angels-in-the-City’s political consciousnesses (making them Modern Women) as another justification for wanting the vote.

It is not only here in the second act, but also in the third and final act where Robins explicitly employs the modern, feminist slogan “the personal is political” as a reason for women’s desire of the franchise.<sup>574</sup> The audience learns that the Honorable Geoffrey Stonor, Unionist M.P., was the man of Vida Levering’s past. Not receiving his father’s blessing for the marriage, coupled with Vida’s pregnancy out-of-wedlock,

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<sup>573</sup> Robins, *Votes for Women!*, 64.

<sup>574</sup> The “personal is political” is an idea that came out of the second wave feminist movement in the 1960s and 1970s. The argument behind the slogan claims that power relationships structure women’s personal and private lives. Therefore, feminist politics must confront personal issues in public through political activism to seek change. See the Introduction for more details.

forced Geoffrey to abandon her, and forced her in turn to abort the child.<sup>575</sup> In an attempt to make amends for his past behavior and to garner support for his constituency, Geoffrey provides the “political dynamite” needed to secure votes for women and to ensure his re-election.<sup>576</sup> In Robins’ suffrage drama, therefore, Vida Levering becomes the fusion of the fin-de-siècle representations of the “woman-with-a-past” and the emancipated, political New Woman yet updated to fit Edwardian society. Unlike the New Drama of the 1890s, in Robins’ play, the “woman-with-a-past” is not ostracized from society, illicitly unfeminine or desiring male protection. Joy is not found in marital bliss, but in standing up for one’s convictions, even if that is standing alone. Similarly, Robins’ political woman is not flippant, masculine, or secretly craving marriage (i.e. a New Woman), but is educated, elegant, and independent and politically astute (i.e. a Modern Woman). Furthermore, this Modern Woman, symbolized in Vida Levering, campaigns for legal equality between the sexes through political power, not for superficial gender equality depicted in New Woman characters in New Drama.<sup>577</sup>

Yet while Robins deliberately tried to offer a new feminine representation of the political, emancipated woman on stage to combat previous “masculine” images, some spectators were confused with her look (mirroring the paradox of the

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<sup>575</sup> The fact that the Examiner of Plays licensed Robins’ play, while censoring another play that also introduced the topic of abortion aroused curiosity by contemporaries of the time. It is speculated that since the termination of the pregnancy was in the distant past and caused deep regret to the woman involved in the play, the Examiner was prepared to let it go. Another possibility is that since abortion is never directly named, the Examiner missed it altogether. See Chothia, *The New Woman and Other Emancipated Woman Plays*, xxii-xxiii.

<sup>576</sup> Robins, *Votes for Women!*, 87.

<sup>577</sup> For more analysis of New Drama, see Chapter 2.

Suffragettes' image in the eyes of the public). A reviewer for the *Times* wondered whether Vida Levering was secretly "yearning to be married." Why else would she "take such care to make the best of her good looks and pretty figure and wear such charming frocks? Is it to please other women?" The critic concluded that "the cause would make much more headway than it does if all its advocates were as fair to look upon, as agreeable to hear, and as beautifully dressed as Miss Wynne Matthison [the actress who played Vida Levering]."<sup>578</sup> Overall, however, the play met high praise with the *Pall Mall Gazette* claiming, "For the sake of its revelations of the Suffragette psychology, if for nothing else (and there is a good deal else), one should not miss 'Votes for Women!'"<sup>579</sup> The *Manchester Guardian* argued that although it had taken time for "English publicists to discover what an effective medium the theatre can be...for propagandist purposes," in *Votes for Women!*, "Miss Elizabeth Robins comes along with a play of definite political advocacy, presenting with considerable skill all...of the favourable aspects of an aggressive party view. It is remarkable how effective an instrument the theatre can be made in such ingenious hands."<sup>580</sup> Similarly, the *Era* claimed, "If *Votes for Women!* does not have the effect of altering opinions as to the question of female suffrage, it will, at any rate, show the women's side of the question in a fresh light to most playgoers, who are not, as a rule, 'strong' in philanthropic facts and figures."<sup>581</sup>

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<sup>578</sup> *Times* (London), 10 April 1907.

<sup>579</sup> *Pall Mall Gazette*, 10 April 1907.

<sup>580</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 10 April 1907.

<sup>581</sup> *Era*, 13 April 1907.

Following the success of Robins' dramatic tract, actress, writer and suffragist, Cicely Hamilton debuted the romantic comedy, *Diana of Dobson's*, at the Kingsway Theatre on February 12, 1908. Like Kitty Marion, Cicely wrote of the "worldly knowledge" and agency she possessed through her life as an actor and writer. These were areas that allowed and developed self-expression and identity and influenced her political consciousness and her political propaganda.<sup>582</sup> Like Kitty, she experienced the corruption and sexual double standard that came with a life on the stage. Although the theatre claimed to adhere to the principle of equal pay for equal work, the reality was the opposite. "Stars—players who are box-office attractions—are in a class apart, and their salaries are estimated not by considerations of sex, but by their power of drawing the public. With the lesser fry of the provinces, however...the rule obtains that the average woman is paid less than the average man." This injustice was exacerbated for women because the actress often had more expenses than the actor. "In companies...which ran costume plays, clothes would be provided for the men of the cast, the women often had to find their own—and, if their dresses were not considered suitable, the management looked at them askance."<sup>583</sup>

Twice in her life on stage, Cicely also "was thrown out of work to make room for a manager's mistress" regardless of the strength of her performance in the part. "I remember how bitterly I raged in my heart at the injustice....That sort of thing is perhaps more unashamed on the stage than in other walks of life, but the intrusion of

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<sup>582</sup> Hamilton, *Life Errant*, 57.

<sup>583</sup> *Ibid.*, 43-44.

the sex-element into the business relations of men and women is by no means confined to the theatre....<sup>584</sup>

But while on tour, it was Cicely's experience of lodging with a Lancashire widow struggling to take care of her six children that inspired *Diana of Dobson's* and her involvement in the suffrage movement. "Like most women of the time who earned their living at 'middle-class' callings, I was drawn into the Woman Suffrage agitation, and for several years, I did a good deal of writing and speaking for the Cause." The primary notion that she revolted against was "the dependence implied in the idea of 'destined' marriage, 'destined' motherhood—the identification of success with marriage, of failure with spinsterhood...."<sup>585</sup> Recalling the "heroine" that she lodged with while on tour as an actress, "the memory of her struggle with poverty, her labour that ceased not, from morning till night, for an overflowing household of children...outweighed many pounds of sweet theory on the beauty and glory of motherhood."<sup>586</sup> As a result, she worked for female enfranchisement as a means to "shaken and weaken the tradition of the 'normal woman.'"<sup>587</sup> This experience provided the foundation for *Diana of Dobson's* and inspired other actresses like Lena Ashwell to join the cause as well.

It was not only Lena Ashwell's experience as a successful actress, but also her experience as a businesswoman that influenced her political awareness. In 1907, she

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<sup>584</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>585</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>586</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>587</sup> Ibid., 65.

became manager of her own theatre.<sup>588</sup> Lena intended for the Kingsway Theatre to give actors stability by guaranteeing long-term employment and producing plays by new writers. “I was to have the opportunity of freeing the theatre from the domination of the mass-mind, ‘what the public wants’, and of giving some vision of what the artist wanted...for art should lead, not be led.”<sup>589</sup>

While also starring in the lead role, the second play that Lena produced was *Diana of Dobson’s*. It was through her acquaintance with Cicely Hamilton, the great success of the play, as well as her experience as an actress and manager that prompted her into the women’s suffrage movement. “...[T]here were movements going on; for the seeds of revolution were germinating. There was much in the world that needed to be put right, and I became immersed in the suffrage movement and the position of women.”<sup>590</sup>

In *Diana of Dobson’s*, Hamilton tells the story of a shop girl, “hard up and rebellious, who, on the strength of a small legacy, makes a Cinderella-like appearance in the world that does not toil or spin.”<sup>591</sup> The play begins in darkness at a shop girls’ dormitory in Dobson’s drapery store. When one shop assistant fumbles to turn the gas light on, the stage illuminates “a bare room of the dormitory type. Very little furniture except five small beds ranged against the walls—everything plain and comfortless to the last degree.”<sup>592</sup> As the shop girls come in after a long day’s work,

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<sup>588</sup> At this time, Lena Ashwell was the only female theatrical manager in London.

<sup>589</sup> Lena Ashwell, *Myself A Player* (London: Michael Joseph Ltd., 1936), 146.

<sup>590</sup> *Ibid.*, 163.

<sup>591</sup> Hamilton, *Life Errant*, 61.

<sup>592</sup> Cicely Hamilton, *Diana of Dobson’s: A Romantic Comedy in Four Acts*, eds. Diane F. Gillespie and Doryjane Birrer (NY: Broadview Literary Texts, 2003), 75.

they proceed to undress. Although some reviewers thought the opening scene to be shocking, the mechanical nature of the undressing was a conscious choice on the part of the playwright.<sup>593</sup> Enraged that only the power of desire in women was valued by society as opposed to character or intellect, Hamilton deconstructs the eroticized image of women, especially shop assistants and their fashionable accessories, made popular by George Edwardes' musical comedies.<sup>594</sup> Sheila Stowell argues that the audience is supposed to experience "women's professionalism in the quick and efficient manner in which they discard the puffs and switches, ribbons and collars, waists and skirts that translate them into suitable representatives of attractive womanhood."<sup>595</sup> This opening scene, therefore, illustrates the essential nature of costume and its accessories to the performance of gender.

It seems for the most part, Hamilton succeeds in conveying this de-eroticism of women and establishing the hopeless circumstances of female shop assistants who accepted the "living in" system in department stores. *The Stage* objected that the "stages of undress do not happen to be made pretty," which was supported by the *Illustrated London News* who saw no titillation in the first scene, but merely "a batch of drapery assistants wearied out with the day's work, and undressing listlessly or

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<sup>593</sup> A reviewer from *The Stage* claimed that the opening scene was "an obviously make-believe going to bed, an insincere business with no bearing on the play, introduced merely for whatever sensational appeal it may have in itself....It seems...a cheap expedient, an expedient the more wanting in taste...because there is no dramatic significance to justify it." See *The Stage*, 13 February 1908.

<sup>594</sup> Cicely Hamilton, *Marriage as a Trade, fifth edition* (London: Chapman and Hall, Ltd., 1910), 246. For more analysis of George Edwardes' musical comedies like *The Shop Girl* (1894) and *Our Miss Gibbs* (1909), see Chapter 3.

<sup>595</sup> Sheila Stowell, "Drama as a Trade: Cicely Hamilton's *Diana of Dobson's*," in *The New Woman and Her Sisters: Feminism and Theatre 1850-1914*, eds. Vivien Gardner and Susan Rutherford (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 1992), 182; hereafter cited as "Drama as a Trade." A "puff" was a soft, loose roll of artificial hair and a "switch" was a heavy strand of artificial hair both worn by women to replace or supplement natural hair.

mechanically in their dormitory...”<sup>596</sup> Similarly, the *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News* argued “there is nothing approaching the improper in this episode, though we see half a dozen tired shop assistants getting into their bed clothes after revealing secrets of the unmaking of various forms of coiffure, which only a woman would have the audacity to attack.”<sup>597</sup> And the *Pall Mall Gazette* challenged the “flippant reader” who “imagines that by booking a seat at the Kingsway Theatre he will get a view of something rather scandalous and improper—well, all we shall say is, Let him book his seat! He will deserve his disappointment.”<sup>598</sup>

The women who are condemned to this bleak and difficult life as a shop assistant, Hamilton argues, are those without money or any prospects of marriage. These similar circumstances and current work in the drapery help to bond these shop girls. Along with the performance of gender displayed through undressing, living and working together also create a communal sisterhood or shared, collective identity as perpetual Angels-in-the-City. Miss Smithers who enters first to turn the gas light on is described as “well over 30, faded and practical looking.” Following her is Kitty Brant, “about 20, pretty, but pale and tired.”<sup>599</sup> Through the opening exchange, it is revealed that Kitty has made her “trade” and will be marrying soon, escaping from the dreary life as a shop girl. Played by Lena Ashwell, Diana, “about 27 or 28...pale with dark lines under her eyes, her movements... nervous and overwrought” is the

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<sup>596</sup> *The Stage*, 13 February 1908; *Illustrated London News*, 22 February 1908.

<sup>597</sup> *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, 7 March 1908.

<sup>598</sup> *Pall Mall Gazette*, 13 February 1908.

<sup>599</sup> Hamilton, *Diana of Dobson's*, 75.

personification of the playwright onstage.<sup>600</sup> In the statement below, she elucidates Hamilton's feminist message about the limited prospects of women's lives when marriage, not education, employment or independence is the only option for a successful career.

You're going to have done with it, Kitty. In three months' time you'll be married. However your marriage turns out, it will be a change for you—a change from the hosiery department of Dobson's....But I haven't any prospect of turning my back on it, and it doesn't seem to me I ever shall....The delectable atmosphere of Dobson's will follow me about wherever I go. I shall crawl round to similar establishments, cringing to be taken on at the same starvation salary—and then settle down in the same stuffy dormitory, with the same mean little rules to obey—I shall serve the same stream of intelligent customers—and bolt my dinner off the same tough meat in the same gloomy dining-room with the same mustard-coloured paper on the walls. And that's life, Kit! That's what I was born for.<sup>601</sup>

Much like Robins' Vida Levering in *Votes for Women!*, the desperation that Diana feels illustrates the problems when middle-class women are kept in the private sphere of the home, sheltered from education and the realities of life. Having once lived a comfortable, middle-class upbringing, upon her fathers' death, she is thrown out into the world with no family, inheritance or skills to make a way for herself in the world. Exacerbating her circumstances is the sexual double standard within the workplace, which keeps working women at a financial disadvantage to their male counterparts.<sup>602</sup> This hopelessness and despair is made even starker by the surprise inheritance from a distant cousin. She declares, "Girls, have you ever grasped what

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<sup>600</sup> Ibid., 79.

<sup>601</sup> Ibid., 83.

<sup>602</sup> Diana claims to make thirteen pounds a year, five bob (shilling) a week. This would have been an extremely low salary, even with housing and food provided at the drapery. Even as a poorly paid actress, Cicely Hamilton made more: approximately 1-2 pounds per week or 52-104 pounds per year. See footnote explanation by editors Gillespie and Birrer in *Diana of Dobson's*, 81.

money really is? It's power! Power to do what you like, to go where you like, to say what you like...."<sup>603</sup> Instead of saving the 300 pounds, Diana decides to spend it lavishly on herself.

In the following two acts, Hamilton illustrates the importance of economic and material means in improving a woman's life, one with no other prospects. Spending her one month at a Swiss resort in the Alps, Diana and her inheritance do indeed bring her power. Not only does she travel to the mountains where she has never been before and dress herself in the most fashionable Parisian dresses of the day, she and her inheritance are courted by two gentlemen. Sir Jabez Grinley, a former employer of Diana's (although he fails to recognize her in her new frocks), is a wealthy man, earning 40,000 pounds a year. He came from humble roots, however, boasting of the fact that he "started on two bob a week" and through hard work and perseverance became wealthy and successful.<sup>604</sup> She is also wooed by Captain Victor Bretherton, who mistakenly assumes that her annual income is 3600 pounds per year since she is spending 300 pounds in one month in the Alps. For Bretherton, Diana is an attractive match not only because she is pretty and well-mannered, but because she is worth more than he due to his "miserable six hundred pounds a year."<sup>605</sup> In these two acts, Hamilton seems to redefine class in the modern world. Instead of focusing

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<sup>603</sup> Hamilton, *Diana of Dobson's*, 87.

<sup>604</sup> Ibid., 108. "Sir Jabez" refers to his honorary knighthood, not an inherited title.

<sup>605</sup> If Diana's 300 pound inheritance were her annual income, it would have moved her into the middle class. Virginia Woolf wrote in *A Room of One's Own* (1928) that a woman must have 500 pounds per year in order to live comfortably and allow her the freedom to write. Victor Bretherton's annual 600 pound income, two decades earlier, therefore, would put him in the upper middle class. See footnote explanation by editors Gillespie and Birrer in *Diana of Dobson's*, 86; see also Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (London: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1929).

on the Victorian notion of “cultural capital”—material and economic status shaping middle-class values of respectability and morality—Hamilton reduces class to economics.<sup>606</sup> The discussion of who is of marriageable quality is centered on who earns more money and the status associated with financial earnings. In the tension between old and new and man and woman that defined modernity between 1890 and 1914, Hamilton therefore seems to argue that it is not only femininity that is being redefined, but also class.

Although it seems that money can indeed buy her anything (even a husband), Diana rejects both offers of marriage because these men have misconstrued her true circumstances. Even if she had a stable income, Sir Jabez, although a good “commercial” match, was her former employer and she detested his treatment of his workers, and Hamilton also implies that Diana is not seeking marriage only as a trade, but also for love. With Bretherton, Diana rejects him by explaining her reality, causing him to accuse her of being an “adventuress” or a conventional “woman-with-a-past.”

Diana (*lightly*): An adventuress!...For if I’m an adventuress, Captain Bretherton, what are you but an adventurer?...You were ready and willing and anxious to run after me, so long as you believed that I had money and in the hope that I should allow you to live upon that money—

Bretherton: ...If it were not a moral impossibility for a man—a man in my position—(*He stops.*)

Diana: If it were not a moral impossibility for a man in your position to marry a shop girl. That’s what you mean, isn’t it? (*He is silent.*) A shop girl—that is to say, a woman who has so far degraded herself as to

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<sup>606</sup> For more on the notion of “cultural capital,” see the Introduction.

work for her own living....only, for the life of me, I cannot understand how you and your like have the impertinence to look down on me and mine? When you thought I had married an old man for his money, you considered that I had acted in a seemly and womanly manner—when you learnt that, instead of selling myself in the marriage market—I have earned my living honestly, you consider me impossible.<sup>607</sup>

Sheila Stowell argues, however, that unlike conventional “women-with-a-past” characters such as Oscar Wilde’s Mrs. Erlynne or Arthur Pinero’s Paula Tanqueray, Diana does not manipulate Bretherton into a marriage proposal before her past is exposed, but reveals herself before considering Bretherton’s offer of marriage.<sup>608</sup> In addition, when Bretherton becomes the outraged victim of the adventuress’ ruse, Diana, according to the reviewer of the *Pall Mall Gazette* “reminds him with an energy a fighting Suffragette might envy, that a woman who has worked for her living is at least as respectable as a man who has never done a day’s work in his life, could not do it if he tried....”<sup>609</sup> The act ends with Diana challenging Bretherton to live for six months without his inheritance, earning what he can on his own skills, in order to understand what it is like for single, middle-class women to make their own way in the world. By exposing her true self while rejecting Bretherton’s proposal, in contrast to her abrupt refusal of Sir Jabez, Hamilton also foreshadows her argument that a good marriage—a good trade—is “double-motivated” for women.

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<sup>607</sup> Hamilton, *Diana of Dobson’s*, 130-2.

<sup>608</sup> Stowell, *A Stage of Their Own*, 88.

<sup>609</sup> *Pall Mall Gazette*, 13 February 1908.

This final message becomes clear in the last act, which opens on “the Thames Embankment in the small hours of a November morning.”<sup>610</sup> Three ragged figures, huddled together on a bench are seen, but instead of a hopeless and destitute Diana, the audience witnesses one of the figures to be Captain Victor Bretherton. As he is moved off by a police constable, it is revealed that Constable Fellowes once served in the Captain’s company in the Welsh Guards. This realization allows for Bretherton to explain his “homelessly unemployed” circumstances because he has taken up Diana’s challenge to earn his own living.<sup>611</sup> Diana enters shortly thereafter, her appearance greatly altered from the previous act. Gone are the glamorous Parisian dresses; “she wears a shabby hat and coat, a short skirt, muddy boots and woolen gloves with holes in several of the finger-tips.”<sup>612</sup> Bretherton tells Diana of his experience and that he has learned how hard it is to “fight the world” on one’s own, realizing that his 600 pounds a year is “not only enough for *one* to live upon—it’s ample for *two*.”<sup>613</sup> Subverting the prevailing status of women who had legal rights in marriage, Diana reexamines Bretherton’s situation as he offers her “proprietary rights in a poor backboneless creature who never did a useful thing in his life.”<sup>614</sup> In Diana’s response, Hamilton exposes her claim about the women’s double motivation in considering a marriage proposal.

Diana (*turning on him most fiercely*): Captain Bretherton—I’m homeless and penniless—I haven’t—tasted food for nearly twelve hours—I’ve been

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<sup>610</sup> Hamilton, *Diana of Dobson’s*, 135.

<sup>611</sup> *Ibid.*, 135.

<sup>612</sup> *Ibid.*, 139-40.

<sup>613</sup> *Ibid.*, 142, 144.

<sup>614</sup> *Ibid.*, 144.

half starved for days. And now, if I understand you aright—you offer to make me your wife.

Bretherton: You do understand me aright.

Diana: That is to say, you offer me a home and what is to me a fortune.

Bretherton: And myself.

Diana (*laughing harshly*): And yourself—please don't imagine I forget that important item....<sup>615</sup>

With no other prospects, Diana accepts the trade (marriage) put before her.

Although billed as a romantic comedy, this should not overshadow Hamilton's feminist message. Unlike the romantic musical comedies in the variety theatres that glamorized and eroticized the social and economic independence of shop girls, Hamilton hoped that “the story may prove to be interesting to the general public, who do not know as a rule much about the lives of shop-girls, and the want of consideration with which some of them are treated by their employers.”<sup>616</sup> Her other goal was to demonstrate “the business-like aspect of love in woman.”<sup>617</sup> Although employment opportunities were growing for middle-class women to achieve a certain degree of economic independence, the Victorian idea that women should make wifehood and motherhood their career still held strong. This lingering notion stemming from separate spheres ideology illustrated the anxiety caused from the ongoing modern struggle between old and new and man and woman. This conventional idea of womanhood also fueled a sexual double standard in the

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<sup>615</sup> Ibid., 144.

<sup>616</sup> *Pall Mall Gazette*, 8 February 1908. The bleak and desperate life of shop girls that Hamilton portrays in *Diana of Dobson's* was corroborated and chronicled by Black, *Sweated Industry and the Minimum Wage*.

<sup>617</sup> Hamilton, *Marriage as a Trade*, 207.

workplace preventing women from earning equal wages to men. In her polemic, *Marriage as a Trade*, Hamilton argues that women are generally less romantic than men due to the commercial aspect of marriage, which is vital to women's livelihood.

It is because her love has always been her livelihood that woman has never been inspired by it as man has been inspired. And it is just because it is so business-like that her interest in love is often so keen. For instance, her customary appreciation of a book or a work of art dealing with love... is the outcome of something more than sentiment and overpowering consciousness of sex. To her a woman in love is not only a woman swayed by emotion, but a human being engaged in carving for herself a career or securing for herself a means of livelihood. Her interest in a love story is, therefore, much more complex than a man's interest therein, and the appreciation which she brings to it is a very different quality.<sup>618</sup>

And yet, Hamilton claims that marriage is not merely a business transaction, but is “double-motivated.” Physical attraction, love and sentiment also play a role, making it much more “complex than a man's interest therein.”<sup>619</sup> Like Robins and other suffragists, Cicely Hamilton's implicit subtext is that the “personal is political.” Women's experiences as Angels-in-the-City shape their political awareness, but also arguments for suffrage. Yet Hamilton goes beyond the suffrage arguments based on women's difference or social justice. She subversively implies that only legal equality (achieved through political power) could enable women with choices other than marriage as a means of livelihood.

Although Hamilton attempts to show that Diana enters into the trade of domesticity not only to live, but also to love, this double motivation was not readily apparent to all. A reviewer from *The Stage* wrote, “...the audience does not know

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<sup>618</sup> Ibid., 216-17.

<sup>619</sup> Ibid., 22, 216.

exactly what to think of the girl and her masquerade....The position would be simplified if it had been brought out that Diana is in love with Bretherton.”<sup>620</sup>

Overall, however, the play was a success and Hamilton’s message about a patriarchal society that has created economic and social problems for women by narrowing their ambitions to only one, marriage, was received clearly by reviewers.<sup>621</sup> The *Times* called the play a “bright little comedy, novel in subject and fresh in treatment.” It added, “The sufferings of overworked shopgirls, the discomforts of the ‘living-in’ system, the employers’ point of view, the essential antagonism between the struggling breadwinner and the idle rich, the ‘unemployed’ problem and its difficulties—all these questions are touched upon in a narrative which might be called ‘Diana’s legacy and what she did with it...’”<sup>622</sup> *The World* called it “delightfully fresh and real....one never loses the feeling that the characters are men and women. Never do they degenerate into stage puppets.”<sup>623</sup> Perhaps a testament to Hamilton’s feminist goal (and that of the AFL later on), the *Era* lauded the play “produced quite apropos of the agitation against ‘living in’ and of the cry for female suffrage. It voices very boldly the revolt of the modern woman against her subjection, her craving for interest in life, her hatred of monotony, and her desire for a ‘good time’...The piece...has the great advantage of striking what is practically a new ground for dramatic cultivation.”<sup>624</sup>

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<sup>620</sup> *The Stage*, 13 February 1908.

<sup>621</sup> Hamilton, *Marriage as a Trade*, 8.

<sup>622</sup> *Times* (London), 13 February 1908.

<sup>623</sup> *The World*, 19 February 1908.

<sup>624</sup> *Era*, 15 February 1908. In the program for *Diana of Dobson’s*, Lena Ashwell, manager of the Kingsway Theatre, wrote that due to the play’s success in London and the provinces, she was taking her London company on tour to other cities in Britain—Bristol, Liverpool, Newcastle, Glasgow, Dublin—during the summer 1908. *Diana of Dobson’s* was so successful with audiences that it was

Using their experiences as actresses and dissatisfaction with male-dominated drama, Elizabeth Robins and Cicely Hamilton proclaimed the beginning of a suffrage theatre. Although these women had begun to write plays that depicted the reality of women's lives, they were still working as individuals. With the emergence of a mass, modern movement of female politics in the early twentieth century, thousands of actresses joined the cause. Out of this united struggle, Suffrage Drama emerged fully through the Women Writers' Suffrage League (WWSL) and the AFL as did the first Woman's Theatre. Prompted in part by the success of *Votes for Women!*, Cicely Hamilton and novelist Bessie Hatton created the WWSL in June 1908. With Elizabeth Robins as President, the League's objective was to obtain the vote for women on the same terms as men through "the use of the pen."<sup>625</sup> Membership was granted to anyone who had published and included among Elizabeth, Cicely and Bessie, journalist Evelyn Sharp and novelists Sarah Grand and Beatrice Harraden.

With the creation of the WWSL came the formation of the AFL, which collaborated with each other, but also overlapped in members (particularly playwrights who were also actresses). In December 1908, 400 actresses gathered at the Criterion Restaurant in London for the first meeting of the AFL. After speeches concerning the current situation of women and a declaration in support of women's suffrage took place, the AFL passed the following resolution: "That this meeting of actresses calls upon the Government immediately to extend the franchise to women;

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revived at the Kingsway Theatre in 1909. See *Kingsway Theatre Programme*, 12 February 1908, London Playbills, John Johnson Collection, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, Oxford.

<sup>625</sup> Robins, *Way Stations*, 106.

that women claim the franchise as a necessary protection for the workers under modern industrial conditions, and maintain that by their labour they have earned the right to this defence.”<sup>626</sup> As seen in the suffrage movement thus far, many middle-class women cited their experience of working alongside men and earning their own living as shaping their political consciousnesses. Actresses, in particular, had been working in public far longer than other middle-class women and sought to protect working women who still experienced a sexual double standard in working conditions and wages. Echoing *Votes for Women!* and *Diana of Dobson's*, the AFL claimed that only political power through the vote would bring legal equality and provide working women with equal opportunities and rights, sustaining the Modern Woman in London society. Membership in the AFL was open to anyone involved in the theatrical profession so in addition to Elizabeth and Cicely, members included Lena Ashwell, Ellen Terry, Edith Craig, Lillie Langtry, Eva Moore and Kitty Marion.

Although many of the leading actresses of the period had been converted to the cause by the WSPU and often identified with their theatrical and spectacular militant methods, the AFL consisted of members who belonged to the WSPU, the WFL and the NUWSS. As a result, the AFL decided to remain impartial about suffrage tactics and support all suffrage societies. Vice-President, Eva Moore, claimed that the AFL was “‘non-party and non-political.’ Though it did not advocate the extreme measures, it did not condemn; its policy was ‘The aim of everything.’”<sup>627</sup> Moore’s claim, however, is a bit inaccurate. The AFL may have been non-party or

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<sup>626</sup> *Votes for Women*, 24 December 1908.

<sup>627</sup> Moore, *Exits and Entrances*, 94.

non-partisan, but it was a political body as evidenced not only through the writing and performing of Suffrage Drama, but also through the AFL's participation in mass demonstrations, exhibitions and meetings with the NUWSS, WSPU and the WFL. Furthermore, in its constitution, the League's objectives consciously were established to provide and to promote political propaganda.

1. To convince members of the Theatrical profession of the necessity of extending the franchise to women.
2. To work for Votes for Women on the same terms as they are, or may be, granted to men by educational methods, such as:--
  1. Propaganda Meetings.
  2. Sale of Literature.
  3. Propaganda Plays.
  4. Lectures.
3. To assist all other Leagues whenever possible.<sup>628</sup>

Although many members of the AFL were members of the WSPU and sympathized with hunger strikers, only a few were directly involved in militant action. As working actresses, they could not afford to spend one night in jail, never mind a month or more, when a missed performance could cost them their employment, including future engagements. For example, Kitty Marion, a member of the AFL and WSPU, was repeatedly arrested, imprisoned and forcibly fed, which in turn forced her to give up her career on the music-hall and variety stage. Most of the actresses in the AFL, however, worked in traditional theatres, and were not willing to give up their careers for the cause. In addition, actresses were aware that even within their own profession which offered more agency for women, men in their profession were not always supportive of women's involvement in politics and could therefore

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<sup>628</sup> "Actresses' Franchise League Constitution," 1912, 1-2, Records of the Actresses' Franchise League, Box FL 598, Women's Library, London.

make their lives more difficult. For example, in her autobiography, actress and manager Lena Ashwell recalled a visit to Herbert Beerbohm Tree<sup>629</sup> about a business matter. Arriving with a short story entitled, “The Soul of a Suffragette,” by W. L. Courtney in her hand, “Tree picked it up and with a magnificent gesture of contempt flung it into the far corner of the room.”<sup>630</sup> Reflecting upon this incident, she wrote, “It is impossible to realise now the scorn which women who thought that they should be recognised as citizens drew upon themselves from otherwise quite polite and sensible people. Managers, authors, pressman became quite passionate in their resentment....”<sup>631</sup> With militancy not an option and plays for the cause not yet written, the AFL began by giving speeches or providing other entertainment (recitations or songs) at other societies’ meetings. Actresses were ideal for this since many middle-class women had no performance skills or experience speaking in public. As the AFL grew, however, it quickly realized a “new field of propaganda” could be embarked upon by “illustrat[ing] the speeches and pamphlets of the earlier Suffrage societies in dramatic form.”<sup>632</sup> As a result, it established a play department, directed by Inez Bensusan, who supervised the writing, publishing and performing of Suffrage Drama.<sup>633</sup>

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<sup>629</sup> In 1887, Herbert Beerbohm Tree ran the Haymarket Theatre, and in 1897 helped to fund His Majesty’s Theatre both centered in the West End of London. He encouraged the New Drama staging plays of Ibsen and Wilde. Not only known for his management, Tree was also a prominent actor often playing leading roles like that in George Bernard Shaw’s *Pygmalion* in 1914.

<sup>630</sup> Ashwell, *Myself A Player*, 164. William Leonard Courtney’s “The Soul of a Suffragette,” debates the arguments for militancy and the value of the sacrifice made by women who engaged in violent protest.

<sup>631</sup> *Ibid.*, 164.

<sup>632</sup> A.J.R., ed., *Suffrage Annual and Woman’s Who’s Who* (London: Stanley Paul & Co., 1913), 10.

<sup>633</sup> Inez Bensusan was a professional actress in Australia before emigrating to England. She was also a prolific writer, publishing short stories and many articles on women’s suffrage.

The AFL's first smash hit was Cicely Hamilton's and Christopher St. John's<sup>634</sup> farce, *How the Vote Was Won*. First performed at the Royalty Theatre in April 1909, a modest clerk, Horace Cole, is converted to the women's suffrage campaign by the successive and inconvenient arrival of economically emancipated and politically conscious female relatives. The suffrage campaign *in* the play, as well as the suffragist writers *of* the play satirize the nineteenth-century argument that women should not have the vote because they are dependent on men physically, intellectually, socially, economically and politically. By parodying this ideology of separate spheres, the AFL illustrated not only how impractical the ideology was, but also how old-fashioned and out of place it was in the modern world. The play opens with women everywhere going on strike and reporting to their nearest male relative "to be supported." Each woman that comes to Horace Cole's doorstep demands food and lodging as part of a campaign to expose the folly of anti-suffrage arguments that espouse the Victorian belief that women's place was in the home. The intended result of the strike is that men will not be able to afford to support all of their female relations and will do anything to shirk this responsibility—even giving women the vote. With its debut play, the AFL, therefore, expanded the arguments for women's suffrage beyond the "difference" debate or the demands for social justice within the movement. Suffragist playwrights like Hamilton and St. John drew from middle-class women's experiences working in the city and being financially independent like

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<sup>634</sup> Christopher St. John is a pseudonym used by Christabel Marshall, who went on to write novels. She was the life partner of actress, director, suffragist Edy Craig, who was the daughter of renowned actress Ellen Terry.

men as a basis for deserving the vote. In other words, the individual and collective experience of living and working in the city that transformed Angels-in-the-City into Modern Women became the same reason to campaign for women's suffrage.

Among Horace Cole's female relatives who visit him are a governess, writer, dressmaker, music hall performer and landlady, providing multiple, real representations of the Modern Woman. Horace's sister, Agatha, a "weary looking" governess of "about thirty-five" dressed in "National Union colours" appears on his doorstep first.<sup>635</sup> Although she has worked since age eighteen, Agatha argues that since her work and thus her citizenship is not recognized by the nation, she will return to her "proper place" within the home provided by her closest male relative. Echoing feminist arguments and experience of Vida Levering in *Votes for Women!* and Diana Massingberd in *Diana of Dobson's*, Agatha declares, "Yes, I was a lady—such a lady that at eighteen I was thrown upon the world, penniless, with no training whatever which fitted me to earn my own living. When women become citizens I believe that daughters will be given the same chances as sons, and such a life as mine will be impossible."<sup>636</sup>

The importance of fashion and a consumer culture in creating a modern femininity for middle-class women and inspiring a political awareness is embodied in the dressmaker, Madame Christine, Horace's second cousin. When she first appears

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<sup>635</sup> "National Union colours" refers to the red, green, and white of the law-abiding, constitutionalist organization, the NUWSS. The fact that Agatha is a member of the NUWSS, and later Madame Christine is introduced as a member of the WSPU, illustrates the AFL's nonpartisan stance with regard to suffrage tactics. As a result, it allowed them to help dramatize and propagate the cause for all suffrage societies.

<sup>636</sup> Cicely Hamilton and Christopher St. John, *How the Vote Was Won*, (London: Garden City Press, 1909), 15-16.

on stage, she is getting out of a motor car—a significant sign of her affluence contrasted with Horace’s modest clerk’s salary of £3 10s. a week. In the stage directions, she is described as “dressed smartly and tastefully, age about forty, manners elegant, smile charming, speech resolute,” a description illustrated in one of the few surviving photographs of the performance by a stylish, long fur stole and muff.<sup>637</sup> Her gown is “trimmed in what one assumes to be purple and green” (WSPU colors).<sup>638</sup> The expanding opportunities for independence offered to middle-class women due to the collapse of separate spheres and the symbiotic relationship between consumer culture and female politics are made clear in the exchange between Horace and Madame Christine.

Horace: My dear madam, do you realize that my salary is £3 10s. a week—and that my house will hardly hold your luggage, much less you?

Madame C.: Then you must agitate. Your female relatives have supported themselves up till now, and asked nothing from you. I myself, dear cousin, was, until this morning, running a profitable dressmaking business in Hanover Square....

Molly: I know! I’ve never been able to afford you.

Horace: Do you think that you are justified in coming to a poor clerk and asking him to support you—you could probably turn over my yearly income in a single week! Didn’t you come here in your own motor?

Madame C.: At three o’clock that motor became the property of the Women’s Social and Political Union. All the rest of my property and all available cash have been divided equally between the National Union and the Women’s Freedom League. Money is the sinews of war, you know.

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<sup>637</sup> Ibid., 18. The emphasis on “speech resolute” is an indication that Madame Christine had experience speaking in public as a Suffragette for the cause.

<sup>638</sup> Kaplan and Stowell, *Theatre and Fashion*, 176.

Horace: Do you mean to tell me that you've given all your money to the Suffragettes! It's a pity you haven't a husband. He'd very soon stop your doing such foolish things.

Madame C.: I had a husband once. He liked me to do foolish things—for instance, to support him. After that unfortunate experience, Cousin Horace, you may imagine how glad I am to find a man who really is a man, and will support me instead....<sup>639</sup>

In this exchange, Hamilton and St. John emphasize the significance of middle-class women's growing independence and participation in the economic sphere as Angels-in-the-City in developing their political consciousnesses, and thus making them Modern Women. Madame Christine is more successful and affluent in her career as a dressmaker than Horace is as a clerk. This experience and "worldly knowledge" has shaped her political awareness, and this economic freedom has given her the opportunity to become politically active, which she does in part by providing financial support to the cause. The AFL also illustrates its impartiality or nonpartisanship towards the cause in this exchange. Although Madame Christine is clearly a Suffragette or member of the WSPU (represented by the colors of white, green, and purple that she wears), her worldly possessions are divided evenly among the NUWSS, WSPU and WFL. Much like the contradictory image of the WSPU, while adopting masculine and militaristic language by discussing "money" as the "sinews of war"—the war being the campaign for the vote waged between men and women—she is depicted as the epitome of femininity: impeccably dressed in a beautiful, elegant gown, and exuding a graceful poise and propriety.<sup>640</sup>

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<sup>639</sup> Hamilton and St. John, *How the Vote Was Won*, 19-20.

<sup>640</sup> For more analysis about the paradox of the WSPU's militancy and femininity, see Chapter 4.

Simultaneously, she parodies gender norms established by the Victorian ideology of separate spheres by implying her last husband was not masculine because she was the breadwinner, and sarcastically declaring her relief to finally have found in Horace “a man who really is a man, and will support me instead.”

Maudie Spark, a music hall *chanteuse* and Horace’s cousin, also illustrates how women embraced the urban and commercial culture of the city to further female politics and a new, modern representation of femininity. Although Horace believes that Maudie is a “skeleton in the cupboard of a respectable family” illustrating old concerns about women on stage, Hamilton and St. John portray her as intelligent, political, energetic, cheerful and having “a heart of gold.” With an increase in the number of middle-class women on stage, the shift in notions of femininity due to George Edwardes’ musical comedies, and the growing political consciousnesses of women, Maudie Spark becomes the onstage personification of those Modern Women, like Kitty Marion, Eva Moore and Ellen Terry engaged in the AFL.

In a frustrated effort to relieve himself from the women who continue to invade his household (and his pockets), Horace attempts to escape by going to the theatre.<sup>641</sup> In the following speech, Maudie elucidates how the opportunities and freedom provided by an expanding urban and commercial market have directly informed a female political consciousness.

Silly jay! [T]he theatres are all closed—and the halls too. The actresses have gone on strike—resting indefinitely. I’ve done my little bit

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<sup>641</sup> Horace’s attempt to escape to the theatre is reminiscent of Sydney Grundy’s *The New Woman* (1894). *New Woman*, Agnes Sylvester, neglects her “womanly” duties as a wife, driving her husband to the Empire Music Hall to escape her emancipated ways. For more analysis of Grundy’s play, see Chapter 2.

towards that. They won't get any more work out of Maudie Spark, Queen of Comédiennes, until the women have got the vote. Ladies and fellow-relatives, you'll be pleased to hear the strike's going fine. The big drapers can't open to-morrow. One man can't fill the place of fifteen young ladies at once, you see. The duchesses are out in the streets begging people to come in and wash their kids. The City men are trying to get taxi-men in to do their typewriting. Every man, like Horry here, has a house full of females. Most of 'em thought, like Horry, that they'd go to the theatre to escape. But there's not a blessed theatre to go to! Oh, what a song it'll make. "A woman's place is the home—I don't think, I don't think, I don't think."<sup>642</sup>

Not only is Hamilton's and St. John's play itself a symbol of performance made political, but Maudie's speech within the play reiterates the strong link between a female economic consciousness and a female political consciousness transforming Angels-in-the-City into Modern Women. "The theatres are all closed—and the halls too" indicates that these spaces are not just for mass entertainment for the consumer, but have become spaces of female political resistance because "they won't get any more work out of Maudie Spark, Queen of Comédiennes, until the women have got the vote." The theatre is no longer a place for men "to escape to," but a space for the performance of a female politics that reaffirms a new, modern image of middle-class women as feminine, self-reliant, and political.

It is not only the theatre within the play itself, but also the theatre in which this play is performed that the AFL's mission and message is accomplished. As the AFL began to create woman-centered plays in performance, writing and direction, the space of the theatre where they were performed also became a new stage for a female politics and female-centered society. This feminist political message shines through

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<sup>642</sup> Hamilton and St. John, *How the Vote Was Won*, 21.

in the final scene where Horace's conversion to the cause is illustrated through a speech hypothetically addressed to Parliament.

...What do they expect? You can't all marry. There aren't enough men to go round, and if you're earning your own living and paying taxes you ought to have a say; it's only fair....I know what the vote does for me. It gives me a status; that's what you women want—a status. (*All: Yes, yes; a status.*)...Gentlemen, conditions have changed, and women have to work. Don't men encourage [women] to work, *invite* them to work? (*Agatha: Make them work.*)...If you aren't going to give...them [the vote], gentlemen, and if they won't go back to their occupations without it, we ask you, how they're going to live? Who's going to support them?...Why shouldn't they have a voice in the law which regulate the price of food and clothes? Don't they pay for their food and clothes? (*Maudie: Paid for mine all my life.*)...<sup>643</sup>

This speech highlights the reality of Modern Women's lives. They “earn [their] own living,” “pay taxes,” and “pay for their food and clothes.” Their experience participating in urban life alongside men as workers and consumers and their resulting economic independence becomes the basis not only for their political consciousness, but also a logical justification for the vote—a recognition of their citizenship. With the last line of the play delivered by Horace—“When you want a thing done, get a man to do it! Votes for Women!”—the AFL mocks traditional gendered notions that do not fit in the modern world. The plot and message of the play also depicts, however, that continuous tug of war between old and new and man and woman within modern life. On the one hand, Hamilton and St. John illustrate the unique progress of women's economic independence and a female politics, but on the other hand, the potential danger of a woman-centered society to men's established authority, power and control.

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<sup>643</sup> Ibid., 26, 28.

As the AFL's debut play, it proved to be one of the most popular suffrage dramas. Audiences and critics alike saw no conflict with mixing political propaganda and playwriting; in fact, they took quite the opposite stance. According to the *Pall Mall Gazette*, "The fact that it is so acutely controversial is not at all against it—is, in fact, a virtue rather than a defect, for the theatre of Ideas is upon us. All that really matters is that it is clever and witty, and that it kept yesterday's audience brimming with excitement and in roars of laughter."<sup>644</sup> *The Stage* wrote, "Beneath its fun there is a deal of propaganda, which, however rather engenders the wish that political questions could be made as lively and as pleasant in another place."<sup>645</sup> The *Daily Graphic* concurred. "It is an ingenious idea, and the play is full of clever lines. A crowded house was provoked to cheering and counter-demonstrations by the vigorous arguments."<sup>646</sup> Similarly, the *Star* remarked that "the desolating effects of a general strike of women workers...are as significant as they are truly comic,"<sup>647</sup> and the *Times* exclaimed, "The audience were delighted. How could they help it?...The *dénouement*, conceived and carried out in the finest spirit of farce, reflects the highest credit on the authors."<sup>648</sup>

Although *How the Vote Was Won* debuted in April, it was at the Women's Exhibition at the Prince's Skating Rink in Knightsbridge in May 1909 where the AFL formally introduced its first propaganda plays for the cause. Organized by the WSPU, the exhibition's objective was to publicize the cause, gain new supporters and

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<sup>644</sup> *Pall Mall Gazette*, 14 April 1909.

<sup>645</sup> *The Stage*, 14 April 1909.

<sup>646</sup> *Daily Graphic*, 14 April 1909.

<sup>647</sup> *Star*, 14 April 1909.

<sup>648</sup> *Times* (London), 14 April 1909.

raise money, while also displaying the many “feminine talents” of women—talents that highlighted their conventional femininity, while also being utilized to support a middle-class female politics. Inside the great hall were striking murals, painted by Sylvia Pankhurst, and life-size models depicted the Suffragette life in prison cells and in court rooms. Stalls run by local branches of the WSPU sold hats, flowers, dresses, books, candles, sculptures and household crafts. *The Christian Commonwealth* observed, “Purple, white, and green everywhere, from the first moment that you catch sight of Prince’s Skating Rink in the distance, and everyone in your omnibus cranes forward to see ‘whatever those Suffragettes are doing now!’”<sup>649</sup> The *Sphere* claimed that although “great activity prevails in the various women’s leagues founded for the enfranchisement of their sex...it has been left for the Suffragettes to devise something quite original in exhibitions in order to attract sympathisers and new recruits.”<sup>650</sup>

Adding to women’s work in flower-arranging, millinery, needle-work and painting were the plays written and performed by the AFL adding to the overall dramatic and colorful spectacle of the Exhibition. In addition to the multiple performances of the successful *How the Vote Was Won*, Gertrude Jennings debuted her popular comedy, *A Woman’s Influence*. Like *Votes for Women!*, *Diana of Dobson’s* and *How the Vote Was Won*, it also emphasizes women’s suffering due to their lack of political and economic equality. In *A Woman’s Influence*, Jennings examines the practice of women’s “indirect influence”, a residual anti-suffrage argument stemming from separate spheres ideology. Margaret, the wife of Herbert

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<sup>649</sup> As reproduced in *Votes for Women*, 28 May 1909.

<sup>650</sup> *Ibid.*, 28 May 1909.

Lawrence, is the feminist representation of the “womanly woman” or one image of the Modern Woman. She is a “grave, beautiful woman of twenty-seven or twenty-eight,” and although married and a mother, she is also a writer and as such, remains financially independent from her husband.<sup>651</sup> She is also an active member in the suffrage movement and believes that until women have the vote, they cannot promote any sort of successful social change. In the play, her argument for women’s suffrage is supported by her desire to improve the appalling working conditions and wages of women at a local factory. The conventional act of philanthropy is rejected by Margaret when her husband suggests that she send a check. For Margaret, as with other suffragists, charity was not enough to instigate change anymore; only political power (through the vote) could really affect women’s lives. As Margaret argues, “It isn’t only money...that they want, it’s their whole social condition that’s wrong.”<sup>652</sup>

...What are these poor women to do unless they work? This one, Annie Matthews, has been deserted by her husband. She brings up and supports his children, by making shirts at 1*d.* an hour. Liza Green works inside the factory, standing for eight hours, though her baby is only a week old. Mary Ball, wage earner for the household, husband drinks—she does one man’s work for the Factory at Hill Rise, but because she’s a woman she only gets half wage.<sup>653</sup>

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<sup>651</sup> Gertrude Jennings, *A Woman’s Influence in How the Vote was Won and other Suffragette Plays*, eds. Dale Spender and Carole Hayman (London: Methuen, 1985), 129; hereafter cited as *A Woman’s Influence*.

<sup>652</sup> *Ibid.*, 129.

<sup>653</sup> *Ibid.*, 131. This focus on working-class women was an attempt on the part of the AFL and other suffrage societies to show that their movement was not just for middle-class women. Suffragists campaigned for the vote “on the same terms as men” meaning they wanted the vote for all women in order to improve society, and ultimately make it more female-centered. For many working women, however, the suffrage movement seemed “self-indulgent” because of its sensational quality and time-commitment, which working women could not afford. For more analysis of the middle-class nature of the women’s suffrage movement, see Chapter 4. See also Liddington and Norris, *One Hand Tied Behind Us*.

In contrast to Margaret, Mrs. Perry, “a pretty babyish little woman of thirty-five” who is an anti-suffragist and a widow with substantial financial means and no children suggests that Margaret “coax [her] husband into helping [her].”<sup>654</sup> As she argues, “All these things, dear Margaret, are so easy to get from men. A woman’s influence...”<sup>655</sup> In fact, it is Margaret’s own husband Herbert, who echoes this Victorian convention in the beginning of the play when he says to Margaret, “pretty women like you. Always get what you want, you know; ask me, I’ll do it; ask your husbands! Much better than fussing about votes for yourselves. What are votes? Sweet womanly influence worth much more.”<sup>656</sup> When Margaret refuses to use such degrading means, Mrs. Perry attempts to do so to prove her point. To prepare to “coax” Herbert, Mrs. Perry “powders her nose, and puts her hair straight, makes a face at the door, sits by table, leans her head on her hands, pretends to cry.”<sup>657</sup> As Herbert comes in, he naturally tries to console her. Through such “womanly influence,” Mrs. Perry convinces Herbert to talk with his M.P. to improve the working conditions at the local factory. A split second later, however, Mrs. Perry rescinds her appeal when she learns that the factory in question is the one where her income is invested. Improvement in workers’ wages would cause a plummet in the worth of shares. When Margaret reveals the motivation behind Mrs. Perry’s sudden reversal of appeal, Herbert realizes his own folly and agrees to help the women’s movement.

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<sup>654</sup> Jennings, *A Woman’s Influence*, 131.

<sup>655</sup> *Ibid.*, 132.

<sup>656</sup> *Ibid.*, 129.

<sup>657</sup> *Ibid.*, 134.

*A Woman's Influence* is meant to demonstrate the damaging effects of the long-standing and accepted notion of woman's indirect influence (a justification for why women did not need the vote) and to argue for a direct and equal participation of women in politics. As Margaret explains:

It isn't really amusing if one thinks of all the sin and misery that lie underneath it all, the helplessness of Woman using her one weapon, sometimes beautifully, sometimes merely frivolously (like today), sometimes with degradation, but always—always the same weapon. Ah, if you men would only give us *another* one, the use of our intelligence, so that we could realise that we are reasonable creatures, fit to be heard equally with man, not parasites....<sup>658</sup>

The reviewer of *Votes for Women* claimed that *A Woman's Influence* took this anti-suffragist argument of “womanly influence”, rooted in separate spheres ideology and “expose[d] its naked hypocrisy....Mrs. [Margaret] Lawrence...is the very embodiment of the new spirit which is pervading the women of the younger generation, not anti-man, not bigoted, but deep-sighted and wise, who know just what a woman's influence really means, and just what the vote would do.”<sup>659</sup> With the plays *A Woman's Influence* and *How the Vote Was Won*, the AFL provided the public with its first attempt to produce non-controversial propaganda plays, in order to persuade people to the cause, but also to maintain their commitment to serve all suffrage societies regardless of tactics. As *Votes for Women* concluded:

We hope that all these plays will be performed before the general public many times. From different points of view they tell the same story, and all point the same moral, but though they are propagandist in their character, they are full

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<sup>658</sup> Ibid., 136-7.

<sup>659</sup> *Votes for Women*, 28 May 1909.

of life and reality, and will be quite sure to keep any audience fully interested from beginning to end.<sup>660</sup>

The next big production that the AFL provided for the mass public was Cicely Hamilton's *A Pageant of Great Women*. This performance at the Scala Theatre on November 10, 1909, directed by Edy Craig, was the highlight of a four-hour matinée designed as a fundraiser for the AFL and the WWSL.<sup>661</sup> In this allegory, Woman, desiring to be free, pleads with Justice (a beautiful woman) for social and political liberty, while Prejudice (a man) argues against her. One argument of Prejudice is that women are innately ignorant, making them incapable of mature and intelligent thought. In response, Woman argues that if society treats women only as sexual objects, then that is what they eventually will become. Through the character of Woman, Hamilton argues that ignorance and immaturity are not innate in women, but a social convention that has been repeatedly imposed upon them.

Oh, well, indeed well does this come from you,  
 Who held the body as all, the spirit as naught—  
 From you who saw us only as a sex!  
 Who did your worst and best to quench in us  
 The very spark and glow of the intellect:  
 Who blew a jeer at the leap and glimmer of it  
 And smothered it with laughter!...This from you  
 Who praised a simper far above a thought—  
 Who prized a dimple far beyond a brain!

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<sup>660</sup> Ibid., 28 May 1909.

<sup>661</sup> Daughter of well-known actress, Ellen Terry, Edy Craig was a suffragist, actress, director, and founder of the Pioneer Players in 1911. I will not examine the Pioneer Players in this dissertation because they did not define themselves as a woman-centered institution. Although women were involved in the performance, writing and direction, men also participated on stage and in the behind-the-scenes work. Although claiming to be political and feminist, the Pioneer Players refused to categorize or define their work in relation to a single political movement or group, making it difficult to identify their politics. Furthermore, although they grew out of the AFL, they did not conform to writing and performing Suffrage Drama, and the majority of their work was during the First World War and afterwards. See Katherine Cockin: *Women and Theatre in the Age of Suffrage: The Pioneer Players, 1911-1925* (New York: Palgrave, 2001).

So we were trained to simper, not to think:  
So were we bred for dimples, not for brains!<sup>662</sup>

To counter Prejudice's foolish objections, which draw from anti-suffrage arguments of the day, Woman calls upon famous women—learned women, saintly women, artists, heroines, rulers and warriors—to come forward, ultimately forcing Prejudice to fall silent and slink away. Some of these famous figures include Hypatia, Lady Jane Grey, Jane Austen, Sappho, Nance Oldfield, St. Hilda, Elizabeth Fry, Queen Victoria, Joan of Arc, Boadicea and Florence Nightingale.<sup>663</sup> The only “famous woman” who speaks is the early eighteenth-century actress, Nance Oldfield. Played by Ellen Terry, one of the great actresses of the modern period, her speech exploits the multiple liminal and theatrical elements of the moment, as well as the AFL's existence and purpose.

By your leave,  
Nance Oldfield does her talking for herself!  
If you, Sir Prejudice, had had your way,  
There would be never an actress on the boards.  
Some lanky, squeaky boy would play my parts:  
And, though I say it, there'd have been a loss!  
The stage would be as dull as now 'tis merry—

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<sup>662</sup> Cicely Hamilton, *A Pageant of Great Women in Literature of the Women's Suffrage Campaign in England*, ed. Carolyn Christensen Nelson (Orchard Park, NY: Broadview Press, 2004), 223; hereafter cited as *A Pageant of Great Women*.

<sup>663</sup> Hypatia was born in Alexandria about 370 CE and was a Neoplatonist philosopher; Lady Jane Grey was the Queen of England for ten days in 1553 and learned in Greek, Latin, Italian, French, Hebrew and Arabic; English novelist, Jane Austen wrote such famous works as *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility*; Sappho was a poet born in Lesbos in 630 BCE; Nance Oldfield was one of the earliest and most celebrated English actresses in the early eighteenth century; St. Hilda was founder of Whitby Abbey in the seventh century; Elizabeth Fry was a nineteenth-century philanthropist who reformed prison conditions for women; Queen Victoria reigned England from 1837-1901; Joan of Arc was a fifteenth-century French warrior that delivered France from the English; Boadicea was Queen of the Iceni and led British forces against the Romans in the first century CE; and Florence Nightingale was a nurse in Crimea during the nineteenth century and the first to be decorated with the Order of Merit. See Carolyn Christensen Nelson, ed., *Literature of the Women's Suffrage Campaign in England* (New York: Broadview Press, Ltd., 2004), 229-232.

No Oldfield, Woffington, or—Ellen Terry!<sup>664</sup>

Many of the “famous women” already had appeared in other dramatic “pageants”, namely, the WSPU’s theatrical processions and demonstrations in the streets of London. For example, Abbess Hilda, Jane Austen and Joan of Arc figured prominently in many processions between 1908 and 1911. The *Pageant* itself was a symbol of a woman-centered drama and theatre that combined performance, middle-class politics and feminism. As part of the AFL’s mission, the *Pageant* offered fifty-two actresses parts that provided positive and inspiring images of women and was a very striking difference from the majority of entertainment in the West End.<sup>665</sup> For instance, only one month before, *Votes for Women* claimed, “There is not one play on the London stage at the present time which takes any account of women except on the level of housekeeping machines or bridge players—the actual or potential property of some man, valuable or worthless as the case may be.”<sup>666</sup> Although these “famous women” may have been exceptional for the times in which they lived, I argue that highlighting them in this *Pageant* was a way to include such extraordinary women within the larger feminist movement. In contrast to those who viewed female saints, warriors, queens, writers and artists as an anomaly—as an example to which most women could never aspire thereby continuously subordinating women—suffragists

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<sup>664</sup> Hamilton, *A Pageant of Great Women*, 225. In this one speech, Cicely Hamilton exposes the multiple liminal aspects of the scene producing several layers of irony for the audience. Ellen Terry is a famous actress at the time she plays Nance Oldfield (a famous actress of the eighteenth century), and cites herself as not existing if it were not for actresses like Oldfield who paved the way. In addition, this speech and the entire play highlight the performers on stage as not only actresses, but also suffragists on the wider stage of the city of London since the play was produced by the AFL. Furthermore, the dual identity of performers as suffragists also exposes the duality of the *Pageant*: it was not only theatrical entertainment, but also political propaganda.

<sup>665</sup> Holledge, *Innocent Flowers*, 70.

<sup>666</sup> *Votes for Women*, 8 October 1909.

used these extraordinary women in plays and processions to fight side by side with average women engaged in the movement. Suffragists, therefore, deliberately connected their modern movement for women's rights to a history of notable women. The visual display of these great women on the public stage signified suffragists' claim to be acknowledged as modern subjects, and yet continued a tradition of women's achievements. The *Pageant* also was intended to raise further the political and feminist consciousness of women. For example, the *Vote* printed the following advertisement for a performance of the *Pageant* in Kent:

You believe that women have been great, that they are great. Come to the Public Hall, Beckenham, on Saturday, September 24<sup>th</sup> and realise your beliefs! As learned women and saintly women, artists, heroines, rulers, and warriors pass before you, as you hear of the work they have accomplished, give rein to your enthusiasm, let your hands proclaim your pride in Womanhood; as these illustrious ones of all nations appear, let every woman present thank god [sic] that she belongs to the sex that, in spite of fearful odds, has left such splendid record upon the annals of history.<sup>667</sup>

The AFL and the WWSL and the general public seemed to believe that *A Pageant of Great Women* was successful in raising this consciousness. Actress Ellen Terry proclaimed it to be “the finest practical piece of political propaganda.”<sup>668</sup> Critics agreed. The *Times* stated that the matinee given by the AFL and the WWSL was one “with a purpose. What women have done, and are doing, and mean to do was the theme throughout.” The uniqueness of the performance, however, was “the idealistic view of the cause of Woman Suffrage. Apparently the whole of the large audience were in enthusiastic sympathy with the movement. But even its opponents

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<sup>667</sup> *Vote*, 10 September 1910.

<sup>668</sup> *Votes for Women*, 19 November 1909.

must have been struck by the intense earnestness and the absolute good taste with which those ideas were presented.” The reviewer concluded, “no one seemed to be tired by the length of the performance. Even for those who do not believe in the wisdom of the cause it was an afternoon to be remembered.”<sup>669</sup> The *Vote* seemed to echo the *Times*, as well as confirm the success of the AFL’s own nonpartisan intentions. It praised the matinée fundraiser as an occasion “uniting pleasure, profit, and propaganda, and the final result [is] seen in the ‘Pageant of Famous Women.’” Furthermore, “In the audience were representatives of every form of suffrage society, lovers of peace and lovers of war, united by the same kindly intention—to help these two Leagues, which have helped them whenever they have been asked, without questioning whether the prayer came from Suffragist or Suffragette.”<sup>670</sup>

The performative politics of the AFL could be seen not only in Suffrage Drama, but also in their participation and gradual evolution as a political body within the wider suffrage movement. In addition to performing plays at the WSPU’s Women’s Exhibition in 1909, at other bazaars held by the WSPU and WFL, and at mass meetings of the NUWSS, WSPU, and WFL, the AFL also participated in suffrage processions, protested against the government, and adopted resolutions as a united suffrage organization about issues within the movement. In 1910, militants and constitutionalists brokered a truce in order to support a proposed Conciliation bill for women’s suffrage. In demonstrating support for this bill, the WSPU led a demonstration, consisting of all suffrage societies, to Royal Albert Hall on June 18.

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<sup>669</sup> *Times* (London), 13 November 1909.

<sup>670</sup> *Vote*, 18 November 1909.

Among the 15,000 women who marched in the procession was the AFL including performers Eva Moore, Lena Ashwell, Kitty Marion and Cissie Loftus.<sup>671</sup> Lena Ashwell described the procession as an “orderly and well-drilled army, carrying banners and flags of different societies.” Her experience in the march also reveals the difficult balance of work and politics for female performers who were also suffragists. “[W]e were asked to wear white dresses. Owing to a rush of work, I had no time to change, so there I was, conspicuous in black among all the white dresses. As we passed through Piccadilly...I heard a man say to his neighbour: ‘You see’er, that there in the black? That there is the bad girl of the family.’”<sup>672</sup> Three days later, Lena, being the only female theatrical manager in London, represented the AFL in a Women’s Suffrage Deputation to 10 Downing Street.<sup>673</sup>

When the government introduced forcible feeding to Suffragettes imprisoned and on hunger-strike, Eva Moore was one of the most outspoken public performers who criticized the government’s action. In her autobiography, she cites a case where two suffragists of “good social position” were presented to the King at Court. Upon being introduced, one said “Your Majesty, won’t you stop forcible feeding?” to which she was quickly ushered out of the room. The press the next day criticized the woman for insulting the King. At a suffrage meeting the next day, Eva Moore declared her support of the young woman.

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<sup>671</sup> Cecilia (Cissie) Loftus was a well-known performer on the dramatic and variety stages. Her mother, Marie Loftus, was a burlesque star in the nineteenth century, known as “The Sarah Bernhardt of the halls.”

<sup>672</sup> Ashwell, *Myself As A Player*, 168.

<sup>673</sup> *Ibid.*, 164.

‘Whatever one may feel about the wisdom or propriety of her action, you must take your hat to the girl for her courage.’ Then the storm burst. That evening I found headlines in the papers: ‘Eva Moore takes off her hat to the woman who insulted the King’, and so on, it was astonishing. The result was rather dreadful; men I had never seen wrote to me...the most abusive, indecent letters I have ever read or ever dreamed could be written...Had I not already been a suffragist those letters would have made me one!<sup>674</sup>

By 1911, the AFL, as a united political body, protested against forcible feeding, disseminating multiple resolutions along with other suffrage societies over the next few years.<sup>675</sup>

As the women’s suffrage movement evolved, so did the politics and direct action of the AFL. In 1911, the League sent a resolution to the House of Commons condemning its decision to introduce a Manhood Suffrage Bill instead of a Conciliation Bill for Women’s Suffrage, which it had promised. The AFL expressed “its profound indignation” with the way that the government had handled the issue of women’s suffrage. Furthermore, it demanded that “women, as equal human beings as men, of equal importance to the state and equal supporters of the state, shall be given equal rights and dignities incorporated by the Government in the coming Reform Bill on equal terms with men.”<sup>676</sup> In contrast to just providing support to other suffrage societies, in 1912, the AFL initiated its own political campaign as the date to debate this Reform Bill approached. It sent a letter to the House of Commons requesting permission to argue for women’s enfranchisement based on actresses’ experiences within the theatrical profession.

<sup>674</sup> Moore, *Exits and Entrances*, 96. Moore gives no date for this event, but must have been in late 1909 or 1910 since forcible feeding was first adopted in October 1909.

<sup>675</sup> “Secretary’s Report,” June 1913–June 1914, 9, Records of the Actresses’ Franchise League, Box FL 598, Women’s Library, London.

<sup>676</sup> *Votes for Women*, 28 November 1911.

While adding to the gaiety of the nation the actresses have themselves been suffering from great wrongs arising out of sex disability. The broad expansive view of life which the actresses' calling engenders has revealed to them the state of society in Great Britain which they, as patriotic women, can no longer support. Debarred by sex disability from the exercise of the franchise to right these wrongs, repudiated by the government of the day, unprotected by any party machinery, the actresses, representing a very large and important faction of working women, do appeal to the highest tribunal in the land, the House of Commons, and ask to be allowed to stand before the Bar of the House and lay before the Commons at first hand their reasons for claiming equality with men in the state....<sup>677</sup>

The League received a formal acknowledgement of their letter, but was told that it was the members of the House of Commons, not the Speaker of the House, who could grant permission only by passing a resolution for them to be heard.<sup>678</sup> As a result, the AFL asked all suffrage societies to sign a petition requesting Parliament to pass a resolution allowing not only actresses, but also representatives of the entire women's movement to argue their case. This petition was signed by thirty suffrage organizations, which represented over 100,000 women. Presented to the government on April 22, 1913, their request was denied. Inspired by their success in organizing such a vast initiative, however, the AFL established a parliamentary "Lobbying Committee."<sup>679</sup>

Further examples of the AFL's growing political consciousness and political initiative off stage can be seen in 1913. In May, the AFL organized a mass meeting at Drury Lane Theatre. At the meeting, Gertrude Elliott, President of the League, argued that "women should not dabble in politics." She claimed that although

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<sup>677</sup> As quoted by Holledge in *Innocent Flowers*, 89.

<sup>678</sup> *Times* (London), 11 January 1913.

<sup>679</sup> "Secretary's Report," June 1912-June 1913, 8, Records of the Actresses' Franchise League, Box FL 598, Women's Library, London.

actresses had more independence and financial security than most middle-class women, it was because of this experience that they must help their fellow sisters in the movement. Drawing from similar suffrage arguments that emphasized women's unique perspective as a basis for the vote, Elliott argued that what united women in the movement beyond class or profession was their experience as women.

...[A]ctresses were women, and so long as they knew women suffered from sex disability, actresses did also. Woman franchise was, as they all know, only a means to an end. Reforms were urgently needed—reforms affecting the protection of little children. Those things were women's work, and belonged to women's sphere, but without a Parliamentary vote they could not hope to speak with the voice of authority.... The demand for the vote meant the realisation of responsibility.<sup>680</sup>

After enthusiastic applause for this speech, the meeting ended with the League passing the following resolution:

That this meeting, believing that the removal of the political disabilities of the women of the country is the most urgently needed of all reforms, strongly condemns the manner in which the Government has dealt with the great question. It calls upon the Prime Minister to remove this personal veto, and to fulfil [sic] his pledge...in the only possible way, by bringing in a Government measure, by which alone the present deplorable state of disorder can be prevented and the women of the country enfranchised.<sup>681</sup>

The meeting was seen by the League as a "brilliant success from the propaganda point of view," as well as contributing a large source of financial support.<sup>682</sup>

In the same year, the AFL protested current taxation laws. Actress and manager of the Kingsway Theatre, Lena Ashwell, protested the taxation of married

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<sup>680</sup> *Era*, 10 May 1913.

<sup>681</sup> *Ibid.*, 10 May 1913.

<sup>682</sup> "Secretary's Report," June 1912-June 1913, 6, Records of the Actresses' Franchise League, Box FL 598, Women's Library, London.

women in a deputation of the Women's Tax Resistance League (WTRL) to Chancellor of the Exchequer, David Lloyd George.

My complaint was as follows: I was the sole proprietor and licensee of the Kingsway Theatre; I engaged the company, the staff, the manager, the solicitor, and the chartered accountants. When the income tax returns were filled in by my accountants, with the help of my solicitor, and business manager, I disappeared utterly from view because the paper had to be signed as correct in every detail by my husband who knew nothing about the theatre or the work of the stage....He ha[d] never been my manager on financial or artistic matters....His ignorance of the theatre ma[de] him quite the last man I should ask to give a correct statement of any theatrical business.<sup>683</sup>

The AFL also directly and indirectly protested the "Cat and Mouse Act" in 1913, which temporarily discharged Suffragettes who went on hunger-strike in prison until they were well enough to return and finish their sentence. An alternative to forcible feeding, which was greatly criticized by the public, the result was a chase of "cat" (the police) and "mouse" (the Suffragette) who tried to elude capture and a return to prison. On July 8, 1913, the AFL took part in a protest meeting against the "Cat and Mouse Act" in Queen's Hall, organized by the National Political League.<sup>684</sup>

Maintaining their nonpartisanship with regard to suffrage tactics, the AFL also indirectly protested this Act by providing support to militant Suffragettes attempting to evade capture by the police. The transforming skills of actresses from one costume and one character to the next were in high demand. As WSPU member, Grace Roe, recalls, it was the AFL who provided several different disguises to her and other "mice" who had warrants out for their arrest.

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<sup>683</sup> Ashwell, *Myself as a Player*, 166; *Era*, 14 June 1913. Lena Ashwell's husband, Henry Simpson, was the royal obstetrician.

<sup>684</sup> "Secretary's Report," June 1913-June 1914, 9, Records of the Actresses' Franchise League, FL 598, Women's Library, London. The National Political League for Men and Women was founded by Mary Broadhurst in 1911 primarily to support women's suffrage, but also other political reforms.

[T]wo members of the Actresses' Franchise League came to give me a new disguise. This time I was dressed as an elderly lady and I had to remember that all my movements must be slow. I moved to Hampstead but felt in danger all the time....Before I went into [a] flat [in Earls Court], the Actresses' Franchise League came to the rescue and I was redisplayed as a chorus girl. Charlie Marsh, who did much secret work for me, had a similar disguise. My transformation was golden and her wig was black....Our costumes were so cleverly designed that only the wrong type of man looked at us!<sup>685</sup>

As the League became more political off stage between 1911 and 1914, the content of their dramatic propaganda onstage changed as well. Instead of focusing on the reality of Modern Women's lives or the sexual double standard in pre-war society, by 1912, they emphasized specific arguments and examinations of the suffrage question. As a result, plays like *How the Vote Was Won* and *A Pageant of Great Women* were now replaced by duologues like *A Chat With Mrs. Chicky*, which centered on the *tête-à-tête* between a suffragist and anti-suffragist. The move to duologues was also a logistical consideration for the AFL who had found that booking plays with large casts like *A Pageant of Great Women*, was administratively and financially problematic.<sup>686</sup>

In Evelyn Glover's *A Chat With Mrs. Chicky*, first performed at the Rehearsal Theatre in London in February 1912, Mrs. Chicky, a charwoman, and her employer's sister, Mrs. Holbrook, discuss women and politics.<sup>687</sup> Mrs. Holbrook, an anti-suffragist, wants Mrs. Chicky to sign her petition to prove that women do not want the vote. Not wanting to take Mrs. Chicky away from her work, Mrs. Holbrook

<sup>685</sup> As quoted by Antonia Raeburn, *The Militant Suffragettes* (London: Michael Joseph, Ltd., 1974), 197-98. Charlotte (Charlie) Marsh was a social worker and active member of the WSPU.

<sup>686</sup> Holledge, *Innocent Flowers*, 86.

<sup>687</sup> An element of irony was present in the first performance of *A Chat With Mrs. Chicky*, because Mrs. Chicky was played by Inez Bensusan, the head of the play department of the AFL.

proceeds to extol the virtues of separate spheres ideology that dictates women's place is in the home. The humor comes from the irony of Mrs. Holbrook's claims about womanhood being protected in the home from the outside world while Mrs. Chicky, who is from the world outside the home, cleans around her in the home! Slowly, Mrs. Chicky begins to undermine Mrs. Holbrook's anti-suffrage arguments by relating them to the daily reality of working women's lives. As Mrs. Holbrook discusses the joys of motherhood, Mrs. Chicky states that women do not have legal rights over their children. "It's a bit difficult for 'er as the lor don't give 'er no voice in 'er child's schoolin' nor religin' nor vaccinatin' nor such like, in the or'nary way."<sup>688</sup> As Mrs. Holbrook is flustered by these facts and still insists that the vote for women would ruin the home, she accuses Mrs. Chicky of insulting her nation. In response, Mrs. Chicky claims, in a broad cockney accent, to be French. Her dead husband was French, and so according to the laws of England, her nationality is French.

Mrs. Holbrook: That *does* seem rather peculiar, certainly.

Mrs. Chicky: Yes 'M. I don't *feel* French!

Mrs. Holbrook: (*hurriedly*) Of course not—of course not. (*Pauses, leaning elbow on mantelpiece as Mrs. Chicky shakes out hearthcloth, spreads it and kneels down to grate.*) Of course if one thinks a moment one sees the beautiful idea at the back of it. A husband and wife are one, you know.

Mrs. Chicky: (*docilely*) Yes 'M. Which one?<sup>689</sup>

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<sup>688</sup> Evelyn Glover, *A Chat With Mrs. Chicky*, in *How the Vote Was Won and Other Suffragette Plays*, eds. Dale Spender and Carole Hayman (London: Methuen, 1985), 107; hereafter cited as *A Chat With Mrs. Chicky*.

<sup>689</sup> *Ibid.*, 108-09.

As Mrs. Holbrook states she will put Mrs. Chicky's name on her anti-suffrage petition, the tables turn. Mrs. Chicky now has the power in this relationship. She reveals to Mrs. Holbrook that she is a suffragist and explains why women want the vote. She accuses Mrs. Holbrook of ignorance, sitting in her grand sitting-room that Mrs. Chicky cleans, in contemplating how wonderful it is to be protected by men, while being oblivious to the reality of most women who are exploited socially, economically, and politically by society.

The first time I 'eard a lady at a street corner sayin' as women orter 'ave votes, I listens for a bit 'an I says 'I'm on this job' I says....She aint sat in no drorin'-room an' *read* about us' I says. 'She knows.' She didn't waste no time tellin' women out workin' to keep body an' soul together as they orter be queens of their 'omes!...She didn't waste no time tellin' seated women drove on the streets—women 'oo's 'usbands give'em a drib 'ere an' a drab there when they're sober, an' the childring goin' 'alf-naked....Oh, I'm not sayin' this 'ere votes' goin' to set everythin' right, but I do say as anythin' that's done without it'll be just patchin' an' 'nothin' more! It's goin' to make women *count!*...*you 'ave to be a woman yourself to know where things 'urt women!*<sup>690</sup>

Defeated by political argument, but not converted to the cause, the play ends with Mrs. Chicky being called away by another servant and Mrs. Holbrook “drop[ing] on to [the] chair and star[ing] after her in open-mouthed amazement.”<sup>691</sup>

Evelyn Glover highlights every major suffrage argument through the conflict between the middle-class anti-suffragist, Mrs. Holbrook, and the working-class suffragist, Mrs. Chicky. In order to illustrate the weakness and ignorance of anti-suffrage arguments and to contradict her superior, Mrs. Chicky often assumes the

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<sup>690</sup> Ibid., 112-13.

<sup>691</sup> Ibid., 113.

stereotype of an ignorant, stupid, working woman. The fact that Mrs. Chicky is not ignorant about her rights or what suffrage can bring is yet another attempt on the part of the AFL and the entire suffrage movement to portray themselves as a movement for all women. While claiming to be working on behalf of all women, both constitutional and militant suffragists did not actively recruit working-class membership. The WSPU, in particular, wanted to separate itself from Sylvia Pankhurst's suffrage work with the East London Federation, made up of working-class women, and believed that middle-class women marching in the streets would spark more attention and promote more change.<sup>692</sup> Even while not seeking out working-class members, the women's suffrage movement, however, still wanted to portray itself as a vast women's movement that placed gender above class loyalties. As a result, Mrs. Chicky continues a Victorian image of the working woman while expanding the image of the Modern Woman. She is an older widow and a domestic servant, but she subverts the invisible character of the domestic worker by coming out of the shadows and proclaiming her political awareness. By not representing Mrs. Chicky as a young, single, factory worker or shop girl, the AFL expanded the persona of the Modern Woman while maintaining middle-class notions of femininity and political protest.<sup>693</sup> As such, Mrs. Chicky embodied the tug of war between old conventions and new changes within modern society, and revealed the AFL's political sensibility to balance tensions and competing visions within the movement.

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<sup>692</sup> See Chapter 4 for more on the middle-class nature of the women's suffrage movement.

<sup>693</sup> See Chapter 4 for more on the continuation of Victorian middle-class notions of femininity and political protest within the modern world.

Although the reality was that the majority of women involved in all suffrage societies were middle-class, the emphasis on the reality of working women's lives (whether middle-class or working-class women) in *A Chat With Mrs. Chicky*, *How the Vote Was Won* and *A Woman's Influence* also paralleled changes within the suffrage movement as the NUWSS and WFL worked not only for suffrage, but wider social and economic reforms for women. Even the WSPU, who campaigned solely for the vote, realized that without political power, there could be no hope for legal or social change. As actress Eva Moore recalls, "Mrs. Pankhurst used to say, 'Remember when you have gained the vote your work is only beginning....'"<sup>694</sup>

*A Chat With Mrs. Chicky* proved to be the most popular piece in the AFL's repertoire, consisting of a large proportion of the AFL's eighty performances between 1912 and 1914.<sup>695</sup> *How the Vote Was Won* and *A Woman's Influence* also were widely popular being performed multiple times throughout England between 1909 and 1914.<sup>696</sup> Even Cicely Hamilton's hit, *Diana of Dobson's*, written and performed before the formation of the AFL, was revived at the Kingsway Theatre in 1909 to critical acclaim.<sup>697</sup> The multiple performances of these plays indicate not only their popularity, but also a change in the League's output. The AFL performed forty-three plays between 1909 and 1911, but from 1911 until the outbreak of the First World

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<sup>694</sup> Moore, *Exits and Entrances*, 100.

<sup>695</sup> "The Honorary Organising Secretary's Report of the Play Department," June 1913-June 30, 1914, 12, Records of the Actresses Franchise League, Box FL 598, Women's Library, London.

<sup>696</sup> See "Secretary's Report," June 1909-June 1910; "The Half Yearly Report of the Play Department," January-June 1911; "Honorary Organising Secretary's Report of the Play Department," July 1912-June 1913; "The Honorary Organizing Secretary's Report of the Play Department," June 1913-June 30, 1914, Records of the Actresses' Franchise League, Box FL 598, Women's Library, London.

<sup>697</sup> *Times* (London), 12 January 1909.

War, the League only performed fifteen plays, but performed them more frequently to more diverse audiences. Part of this change was to focus even more on plays popular with the entire suffrage movement—as part of their mission to remain neutral to suffrage tactics. By 1912, Inez Bensusan established several matinées at the Rehearsal Theatre in London where Suffrage Drama was performed for invited audiences, consisting of representatives of all suffrage societies who wanted to book the plays for their own political events. By performing less plays more often, the League also branched out to broader audiences by performing for women’s groups like the Sanitary Inspectors and Health Visitors and the Women’s Aerial League.<sup>698</sup>

As the AFL grew in numbers and popularity, it also discussed the double consciousness felt among its members about the relationship of their work as performers on the commercial stage and in politics. At monthly meetings held at Caxton Hall in 1911, the AFL passed several resolutions. Agreed upon immediately was “That the stage conception of women is conventional and inadequate.” *Votes for Women* recalled that the audience agreed that “it would be well for dramatists to study modern women in their workshops, studios and factories, if they wish to find the true feminist spirit.”<sup>699</sup> Furthermore, the AFL approved the resolution, “That an interest in politics is not injurious to dramatic art.” *Votes for Women* explained that the AFL believed “an interest in politics was a vital necessity for the truthful interpretation of the drama of life.”<sup>700</sup> As part of the wider struggle between old and new, man and

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<sup>698</sup> Holledge, *Innocent Flowers*, 85. The Women’s Aerial League purpose was to “secure and maintain for the Empire the same supremacy in the air as it now enjoys on the seas.”

<sup>699</sup> *Votes for Women*, 31 March 1911.

<sup>700</sup> *Ibid.*, 27 January 1911.

woman and public and private within modern life, actresses felt the struggle between drama and politics. Like the entire suffrage movement that united these extremes by placing middle-class women in public and creating a middle-class, female politics, so too did the AFL by uniting dramatic art and political propaganda. Art historian Lisa Tickner has illustrated how the women's suffrage movement was the first political agitation to organize the arts to benefit the cause.<sup>701</sup> Likewise, actress, playwright, and suffragist Cicely Hamilton remarked that along with decorative art, came the art of entertainment, particularly music and drama, which women used to assist their political campaign.<sup>702</sup> I argue, however, that the difference between the wider suffrage movement and the AFL was that within the theatre, female performers were successful not only in uniting entertainment and politics, but also in uniting political factions within the movement. By focusing on their shared experiences as performers and upon their art itself, the AFL were able to develop the theatre into a conscious consensus of politics, performance and feminism within a middle-class and woman-centered space.

In conjunction with their involvement in the women's suffrage movement, the AFL began this inward turn to reflect upon their own profession and what could be done to improve the theatre for female performers. Their experiences as actresses within a male-dominated theatre informed their political consciousness, but their participation in the cause developed that consciousness into political action. Suffrage

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<sup>701</sup> See Tickner, *The Spectacle of Women*.

<sup>702</sup> Cockin, *Women and Theatre in the Age of Suffrage*, 67.

Drama had been a good start allowing women to write, direct and act in their own plays. However, even by 1911 in spite of actresses' longstanding independence and the very public movement for women's suffrage, they were still struggling to obtain the quantity and quality of parts that men had in the profession. For example, at the time of the coronation of King George V and Queen Mary, a gala performance had been planned at His Majesty's Theatre. The program of plays allowed for all the leading actors of the period to take a part, but only roles for two or three leading actresses. Lena Ashwell, manager of the Kingsway Theatre, appealed to Charles Wyndham about discussing this matter at the Manager's Association.<sup>703</sup> She wanted to include a play where all female actresses could play a part. When nothing was done by the Association, she wrote a letter to the Queen indicating her grievances which became a bargaining tactic that prompted the Association to hear her request (without actually sending the letter). As a result, Ashwell was given twenty-four hours to find a suitable play and actresses to perform in it. This proved to be no problem and *The Vision of Delight*, by Ben Jonson (which Ashwell had already produced at the Kingsway) was the play that closed the evening's performances.<sup>704</sup>

With the creation of the AFL, female performers who were also suffragists devoted their energy to obtaining the vote for women in order to improve the position of women outside of the theatre. By performing Suffrage Drama across England, female playwrights finally had the opportunity to see their work performed, but they

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<sup>703</sup> Charles Wyndham was an actor-manager who managed the Criterion Theatre, and founded the Wyndham's Theatre (1899) and New Theatre (1903) in London.

<sup>704</sup> Ashwell, *Myself A Player*, 167-8. Lena Ashwell was the only female theatrical manager in London at this time.

were still earning their living in the male-dominated theatre. In 1913, the AFL finally turned its attention to women inside the theatrical profession. Although women had experienced a degree of independence on the stage, they still felt the discrimination against their sex with regard to the number, size, and nature of women's roles on stage, and in the stage managing, design, and administration of the male-dominated theatre. As a result, the AFL decided to set up an independent Woman's Theatre. The AFL already recognized the theatre as a significant space for political propaganda and the Woman's Theatre was an extension of this mission with a wider vision for women in the theatrical business. Inez Bensusan, the director of the League's play department, explained the goals of the Woman's Theatre.

My idea is to establish a great cooperative scheme extending to all branches of the woman's movement, even to those not especially occupied in furthering woman suffrage....I want it to be run entirely by women. The whole business management and control will be in the hands of women, I mean—there will be women business and stage-managers, producers, and so on. Actors and authors will naturally be drawn from both sexes, and so will (at present) the scenic artists. My ultimate hope is to establish a Women's Theatrical Agency in connection with the Woman's Theatre....<sup>705</sup>

The most innovative part of the Woman's Theatre was the foundation of its finances. Based on the cooperative principle, individual shareholders, as well as suffrage societies could share in the profit. Bensusan used her contacts with women's groups across the country that she had gathered after organizing AFL tours and asked them to buy larger quantities of tickets for the season to be used by its members or sold locally at a profit. By selling tickets again at ordinary theatre prices to society

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<sup>705</sup> *Votes for Women*, 23 May 1913.

members or the local community, suffrage societies made a double profit.<sup>706</sup> Overall, the goals of the new theatre were to depict positive and real images of Modern Women, to release the theatre from being a “slave of commercialism”, and to give actresses numerous challenging roles and fair wages.<sup>707</sup> By doing so, the Woman’s Theatre became a space where middle-class, female performers, writers, directors, stage designers, managers and producers came together to produce a feminist and political drama.

The first “Woman’s Theatre Week” at the Coronet Theatre in London in December 1913 hosted the production of two full-length plays: *Woman on Her Own*, a translation of Brieux’s *La Femme Seule*, and a translation of Björnson’s *A Gauntlet*. Although these plays were written by men, they were chosen to provide more demanding roles for female performers than those found in the AFL’s propaganda plays. Most of the AFL’s female playwrights concentrated on one-act plays with small casts. The Woman’s Theatre, therefore, initially had to rely on plays that were about women, but not written by women in order to satisfy their mission. In its defense, the AFL claimed that it was only beginning its enterprise and still hoped to achieve its vision of an entirely female-centered institution that would have a “permanent season for the presentation of dramatic works dealing with the Women’s Movement.”<sup>708</sup> Overall, the first “Woman’s Theatre Week” was considered a success by the AFL. Financially, it “exceeded all expectations” with a net profit of 442

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<sup>706</sup> Ibid., 23 May 1913.

<sup>707</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 8 December 1913.

<sup>708</sup> “Honorary Organising Secretary’s Report of the Play Department,” July 1912-June 1913, 13, Records of the Actresses’ Franchise League, Box FL 598, Women’s Library, London.

pounds. The work put forward to make the mission of the Woman's Theatre a reality also was seen as successful.

Firstly in the matter of proving the power of women to organise and run a theatre—since women were employed in every department as Producers—Stage Mangers—Assistant Stage Managers—in the Box Office—as Stewards, etc., and the experience was valuable in the amount of confidence such enterprise inspired; secondly in demonstrating the appreciation of the public, seeing that the box office receipts were £522 during the week—which, of course does not include the guaranteed money. Thirdly, and most important of all, is the proof that women can work together for a common purpose in perfect harmony and disinterestedness....Preparations are already going forward for a second week's season....[I]t is quite possible that in a few years' time the Woman's Theatre will become a permanent institution.<sup>709</sup>

The plays chosen and performed, however, were met with mixed reviews.

Brieux's play, *La Femme Seule*, translated by Charlotte Shaw as *Woman on Her Own*, in particular, caused some controversy. This play examined the position of women living in nineteenth-century society where working outside the home was seen as threatening women's femininity and sexuality. More specifically, Brieux portrays an upper-class woman rejecting society's conventions by working in a book-binding factory and on the staff of a feminist newspaper in order to be financially independent. When this experiment fails, she returns to Paris as her former lover's mistress. Irish playwright, George Bernard Shaw, a supporter of the woman's movement, spoke favorably about the play. "...Brieux shews [sic] how educated, refined and high-spirited women...attempt to support themselves [which] brings them into competition with men in the labour market...driv[ing] them out of the market

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<sup>709</sup> "The Honorary Organising Secretary's Report of the Play Department," June 1913-June 30, 1914, 14-5, Records of the Actresses' Franchise League, Box FL 598, Women's Library, London.

and forc[ing] them into marriage or prostitution....”<sup>710</sup> Shaw’s view, however, was not shared by the majority of the public. Although the *Coronet* was “overflowing” with an audience primarily consisting of ladies “who applauded every item of the play with frantic delight,” the *Times* was critical of the play. “The author seems to have looked up all the disabilities, real or imaginary, under which women labour in our modern society, and to have determined that his heroine shall endure them all....That is what, of course, is bound to happen when your author is a propagandist in the first place and only in the second place an artist.”<sup>711</sup> Not all suffragists, however, were delighted with the play as the *Times* claimed. A reviewer in the WSPU newspaper, *The Suffragette*, was critical of Brieux’s portrayal of the Modern Woman.

With all M. Brieux’s earnestness and high ideals, I cannot look upon such a false and pessimistic presentment of women in the labour-market as desirable propaganda for the Feminist cause....It is very good of M. Brieux and others to champion the woman’s cause, but I wish they would do it in a more optimistic spirit....I wish some woman would write a play showing the real spirit of the Suffragette. It has never been done yet, and I do not believe that a male dramatist will ever do it.<sup>712</sup>

According to Julie Holledge, the mixed responses to Brieux’s play highlight fundamental issues for the AFL about the nature of political theatre. With all the changes and events in the women’s movement, by 1913-14, it seemed that suffragists wanted plays that depicted women as independent, victorious and happy, rather than oppressed and defeated. With this desire, there was an implication that a political,

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<sup>710</sup> *Votes for Women*, 19 December 1913.

<sup>711</sup> *Times* (London), 9 December 1913.

<sup>712</sup> *The Suffragette*, 12 December 1913.

feminist theatre should serve the cause by portraying an ideal of womanhood to which the audience could aspire, not a realistic, oppressive picture of women's current position. Holledge argues that the women in the AFL had not yet developed a theatrical style of their own. "The dilemma they faced was whether to pursue the tradition of social drama which, by depicting victims, shamed the audience into political action, or develop a new form of theatre which could successfully represent an alternative."<sup>713</sup> I argue that this dilemma was just another facet of the age of modernity as society struggled with new changes such as middle-class women employed in professions, engaging in politics, and creating political art and entertainment. This debate, however, was never resolved. The second season of the Woman's Theatre, planned for the following November 1914 never took place due to the outbreak of the First World War in August.

Although the ultimate vision of the Woman's Theatre was never fully realized, I assert that its goals and brief existence illustrate the AFL's desire to create a middle-class and woman-centered space within the theatre where feminism, politics and performance could integrate completely. As both constitutionalists and militants campaigned for the vote with a vision to feminize politics and ultimately society, the suffragist actresses of the AFL succeeded to feminize the space of the theatre.<sup>714</sup> In addition, most of the members of the AFL were middle-class. With the creation of the Woman's Theatre, the League legitimated not only middle-class women on the

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<sup>713</sup> Holledge, *Innocent Flowers*, 96.

<sup>714</sup> Sandra Holton argues that female suffragist through their arguments and tactics sought to change the institution of politics from being a male-dominated space to a woman-centered space. See Holton, *Feminism and Democracy*. For more discussion of the women's suffrage movement, see Chapter 4.

stage, but also behind the scenes. By creating new theatrical professions of director, producer, manager, playwright, set designer and costume designer for women and appealing to middle-class audiences through their ticket prices and political message, the AFL created a middle-class institution within the Woman's Theatre. Although female performers were some of first women to obtain independence and a degree of equality in their profession, their experiences in the theatre enlightened them about how political power could secure this independence and improve the equality between the sexes. Furthermore, many actresses believed it was their duty to help other women who did not have the degree of independence that they did. Female performers were the pioneers of the Modern Woman—one who was independent, feminine, educated, employed and political. Their profession inspired the theatrical and spectacular militant movement, and the celebrity of the performers themselves did a lot to further the cause of women's suffrage and more extensively, women's rights. The *Era* claimed that "the actress" represented "the ideal woman of the future. She meets man in the combat of life, and leaves it after what may be called a 'drawn battle.'"<sup>715</sup> As the AFL gained recognition and began plans for a Woman's Theatre, the *Era* concluded that actresses were the greatest asset to the suffrage movement because each female performer was a powerful piece of propaganda.

The actress of all the women workers has most *personal* influence on the public....The affection which is felt for Ellen Terry is much greater than that given to any leading female fiction writer or any woman exhibitor at the Royal Academy. The actress is the most vital, the most impressive of all female forces; and when we find the leaders of the dramatic profession enrolled on the side of Woman's Franchise we may well expect that it will be

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<sup>715</sup> *Era*, 16 January 1909.

gained eventually....If anything can convince the reflective of the seriousness of the demand by women for the franchise it is the advocacy of the change by women who have themselves nothing to gain by associating themselves with the movement.<sup>716</sup>

I maintain that a significant contribution and icon of modernity—the anxiety caused by the tension between old and new, man and woman and progress and destruction—therefore, was the first middle-class, woman-centered, political and public space. A central stage of modernity, the AFL’s Woman’s Theatre provided the first institution where performance, politics, middle-class values, feminism and femininity could coexist and integrate with one another. Through the women’s suffrage movement and the creation of Suffrage Drama, the AFL developed a theatrical and feminist politics to further women’s rights and opportunities for the Modern Woman. The merging of politics and theatre was a key aspect of a modern, female politics. The *Vote* argued that the “suffragette, like the actress appears on a stage or a platform, her charms are an equal...part of her success, and her chief working asset is her voice.” The only difference, the newspaper claimed, was that the “suffragette speaks her own words, is authoress as well as actress.”<sup>717</sup> With the AFL and Suffrage Drama, there ceased to be a difference. Actresses became suffragists; drama became political; the theatre became feminist; and it was all performed on the city stage of modern London.

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<sup>716</sup> Ibid., 8 March 1913.

<sup>717</sup> *Vote*, 18 November 1909.

**Epilogue**  
**The Aftershocks of War: Maintaining the ‘Modern Woman’**

On August 4, 1914, England declared war on Germany, and as a result, the women’s suffrage movement ended temporarily without an approved Parliamentary bill for women’s suffrage. The advent of the First World War, however, did not bring an end to modernity or a middle-class, female politics. Although all suffrage societies diverted their politics from the vote to the war for the time being, they did not abandon their commitment to women’s suffrage or their identity as Modern Women.

Upon England’s declaration of war, the WSPU publicly announced its suspension of suffrage activities. Mrs. Pankhurst and Christabel called on WSPU members to convert their political militancy to wartime patriotism by mobilizing women to work, calling for conscription, and handing white feathers to shame men who were not in uniform. Although the WSPU’s violent militancy in the years leading up to the First World War were criticized by the public and caused further division within the suffrage movement, their redirection of this militancy towards supporting the nation at war was welcomed. The government found the WSPU’s organizational skills, its spectacular nature, and its claim to represent all women to be valuable during a time when the government needed to mobilize the country in the fight against Germany.<sup>718</sup> The war also gave the WSPU a new positive image and a

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<sup>718</sup> Tickner, *The Spectacle of Women*, 231. David Lloyd George, Minister of Munitions, claimed, “an effectively organised nation for a war such as that which they had embarked upon was [not] possible

new purpose to garner support, especially from those who may not have been concerned with women's rights before the war. By maintaining, but redirecting militant methods through the lens of national patriotism, the WSPU demonstrated another avenue of women's contribution to the state, and therefore continued the reevaluation of femininity in the modern world.

While the WSPU lost support between 1912 and 1914 due to its extreme militancy that violated middle-class notions of femininity and political protest, the NUWSS and the WFL gained members and public favor. Once war was declared, unlike the WSPU, both the NUWSS and the WFL maintained their full organizational membership and funds, and eventually extended their membership after the war.<sup>719</sup> They too mobilized women for war work, especially for traditional "male" jobs such as munitions, farming and bus driving. They also established Red Cross centers and canteens for soldiers, and formed committees to offer information and assistance to women and families while men were away.<sup>720</sup> The AFL also joined with the WFL to form the Women's Emergency Corps, which formed a register of women who were willing to help with the war effort in any capacity. Furthermore, the AFL provided entertainment for soldiers at camp bases, but as troops moved out of England, actress-manager, Lena Ashwell organized concert parties to follow them to the front. By

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until they had organised the women of this country as well as the men...It was not merely the question of utilising the services of women for munitions. It was a question of utilising the energies of women for the purpose of discharging the duties and functions of commercial and industrial life which they were capable of doing as well as men." See "The Interview with Mr. Lloyd George" and "Mr. Lloyd George's Reply" in the *Daily Chronicle*, 19 July 1915.

<sup>719</sup> Pugh, *The March of the Women*, 285.

<sup>720</sup> Tickner, *The Spectacle of Women*, 229; See also Mrs. Henry Fawcett, "War Work of the National Union," June 1916, Women at Work Collection, Norlin Library, University of Colorado-Boulder.

1918, there were twenty-five parties in France alone, offering 1,400 performances a month.<sup>721</sup>

Although all societies focused their work on supporting the war and maintaining morale rather than campaigning for the vote, they did not entirely abandon their desire for women's suffrage. Building upon the idea that they were British first and women second, all suffragists realized that supporting the war was the more pressing need. They also acknowledged that by supporting the war, the campaign for the women's vote might gain more popular support. For example, *Votes for Women* declared in 1915, "a Suffrage Society which acted so would be highly commended for subordinating its particular object to the national demand and a case might be made out to defend the surrender of its purpose."<sup>722</sup>

During the war, a middle-class, female politics, however, could still be seen in other areas besides suffrage. Suspending suffrage work did not mean ignoring issues that particularly affected women. The WFL organized the Women's Suffrage National Aid Corps to assist women and children as a way of providing "service to their country at this critical time," but also to reaffirm "the urgency of keeping the Suffrage flag flying, and, especially now, making the country understand the supreme necessity of women having a voice in the counsels of the nation."<sup>723</sup> In addition, the NUWSS sought to secure "equal opportunities, equal work, equal treatment, and equal wages for all women workers."<sup>724</sup> By 1916, all suffrage societies resumed their

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<sup>721</sup> Holledge, *Innocent Flowers*, 97-99; See also Ashwell, *Myself a Player*, 181-4.

<sup>722</sup> *Votes for Women*, 7 May 1915.

<sup>723</sup> *Vote*, 14 August 1914.

<sup>724</sup> *Common Cause*, 17 December 1915.

activities in the midst of a public cry for extending the franchise to soldiers, which suffragists saw as a good opportunity to campaign for women's suffrage again in light of the similarity between soldiers' and women's contributions to the war.

Overall, the impact of the First World War did change women's social, economic and political status. Suffragists' focus on mobilizing women for the war effort brought even more middle-class women out of their homes and into the workforce, expanding and reinforcing the new femininity embodied in the Modern Woman. By July 1918, the government reported that 4,935,000 women were employed in Britain, comprising thirty-eight percent of the entire workforce. This figure, however, did not include women in domestic service, dressmaking, small workshop trades, or those in the Women's Royal Naval Service, the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps or the Women Police force, which the government estimated to be an additional 460,000 more female workers.<sup>725</sup> Most Londoners (including many suffragists) at the time believed that women's war work influenced the passing of women's suffrage in 1918. While some historians today still agree with this assertion, to accept this assumption would negate the fifty years of campaigning by suffragists, as well as the cultural environment of London that shaped new and

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<sup>725</sup> Industrial (War Inquiries) Branch of the Board of Trade, "Report on the State of Employment in All Occupations in the United Kingdom," July 1918, Women at Work Collection, Norlin Library, University of Colorado-Boulder. The figure of 4,935,000 women employed refers to occupations in industries, utilities, transport, agriculture, finance, commerce, professions, entertainment industries, and civil service. There were 8,080,000 men working in the same jobs by July 1918. Between July 1914 and July 1918, however, there was an increase of female workers (+1,659,000) while there was a decrease in male workers (-2,530,000).

modern notions of womanhood.<sup>726</sup> Although the war provided an extraordinary context for extraordinary change, without the foundation of a modern femininity already established through women's struggle in the theatre and in the streets of London, women's entry into conventional "male" employment would not have been met with such smooth transition. Likewise although women's wartime work was seen as temporary by employers and politicians, it still also expanded and reinforced the image of the Modern Woman. During the war, middle-class suffragists were able to put into practice what they had preached for so long. They showed their equality to men in their physical, emotional, and mental fortitude during a time of national crisis. At the same time, the stability of the constitutional NUWSS during the war and its growth after women's enfranchisement implies that the Modern Woman still wanted to maintain middle-class notions of femininity and political protest, which had been violated by the WSPU before the war.

This importance of maintaining middle-class values can be seen in the 1918 Representation of the People Act. The Act gave the vote to all adult males over the age of twenty-one, all women over the age of thirty who were householders, the wives of householders, university graduates, and property owners worth £5 per year.<sup>727</sup> By only providing the vote to women over the age of thirty, the government kept women in the voting minority (albeit a large minority of forty percent of the

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<sup>726</sup> Constance Rover and Arthur Marwick both argue that women's wartime work was the main catalyst in achieving the vote. See Arthur Marwick, *War and Social Change in the Twentieth Century: A Comparative Study of Britain, France, Germany, Russia and the United States* (London: Macmillan, 1974); Rover, *Women's Suffrage and Party Politics in Britain*.

<sup>727</sup> "The Reform Act of 1918," (London: The Liberal Publication Department, 1918), 40-41, Suffragette Fellowship, Norlin Library, University of Colorado-Boulder.

population).<sup>728</sup> In addition, by enfranchising married women, educated women, and financially independent women, the Act reinforced middle-class notions of femininity that combined Victorian ideas of womanhood (domesticity and marriage) with modern notions of womanhood (education and employment). By doing so, the 1918 Reform Act stabilized the permanency of the Modern Woman, and continued the tug of war between old and new, man and woman, public and private, and progress and destruction that defined modernity in London in the early twentieth century.

Although the 1918 Act did not give women the vote “on the same terms as men” for which suffragists had campaigned, the Act was not a failure or a deflated compromise. All suffragists, whether constitutional or militant, saw the vote as only the beginning of securing opportunities and rights for women, not the end. Suffragists knew that the vote symbolized not only citizenship, but also political power, and without political power, no social or political change could be rendered. What may appear as the qualified nature of the 1918 Act thus did not violate suffrage principles or compromise goals, but actually accomplished the beginning of future reform envisioned by suffragists. The purpose of the vote and suffragists’ acceptance of the 1918 Reform Act was explained by NUWSS leader, Mrs. Fawcett, in her memoir, *The Women’s Victory and After*.

...Our fifty years of struggle for the women’s vote was not actuated by our setting any extraordinary value on the mere power of making a mark on a voting paper once in every three or four years. We did not, except as a symbol of free citizenship, value it as a thing good in itself...but for the sake of the equal laws, the enlarged opportunities, the improved status of women which we knew it involved. We worked for it with ardour and passion

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<sup>728</sup> Pugh, *The March of the Women*, 288.

because it was the stuff of the conscience with us that it would benefit not women only, but the whole community...it was the cause of men, women and children.<sup>729</sup>

The focus on women gaining the right to vote as *the* sign of a successful modern, middle-class and female politics or the acceptance and resilience of the Modern Woman, however, is missing the point. The emergence of the Modern Woman and her creation of a middle-class, female and performative politics is compelling in and of itself. The most significant icon of modernity in Britain was the emergence of the Modern Woman. The cultural and urban environment of London, specifically its theatrical entertainment, employment opportunities and consumerism, played a tremendous role in shaping the Modern Woman, and therefore, needs to be acknowledged, not overlooked by historians. It was the experience of working and living in London that influenced middle-class women's political awareness and the desire to challenge the gendered status quo. Moreover, their collective identity as Modern Women became the basis for a new kind of politics that celebrated and envisioned a new kind of society that centered on women's unique contributions.

Female performers on the theatrical and variety stages were pioneers of the Modern Woman. Through their own experiences and their profession, they demonstrated their vision of a new womanhood that offered middle-class women (young and old, single and married) a chance to be public, financially independent, political, and still perceived as feminine and respectable. Furthermore, actresses who united as suffragists were not a group of extraordinary celebrity figures, but a mass of

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<sup>729</sup> Millicent Garrett Fawcett, *The Women's Victory—and After: Personal Reminiscences, 1911-1918* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, Ltd., 1920), 156-7.

ordinary, working women who inspired many more ordinary, working women in other professions to join the cause. As seen in their autobiographies, actresses were not just personally invested in achieving more rights for women to benefit themselves as individuals, nor did they only care for female *artistes* as a group. Instead, they also were deliberate and aware of their role in raising the consciousnesses of all women to unite in a mass movement of female politics to promote change. They used their art and their talents to further this awareness and promote a new vision of womanhood for middle-class women in the modern world. As Modern Women themselves, actresses demonstrated how the performing arts could be a vehicle to raise consciousness, resolve conflicts, and ultimately shift the foundation of London's male and paternally-dominated social, political and cultural institutions towards middle-class, female, and feminist-centered systems. My dissertation thus demonstrates the critical power of the theatre in shaping a gendered and political identity and envisioning a hope for a different kind of society.

The making of the Modern Woman between 1890 and 1914, therefore, offered a feminist re-imagining of London within the age of modernity. Neither did the outbreak of war in 1914 nor the passage of women's suffrage in 1918 signal the end, but the continuation of this feminist vision. As actress, playwright, and writer Cicely Hamilton claimed to be a "feminist rather than a suffragist," so too did many other Modern Women in the decades that followed the victory of the vote.<sup>730</sup> By exploring the important intersection among modernity, class, femininity, politics, theatre and

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<sup>730</sup> Hamilton, *Life Errant*, 65.

performance, “(Per)Forming Female Politics: The Making of the ‘Modern Woman’ in London, 1890-1914,” therefore, illuminates the monumental influence that the cultural environment of the city had in fashioning new identities and new roles for middle-class women in the modern world. Without the courage and resilience of these ancestors, the flourish of the performing arts, the expansion of social, economic, legal and political rights, nor the preponderance of independent and politically-conscious women would have come to fruition or be a reality in the postmodern world.

## Appendix 1

“The Women’s Marseillaise”

Words: F.E.M. Macaulay

Music: Rouget Delisle

Arise, ye daughters of a land  
 That vaunts its liberty!  
 Make restless rulers understand  
 That women must be free,  
 That women *will* be free.  
 Hark! Hark! The trumpet’s calling!  
 Who’d be a laggard in the fight?  
 With victory even now in sight,  
 And stubborn foemen backward falling.

Chorus: To Freedom’s cause till death  
 We swear our fealty.  
 March on! March on!  
 Face to the dawn,  
 The dawn of liberty.

Arise! Though pain or loss betide,  
 Grudge naught of freedom’s toll.  
 For what they loved the martyrs died;  
 Are we of meaner soul?  
 Are we of meaner soul?  
 Our comrades, greatly daring,  
 Through prison bars have led the way:  
 Who would not follow to the fray,  
 Their glorious struggle proudly sharing?

Chorus: To Freedom’s cause till death  
 We swear our fealty.  
 March on! March on!  
 Face to the dawn,  
 The dawn of liberty.<sup>731</sup>

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<sup>731</sup> Nelson, *Literature of the Women’s Suffrage Campaign in England*, 170.

## Appendix 2

“Woman This, and Woman That”

By  
Lawrence Houseman

We went up to Saint Stephens with petitions year by year;  
‘Get out!’ the politicians cried, ‘we want no women here!’  
M.P.’s behind the railings stood and laughed to see the fun,  
And bold policemen knocked us down, because we would not run.

For it’s woman this, and woman that, and ‘Woman go away!’  
But it’s ‘Share and share alike, ma’am!’ when the taxes are to pay,  
When the taxes are to pay, my friends, the taxes are to pay,  
Oh, it’s ‘Please to pay up promptly!’ when the taxes are to pay!

We went before a magistrate, who would not hear us speak;  
To a drunken brute who beat his wife he only gave a week;  
But we were sent to Holloway a calendar month or more,  
Because we dared, against his will, to knock at Asquith’s door.

For it’s woman this, and woman that, and ‘Woman, wait outside!’  
But it’s ‘Listen to the Ladies!’ when it suits your Party’s side;  
When it suits your Party’s side, my friends, when M.P.’s on the stump  
Are shaking in their shoes at how the cat is going to jump!

When women go to work for them the Government engage  
To give them lots of contract jobs at a low starvation wage;  
But when it’s men that they employ they always add a note  
‘Fair wages must be paid’—because the men have got the vote.

For it’s woman this, and woman that, and ‘Woman, learn your place!’  
But it’s ‘Help us, of your charity!’ when trouble looms apace;  
When trouble comes apace, my friends when trouble comes apace,  
Then it’s ‘Oh, for woman’s charity!’ to help and save the race!

You dress yourselves in uniforms to guard your native shores,  
But those who make the uniforms do work as good as yours;  
For the soldier bears the rifle but the woman bears the race—  
And that you’d find no trifle if you had to take her place!

Oh, it's woman this, and woman that, and 'Woman cannot fight!'  
 But it's 'Ministering Angel!' when the wounded come in sight;  
 When the wounded come in sight, my friends, the wounded come in sight,  
 It's a 'ministering angel' then who nurses day and night!

We may not be quite angels—had we been we should have flown!—  
 We are only human beings, who have wants much like your own;  
 And if sometimes our conduct isn't all your fancy paints,  
 It wasn't man's example could have turned us into saints!

For it's woman here, and woman there, and woman on the streets,  
 And it's how they look at women, with most men that one meets;  
 With most men that one meets, my friends, with most men that one meets—  
 It's the way they look at women that keeps women on the streets!

You talk of sanitation, and temperance, and schools,  
 And you send your male inspectors to impose your man-made rules;  
 'The woman's sphere's the home,' you say. Then prove it to our face;  
 Give us the vote that we may make the home a happier place!

For it's woman this, and woman that, and 'Woman, say your say!'  
 But it's 'What's the woman up to?' when she tried to show the way;  
 When she tries to show the way, my friends, when she tries to show the  
 way—  
 And the woman means to show it—that is why she's out to-day!"<sup>732</sup>

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<sup>732</sup> As quoted by Kitty in her autobiography, see the Kitty Marion Papers, 207-08.

### Appendix 3

“The March of the Women”

Words: Cicely Hamilton

Music: Dr. Ethel Smyth

Shout, Shout, up with your song!  
 Cry with the wind, for the dawn is breaking;  
 March, march, wing you along,  
 Wide blows our banner and hope is waking.  
 Song with its story, dreams with their glory,  
 Lo! They call, and glad is their word!  
 Forward! Hark how it swells,  
 Thunder of freedom, the voice of the Lord!

Long, long, we in the past  
 Cowered in dread from the light of heaven,  
 Strong, strong, stand we at last,  
 Fearless in faith and with sight new-given.  
 Strength with its beauty, Life with its duty,  
 (Hear the voice, oh hear and obey!)  
 These, these, beckon us on,  
 Open your eyes to the blaze of the day.

Comrades, ye who have dared  
 First in the battle to strive and sorrow,  
 Scorned, spurned, nought have ye cared,  
 Raising your eyes to a wider morrow.  
 Ways that are weary, days that are dreary  
 Toil and pain by faith ye have borne;  
 Hail, hail, victors ye stand,  
 Wearing the wreath that the brave have worn!

Life, strife, these two are one,  
 Naught can ye win but by faith and daring;  
 On, on that ye have done  
 But for the work of today preparing.  
 Firm in reliance, laugh a defiance,  
 (Laugh in hope, for sure is the end.)  
 March, march, many as one,

Shoulder to shoulder and friend to friend.<sup>733</sup>

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<sup>733</sup> “The March of the Women,” Pankhurst (Sylvia) Papers, 1882-1960, Norlin Library, University of Colorado-Boulder.

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