

Women's Writing and British Female Film Culture in the Silent Era

Submitted by Lisa Rose Stead to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English

In January 2011

This thesis is available for Library use on the understanding that it is
copyright material and that no quotation from the thesis may be published
without proper acknowledgement.

I certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own work has been
identified and that no material has previously been submitted and approved
for the award of a degree by this or any other University.

Signature _____



I acknowledge the support of the Arts and Humanities Research Council in
fully funding this doctoral research project (2007-2010).

Abstract

This thesis explores women's writing and its place in the formation of female film culture in the British silent cinema era. The project focuses upon women's literary engagement with silent cinema as generative of a female film culture, looking at materials such as fan letters, fan magazines, popular novels, short story papers, novelizations, critical journals and newspaper criticism.

Exploring this diverse range of women's cinema writing, the thesis seeks to make an original contribution to feminist film historiography. Focusing upon the mediations between different kinds of women's cinema writing, the thesis poses key questions about how the feminist film historian weights original sources in the reclamation of silent female film culture, relative to the varying degrees of cultural authority with which different women commentated upon, reflected upon, and creatively responded to film culture.

The thesis moves away from conceptualization of cinema audiences and reception practices based upon textual readings. Instead, the thesis focuses upon evidence of women's original accounts of their cinemagoing practices (fan letters) and their critical (newspaper and journal criticism) and creative (fiction writers) responses to cinema's place in women's everyday lives. Balancing original archival research with multiple overarching methodological frameworks—drawing upon fan theory, feminist reception theory, audience studies, social history and cultural studies—the thesis is

attentive to the diversity of women's experiences of cinema culture, and the literary conduits through which they channeled these experiences.

Shifting the recent focus in feminist silent film historiography away from the reclamation of lost filmmaking female pioneers and towards lost female audiences, the thesis thus constructs a nationally specific account of British women's silent era cinema culture.

CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.....	7
INTRODUCTION.....	12
CHAPTER 1 FEMINIST METHODOLOGY AND FEMALE FILM HISTORY	26
Activated reception.....	28
'The Picture Girl': mapping the fan letter across female film culture.....	34
Reception and resistance	45
Re-representation in feminist film history.....	51
Feminist approaches to leisure and consumption.....	56
Negotiating the consumer/spectator double-bind	67
CHAPTER 2 BRITISH WOMEN AND MODERNITY.....	78
Socioeconomic and technological development	80
The public sphere and the circulation of "all social things"	83
Leisure, modern female living and urban vision.....	93
CHAPTER 3 FEMALE FILM CRITICISM.....	104
Close Up: 'art, experiment and possibility'	106
H.D.: 'the lump and the leaven'	110
Dorothy Richardson: the editorial 'we'	121
Tabloid critics	133
C.A. Lejeune: language, sincerity and the 'exceptional audience'	136
Iris Barry and the <i>Daily Mail</i>	147
Gendered film criticism.....	159
CHAPTER 4 CINEMA AND WOMEN'S FICTION	164
Cinemagoing stories	165

Cinematic fictions	169
Novelizations and re-issues	184
Women novelists as public figures.....	187
CHAPTER 5 ELINOR GLYN AND AUTHORIAL STARDOM	195
Glyn as author, 1900—1920.....	196
Glyn goes to Hollywood	203
Star-maker: Gloria Swanson and Aileen Pringle.....	218
Publicizing authorial stardom	229
Glyn as “The Champion of the British Film”, 1929-1932.....	237
CHAPTER 6 MODERNIST / MIDDLEBROW: VIRGINIA WOOLF, WINIFRED HOLTBY AND CINEMA.....	254
Modernist / middlebrow authorship and cinema	255
Woolf and ‘The Cinema’ (1926)	261
Holtby: cinemagoing female characters.....	268
Super cinema escapism	274
Cinemagoing spinsters and widows	279
The Crowded Cinema: martial pressure and cinematic lessons.....	287
CHAPTER 7 BRITISH FAN MAGAZINES AND FEMALE READERS	298
Fan magazine femininity.....	310
The subject of fan discourse	323
Fan poetry and female stars.....	333
CHAPTER 8 FAN WRITING AND FEMALE STARDOM	340
The problem of female stars	347
British star systems and actresses	351
Fan responses to female stars.....	362
CHAPTER 9 FEMALE FILM CULTURE AND POPULAR GENRE: CRIME WRITING, SERIALS AND STARS.....	384

Crime as a popular genre	385
Crime in the fan magazine	389
Screen-to-magazine prose tie-in serializations	400
Destabilizing resolution	410
CONCLUSION	416
APPENDIX A: ELINOR GLYN CHRONOLOGY 1864 – 1930.....	419
APPENDIX B: FEATURED <i>PICTUREGOER</i> STARS.....	422
APPENDIX C: MAGAZINE COVERAGE RELATIVE TO FAN CONTRIBUTION	423
APPENDIX D: NATIONALITY OF FEATURED STARS	424
WORKS CITED	426
WEBLIOGRAPHY	449
FILMOGRAPHY	451

List of Illustrations

Letter by 'D.B.' to <i>The Picturegoer</i> 31 Aug.—7 Sept. 1918: 235.....	26
Chart: adapted from Klinger (1997).....	29
<i>Picturegoer</i> August 10—17, 1918: 168.....	36
<i>Picturegoer</i> September 14—21, 1918: 271.....	36
<i>Picturegoer</i> March 8—15, 1919: 247.....	36
Chart: mapping D.B.'s letter across the thesis.....	46
Letter by 'Irene' to <i>Picturegoer</i> Jan 1926: 66.....	57
British comic postcard, circa 1900-19.....	62
<i>Picturegoer</i> advertisement for Allenbury's Pastilles (Jan. 1928: 68).....	87
<i>Picturegoer</i> advertisement for Persil (April 1927:68).....	92
Magazine programme for the Kensington Kinema, London.....	100
October 1928 cover of <i>Close Up</i>	109
Advertisement for the May 1922 <i>Picturegoer</i>	109
Screenshot from <i>Borderline</i> (Kenneth MacPherson, U.K, 1930).....	112
Screenshot from <i>Borderline</i> (Kenneth MacPherson, U.K, 1930).....	112
<i>Close Up</i> promotional piece for <i>Wing Beat</i> (Vol. I. no. I. July 1927).....	113
Photograph of Dorothy Richardson (1930).....	122
<i>Picturegoer</i> cartoon illustration (Sept. 1918).....	132
Photograph of C.A. Lejeune.....	138
Photograph of Iris Barry.....	149
'The Week on the Screen.' <i>Manchester Guardian</i> (18 March 1927: 7).....	150

'Actors who Dream of Films.' <i>Daily Mail</i> (24 Nov. 1927: 10).....	151
Cover of the 1927 <i>Scala Tatler</i>	167
<i>Picture Stories Magazine</i> Feb.1915 No. 18. Vol. III.....	169
Table: Ethel M. Dell novels, 1912 – 1930.....	177
Promotional poster for <i>The Safety Curtain</i>	178
Ryerson Press 1925 edition of <i>Charles Rex</i>	178
1921 G.P Putnam's Sons edition of <i>Rosa Mundi</i>	178
Advertisement for <i>The Tidal Wave</i> (1920).....	181
Table: adaptations of Marie Corelli's works, 1915—1926.....	185
Promotional poster for <i>The Sorrows of Satan</i> (1926).....	185
First edition cover <i>Gentlemen Prefer Blondes</i> (1925).....	187
Photoplay <i>Gentleman Prefer Blondes</i> (1928).....	187
Early cover of <i>The Sheik</i> (1921).....	187
Reprint of <i>The Sheik</i> (1921).....	187
<i>Picturegoer</i> advertisement for <i>The Virgin of Stamoul</i> (1920).....	188
<i>The Times</i> . 20 Nov. 1924: 19.....	191
Newspaper advertisement for <i>Good Housekeeping</i>	193
<i>The Times</i> . 4 Feb. 1925: 11.....	194
<i>Six Days</i> . J.B. Lippincott Co. (1923) First Edition.....	201
<i>Philosophy of Love</i> . Aurburn, New York: Authors' Press (1923).....	201
<i>Love's Blindness</i> . New York: Cacauly Co. (1926) First edition.....	201
<i>On Love</i> . Readers Library, 1928.....	201

Table. Adaptation of Glyn’s works, 1914—1930.....	205
Table. Glyn Filmography.....	206
Film poster for the Famous Players-Lasky adaptation of ‘It’ (1927).....	209
Poster for the Goldwyn Pictures adaptation of <i>Three Weeks</i> (1924).....	209
Poster for the Paramount adaptation of <i>Red Hair</i> (1928).....	209
Vanity Fair caricature by Ralph Barton (Sept. 1921).....	218
Elinor Glyn with film star Gloria Swanson in 1921.....	223
Rudolph Valentino and Gloria Swanson in <i>Beyond the Rocks</i>	223
Publicity photograph of Elinor Glyn and Aileen Pringle from 1923.....	223
Elinor Glyn in her drawing room, 1 Jan. 1935.....	226
Correspondence between Ideal Films Ltd. and Elinor Glyn, 3 Feb. 1931....	249
Winifred Holtby Bibliography.....	258
Virginia Woolf Bibliography.....	258
Photograph of Virginia Woolf, circa 1902.....	260
Photograph of Winifred Holtby.....	260
Comic postcard from 1925.....	286
Comic postcard from 1930.....	286
<i>Cinema Chat</i> (Issue 1. 26 May 1919).....	302
<i>Girls’ Cinema</i> (Vol.7 No.164. 1 Dec. 1923).....	302
<i>The Kinematograph Weekly</i> (16 Sept. 1920).....	302
<i>The Bioscope</i> (Vol.73 No.1101. 10 Nov. 1927).....	302
<i>The Kinematograph Weekly</i> (16 Sept. 1920).....	303

<i>The Bioscope</i> (Vol. 73, Issue 1101, 10 Nov. 1927).....	303
<i>The Picturegoer</i> (Vol. 5. No. 57 Mar. 1923).....	303
<i>Picture Show</i> (24 Jun. 1922).....	303
Screen shot from the <i>Shooting Stars</i> (1928).....	306
Eastern Foam advertisement (<i>The Picturegoer</i> April 1924).....	316
<i>Picturegoer</i> letters page (<i>The Picturegoer</i> Oct. 1921: 62).....	325
'Kinema Carols' page (<i>The Picturegoer</i> May 1927: 60).....	326
"What could be nicer?" Comic postcard circa 1910s.....	332
"They that go in darkness." Comic postcard circa 1913.....	332
Table. 20 most regularly featured stars in <i>The Picturegoer</i> , 1918-1928.....	344
Alma Taylor on the cover of <i>Picturegoer</i> (Dec. 1918 – Jan 1919).....	354
Clara Bow and Antonio Moreno in <i>It</i> (1927).....	360
Betty Balfour in <i>Squibs Wins the Calcutta Sweep</i> (1922).....	360
<i>Picturegoer</i> advertisement for <i>Broken Threads</i> (1918).....	369
Signed star portrait of Mary Pickford.....	373
Alma Taylor on the cover of <i>Picturegoer</i> (Nov. 1914).....	377
Novelization of <i>Manslaughter</i> (1922).....	391
Novelizations of <i>Piccadilly</i> (1929).....	391
Re-issue of <i>The Lodger</i> (1927).....	391
<i>Pictures</i> (August of 1922).....	396
Promotional poster for <i>The Perils of Pauline</i> (1914).....	396
Promotional still for the serial <i>The Timber Queen</i> (1922).....	397

Ivy Martinek (*The Pictures*. Jul. 20· 1912: 14).....404
The Pictures (Aug. 17· 1912: 16).....405

Introduction

This study looks at British women's written reflections upon their experience of cinema and cinemagoing. Investigating the role of diverse written forms in shaping a national female film culture in the silent era, the thesis speaks to and is informed by the current major movement in feminist film history and its impulse to uncover and restore lost voices in women's film history.

My study is structured by an intersection between feminist theory and female film history. This intersection involves a range of approaches—archival theory, reception studies, historiography. This methodology reflects that of recent landmarks in feminist film history, such as Janet Staiger's *Perverse Spectators* (2002), Amilie Hastie's *Cupboards of Curiosity* (2007) and Vicki Callahan's *Reclaiming the Archive* (2010).

Exploring the generative aspects of female film culture in silent era Britain, the thesis looks at a range of primary textual examples of women's writing about cinema, including fan letters, fan magazines, novels, short story papers, novelizations, critical journals and newspaper criticism.

Referring to these materials as generative, the thesis asks how such diverse voices relate to popular culture. Are these materials evidence of writing generated by British popular culture at this particular time? Or did women's cinema-related writing generate a more autonomous silent era female film culture? Historically situating and analyzing these sources, the

thesis argues that the ways in which they suggest the generation of a British female film culture clearly evidences women's agency over cultural practice.

This introduction aims to briefly chart some of the key questions arising from my engagement with these materials, and the theoretical and methodological frameworks I will employ throughout the thesis in addressing these questions.

A recent growth in critical interest surrounding international silent cinema culture—and the experiences of women as film pioneers in particular—has helped to establish a remarkably diverse and progressive body of feminist film scholarship reclaiming and centralizing women within silent film history. Several key works, such as Kathy Peiss' *Cheap Amusements* (1986), Miriam Hansen's *Babel and Babylon* (1991), Shelley Stamp's *Movie-Struck Girls* (2000) and Christine Gledhill's *Reframing British Cinema 1918-1928* (2003), have laid essential critical groundwork for socio-historical feminist explorations of early film culture with a vested interest in feminist historiography. These works span from developments in cultural studies in the mid 1980s to recent archival feminist film scholarship.

Jennifer M. Bean and Diane Negra's comprehensive *A Feminist Reader in Early Cinema* (2002) constitutes one of the most significant volumes in the field in recent years. Bean and Negra's comprehensive anthology sought to make visible "the remarkable number of roles played by early women producers, directors, stars, and writers in the formation of the young industry" (1).

Fundamentally, the project posed questions about how women's experience within silent film culture, as producers and consumers, could be critically addressed and recreated without reducing, over-emphasizing or simplifying their complexity and historical specificity.

Bean and Negra articulated the importance of investigating the ways in which:

. . . the prominent sign of 'woman' in the period, her role in not only the production but also the reception of early film, [might] be taken up in terms beyond those of a gender paradigm that has never been comprehensive enough (2).

In their attempt to lay the foundations for a feminist account of silent era cinema, Bean and Negra's collection offered invaluable case studies of numerous female filmmaking pioneers and performers, sensitive to insistent issues of class, ethnicity and nationality.

In many ways, my investigation of women and silent cinema is shaped by an engagement with Bean and Negra's project. In striving towards a more comprehensive account of female cinemagoing audiences, fiction writers and critics in silent era Britain—attentive specifically to issues of class and nationality—my thesis leads on from *A Feminist Reader* in progressing historically informed feminist film historiography.

My impulse to re-interrogate many of Bean and Negra's key questions arises a relative gap in their volume, however, in relation to the nationally specific conditions of gendered silent film reception practices. While there have been several major studies exploring the practices of American female audiences in silent film culture (such as Lauren Rabinovitz's *For The Love of Pleasure* (1998) and Peiss' *Cheap Amusements*, which looked at early twentieth century women's cinemagoing and leisure in Chicago and New York respectively), the details of female cinemagoing and women's opinions, reflections and responses to silent film culture remain relatively unexplored in the British context.

An important recent anthology, Melanie Bell and Melanie Williams' *British Women's Cinema* (2010), has made a major contribution towards addressing British female film culture. Yet the voices of cinemagoers, fans, critics and fiction writers in the silent era still remain relatively unexplored, with the focus of much research directed towards the development of British film production, exhibition and marketing.

I have chosen to attempt to facilitate stronger access to this elusive sense of audience, critical and creative 'voice' through the analysis of traces of the writing of British women about cinema and cinemagoing experiences.

Women's writing about silent cinema as it appears in its various forms—fan magazine journalism and letter writing, newspaper criticism, popular literature and middlebrow fiction—testifies to the resonance that filmic

encounters held for British women. These diverse forms—the written traces of cinema encounters, and transformations of those encounters—also challenge the superficiality of leisure experiences. Traces of women’s engagement with leisure forms would seem to insist upon themselves as historically and culturally significant echoes of a fascinating period for British women.

Antonia Lant and Ingrid Periz’ 2006 collection *Red Velvet Seat* was one of the first substantial compilations to take up this type of project in addressing the multiple sites and forms of women’s cinema writing. The volume spans the first fifty years of film and contains a plethora of material drawn from numerous literary and journalistic sites in which women wrote about film. Where Lant and Periz offer an amalgamation of diverse international voices, however, this study seeks to draw out specific instances where women’s film and literature intersected in early twentieth century British culture. This focus allows both specificity and the freedom to move across different yet intersecting forms, high and lowbrow, from fiction to criticism and fan discourse.

In exploring such points of intersection throughout the thesis, the central question of what it means to write as a feminist historian is coupled with the investigative question of what it means to write about cinema as a woman in the British silent era. To answer these questions, the thesis combines a context-activated approach to reception with a theoretically informed process

of historical reclamation in the use of original archival sources. The fundamental questions I ask are firstly: how we assess and negotiate issues of feminist historiography when shifting the focus away from film texts, and secondly, how can feminist historiography be deployed to trace and reclaim lost female audiences, as well as female filmmaking pioneers?

My involvement in current projects promoting a major revival of women and silent cinema—most notably the AHRC funded Women’s Film History Network UK/Ireland and the Women Film Pioneers project based at Columbia University (led by Jane Gaines)—has underscored the need to distinguish my own research upon women’s writing about film as a particular thread of investigation. My research enters somewhat on the fringes of these networks, focusing as it does not upon the makers of film texts (as directors, producers, editors, screenwriters, etc.) but upon the creative written responses of the women who consumed such texts. In navigating the processes of ‘doing feminist silent film history’, therefore, some of the guiding questions of existing feminist film historiography need to be reconsidered.

A problem which besets both pioneer research and audience studies is, as Jane Gaines has stressed, a tendency to “over-write” (‘Film History’ 117). The ever increasing interest in silent cinema’s female pioneers has exerted the pressure for feminist critics to write “*the* history of these women” (Gaines, ‘Film History’ 117). In terms of audiences, over-writing often comes in the

form of an eagerness on the part of the researcher to at times supply the implied voice of female viewers, or award individual voices excessive significance where substantial material evidence is not directly accessible.

As researchers in an age of digital archives and increased access to materials and research networks, the desire to offer a definitive account of reception practices results in the persistence of this problem. As Barbara Klinger puts it in her important essay 'Film history terminable and interminable', there is "something . . . elusively excessive about the historical" (107).

Klinger asks whether a researcher can ever hope to exhaust all influential factors that shape the relationship between film and history. Klinger further asks whether, if the answer is that no scholar can truly achieve this, the exercise is stalled in its partiality. The issue of comprehensiveness, Klinger asserts, "lingers at the border of historical reception studies both as a promise and a threat" (108). The very idea of attempting to offer a comprehensive account is a troublesome notion—risking a "simplistic relativism" that suggests texts produce "an 'undecidable' infinity of interpretations".¹

Klinger concludes, however, that the ethos behind striving for exhaustive investigative accounts nevertheless yields positive and valuable historical insights. We can, Klinger argues, in embracing an idea of "total history," "acknowledge both the unattainability of such a history and the

¹ Kemper, ejumpcut.com (see works cited).

benefits of its pursuit” (108). The value of pursuing comprehensiveness is precisely its methodological impulse to push the boundaries of existing sources of study. This fundamentally interdisciplinary approach enables, Klinger argues, “a sense, not of *the* ideology the text had in its historical context, but its *many* ideologies” (110). Competing voices, rather than a singular illustrative voice, are given room to play against one another. Throughout the thesis, this emphasis manifests in the move away from the singular pioneer towards an account of a range of women’s voices, responding precisely to the many ideologies of individual texts and representations.

Chapter 1 begins by exploring in detail some of these key issues of feminist film historiography, mapping out the central areas for discussion across the thesis as a whole by way of a detailed case study of a single fan letter. The chapter explores a range of approaches to reception, fan studies, cultural history sources, archival film theory and feminist theories of leisure, arguing for a progressive, theoretically informed archival-based approach for engaging with women’s experience of cinema culture as a popular leisure form in early twentieth century Britain.

Moving outwards from the specific issues of methodology to a closer look at historical context, Chapter 2 addresses British women and modernity, tracing women’s engagement with changing conceptualizations of public and private spheres as they overlapped with their experience of cinema culture.

The chapter argues for the centralization of women within the experience of modernity, and attention to the specificities of women's role as consumers within commercialized popular culture, refuting a reduction of female reception practices as qualified by a passive/resistant polarization.

Chapter 3 moves to explore the first in a series of case studies of women's silent film writing, turning first towards critical journals and female film journalism. This writing generated a critical sphere for women's commentary upon film and film culture. The chapter explores the writing of female contributors to the specialized modernist film journal *Close Up*, contrasting the niche film writing of this low-circulation experimental publication with the more culturally pervasive tabloid criticism of two of Britain's earliest female film critics—Iris Barry and C.A. Lejeune. Here we see female writers forging a genuinely new critical language in the discussion and interpretation of film. Throughout these examples of women's critical film writing, issues of gendered audiences, women's cinema and the tension between highbrow art and lowbrow popularist entertainment are prevalent.

Chapter 4 shifts focus from journalistic spheres to women's literature, exploring the influence of cinematic themes, images, stars and styles upon popular British women's novel and short story writing during the silent era. Looking at textual examples from a range of female authors, the chapter particularly focuses on those writers whose work formed a close link with cinema culture through adaptations and authorial involvement in the

adaptation process. These include writers such as Ethel M. Dell, who had a close relationship with the British production company Stoll in the teens and twenties, and Marie Corelli, who interacted with various British and international film studios. The chapter argues for the impact of film culture upon popular literary forms which targeted a shared female audience, and the increasing presence of women as literary celebrities, sharing commercial practices with the development of cinematic star systems.

Chapter 5 offers a major case study of one such popular female author, Elinor Glyn. Glyn's unprecedented success as an authorial 'star' and Hollywood insider constitutes a fascinating example of a British silent era female figure whose public image affirmed the fundamental connections between women's literature and women's film. The chapter explores original archival evidence of Glyn's interaction with both the international media and specific Hollywood and British film studios.

Tracing Glyn's interaction with the British film industry at the close of the 1920s, the chapter is attentive to national issues of women's cinema and women's cinema stars towards the end of the silent era. I ask how Glyn used print media as a way of negotiating specifically nationalized gender issues within film culture as both a creative figure and a film and media personality.

Chapter 7 shifts focus from the popularist fictions of Glyn and her contemporaries explored in Chapter 4 to the modernist and middlebrow writing of Virginia Woolf and the author Winifred Holtby. Turning to Woolf

as an example of a novelist whose direct address of cinema was limited to a singular critical study—her 1926 essay ‘The Cinema’, distinctly highbrow in form and aesthetic—the chapter asks how Holtby might offer a counterpoint to Woolf’s conceptualization of the value of cinema and the nature of cinemagoing audiences.

As a novelist who explicitly discussed women’s interaction with cinema in her published works, Holtby’s attention to cinema was markedly unique. The chapter focuses upon the class specific address of Holtby’s writing and the ways in which the gendered address of middlebrow and working-class popular culture were related in 1920s Britain. I trace the development of Holtby’s cinema-going female characters and explore those passages Holtby frequently gave over in her work to descriptive encounters with cinema spaces and specific films and genres. Holtby offers a distinct voice within the plethora of voices addressed across the thesis, choosing to frame her critical interpretation of cinemagoing and its resonance for contemporary class and gender ideology—relating specifically to marriage and spinsterdom—through the form of creative prose. Framing a reading of Holtby’s novels with detailed reference to her work within mainstream popular culture as a journalist and radio personality—alongside her personal letter writing and documentation of her own affinity for cinema and cinemagoing—the chapter investigates the specific nature of the novel as form of female film culture.

Chapter 7 turns from novels to fan cultures and fan writing. Exploring the British fan magazine market and women's writing within such magazines, the chapter draws upon a range of original examples from women's letter writing in commentary and poetry pages featured in weekly and monthly film fan publications. The platform established by female fans for 'writing back,' as it were, complicates the way in which such ephemeral materials might be critically interpreted. Tracing the female address of fan magazines as a specific extra-textual form of print ephemera, the chapter engages fan theory in asking how specific incarnations of modern femininity were constructed within the shape of magazines as a whole.

Chapter 8 looks in greater detail at fan writing within the primary British publication *The Picturegoer*, as it relates to female stardom and the representation of national female stars. The fan interpretation of female film performance reveals the figure of the female star on screen to be deeply entangled within contemporary conflicts concerning gender norms.

Charting the development of the 'problem' of British female film stardom, the chapter examines particular star images in detail—such as that of British actress Alma Taylor—as they were conceptualized by both the industry and in the writing of female fans. By framing American and British female star images within detailed analysis of their discussion by British fans, the chapter draws upon the illuminating aspects of the specifically national

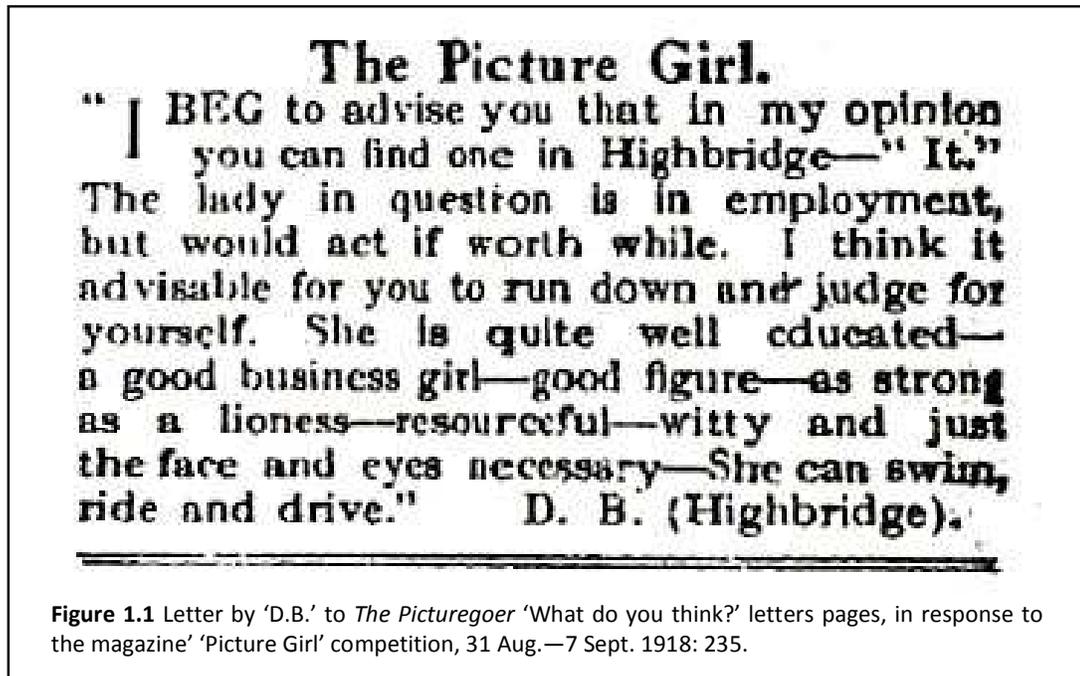
connotations of their particular incarnations of screen and off-screen contemporary femininity.

Chapter 9 forms the final case study of the thesis, exploring a specific generic form. The chapter looks at crime as a rich example of the intersection of literary and filmic cultures addressing and addressed by female audiences as readers and viewers. A substantial female preference for crime fictions on the page and screen and the female representations within them existed in silent film culture. This suggests a prominence of transgressive images and representations which are kept in play beyond the superficial resolution of individual filmic and literary narratives. Using novelizations, fan letters, fan magazine tie-in stories and star writing, the chapter aims to draw together the various intersecting threads of the thesis as a whole, demonstrating the ways in which the generative aspects of women's film culture overlapped and intersected within specific generic forms.

My overriding concern throughout the thesis has been to keep feminist methodological questions at the forefront of my investigative accounts of women's writing and silent cinema. Attentive to the development of feminist film theory from its roots in 1970s conceptualizations of female spectatorship through to the contextually informed debates of the 1980s and 1990s, the thesis situates itself within a body of contemporary feminist scholarship.

I seek to contribute to the shared enthusiasm of this work for a plurality of methodological frameworks and historically sensitive, theoretically informed approaches to the material under study. The project is propelled by Vicki Callahan's recent call for the progression of a 'new' film feminism as a "network of collaboration across generations" (6) of feminist scholarship and an "open arena of communication that acknowledges, visualizes, and gives voices to the diversity of our experiences" (6). The thesis thus seeks to explore a range of materials, some re-examined and many previously unexplored, from women's varied and vital accounts of British silent era cinema culture.

Chapter 1 Feminist Methodology and Female Film History



How do we move from the specific (material evidence) to the general (socio-historical frameworks, models of spectatorship, theories of reception) in the process of doing women's film history? What methodological challenges do we encounter along the way as feminist historians dealing with issues of the interpretive?

This opening chapter aims to look at methodological issues facing the feminist film historian in the movement between the specific and the general. It begins with a microcosmic example—here using a singular fan letter—and moves to explore the resonances of such primary sources through a range of interpretative methodologies. These varied frameworks illustrate distinct issues in the processes of doing women's film history.

The source under scrutiny here—the silent era female fan letter in figure 1.1.—is representative of one of the diverse ways in which British women engaged with the gendered experience of cinema culture and cinemagoing practices in written forms. Written traces offer examples of mediated forms of spectatorship, each presenting distinct voices and distinct levels of authority.

Women's written responses to cinema took the form of fan letters, newspaper criticism, novel writing, journalism, biography and private correspondence. Attention needs to be drawn to how these different kinds of women's writing about cinema, although broadly linked thematically, offer distinct forms of participation within film culture. Some forms, such as women's film criticism, are reflective and interactive; some, such as poetry and novel writing, are creative. Each form originates from alternate platforms of women's writing about film culture that cannot easily be levelled against one another under the heading women and silent film.

Barbara Klinger posits a model of historical inquiry highly sensitive to the various locations of these generative elements of film culture. Klinger proposes three subdivisions of socio-geographic space which "suggest the intricate situations in which cinema exists historically" (113). These are: cinematic practices (*film production, film distribution, film exhibition, film personnel*); intertextual zones (*other businesses and industries, other media and arts, review journalism, star journalism and fan culture*) and social and historical

contexts (*the economy, law, religion, politics, class, race and ethnicity, gender and sexual difference, family, ideology, cross-cultural reception*).

This model allows the researcher to move back and forth between spheres of the production of meaning, from industry generated texts to relevant socio-historical factors influential upon spectators and consumers. In application to my own study, the overarching focus upon gender governs these three spheres.

Figure 1.2 is a representative attempt to map my own project against Klinger's framework, illuminating the interaction between disparate industrial, cultural and economic spheres in the critical investigation of women and silent cinema. This map also outlines many of the core areas and examples that will be explored in detail across the thesis, from fan magazines to popular novels and female film journalism.

Activated reception

As a framing model for the central illustrative exercise of the chapter, I draw upon Janet Staiger's mapping of reception studies into distinct "activated" groups in her work *Interpreting Film* (1992). Staiger describes three categories of theoretical approaches to reception studies, which she labels "'text-activated', 'reader-activated' and 'context-activated'" (*Interpreting* 35):

[Text-activated theories] suggest that the text exists and will set up what the reader will do, that the reader is constituted by the text or by social and literary

Women and British Silent Cinema

Social and historical contexts

Intertextual zones

Cinematic practices

<p>Film distribution (Presumed female target/appeal, patterns of distribution relative to issues of gender, genre related to runs based on audiences etc.)</p>	<p>Film production (censorship related to issues of gender, production history etc.)</p>	<p>Film exhibition (issues of national, local exhibition, conditions of cinema site specific to female experience, marketing targeting female spectators)</p>	<p>Film personnel (female actors, scriptwriters, directors, producers, editors etc.)</p>	<p>Other business and industries (fashion, female targeted advertising, communication industry, promotional linking feminine products to 'women's cinema')</p>	<p>Other media and arts (theatre—status of female actresses, radio—women writing and speaking about cinema crossing over, literary connections between women's fiction and women's writing and cinema, dance trends impacting upon filmic female representations)</p>	<p>Review Journalism (female film criticism in newspapers, magazines, radio)</p>	<p>Star journalism and fan culture (women's interaction with fan magazines and their negotiation of star images and female readership; newspaper treatment of stars; studio generated female star marketing and material)</p>	<p>The Economy (increase in publishing of women's magazines, expansion of public sphere of consumption, women in workforce with greater disposable income)</p>	<p>Law (legal rulings regarding censorship, behaviour in cinemas relating to women and idea of appropriate female decorum)</p>	<p>Religion (reform groups influencing industry censorship placing strong emphasis upon safety and decorum of women in exhibition environment)</p>	<p>Class (representation of gendered class issues in films; mixing of women of different class at exhibition site; class fundamentally entwined with national ideas about female actress)</p>			
											<p>Race and ethnicity (constitution of national / racial gendered identities on screen, exoticism of female screen typing—vamp etc.)</p>	<p>Family (social conception of family unit and appropriate role of women in contemporary British society; war time shifts affecting women's family orientation—workforce increase etc. Representation of romance and marriage on screen for women)</p>	<p>Ideology (historical moment as ensemble of discourses relating to women—cinema participating in reproduction of particular gendered ideologies and/or allowing resistances to these ideological norms)</p>	<p>Crosscultural reception (reception of foreign films in Britain—female preference for American heroines shown in fan discussion—conflict over national norms in and imported ideas of modern femininity in American and European film)</p>

Figure 1.2 (adapted from Klinger 1997)

conventions, and that meaning or significance is 'in' the text for the reader to interpret. In comparison, the reader-activated group . . . argues that the text exists, but the reader, as an individual, can greatly redo or appropriate that text, that the reader is constituted by social or literary conventions or psychologies, and that the meaning or significance is 'in' the reader's interpretation. Finally, those constituting the context-activated group . . . assume that the text and the reader are equally significant in creating meaning, that historical context is very significant for the interaction, and that meaning or significance is 'in' that contextual intersection (*Interpreting* 35-36).

Staiger assesses that the "major competing theories still tend towards text-activated models" (*Interpreting* 57) of film reception. Since the publication of *Interpreting Film*, several significant works in feminist film history have taken up a "reader-activated" approach drawing upon audience studies—namely Jackie Stacey's *Star Gazing* (1994) and Annette Kuhn's *Family Secrets* (1995), which, as Vicki Callahan assesses, "provide . . . a complex account of different levels of identification (both off screen and on[])" (11).

Such works attempt to move away from the 1970s feminist film theory paradigm of text-activated reception approaches. These studies are "corrective of the 'absent' female spectator" (Callahan 11) in gaze-theory's account of mainstream cinema, spanning from Laura Mulvey's seminal essay 'Visual Pleasure in Narrative Cinema' (1975). Mulvey's essay argued that the image of woman on screen constitutes "(passive) raw material for the (active)

gaze of man" ('Visual Pleasure' 17), thus constructing a conceptualization of female spectatorship from a theoretical application of psychoanalytic theory to textual readings.¹ This approach posited female spectatorial encounters within mainstream cinema as the passive consumption of objectified female images.²

Kuhn and Stacey alternatively draw upon the analysis of cultural memory and audience research alongside psychoanalytic theory to offer a range of interpretive modes which are "all potentially constructive to the task of thinking about where meaning is located and how to outline the parameters, fields, or boundaries of text and reader" (Callahan 10). This issue of the location of meaning is important for considering the different generative aspects of women's cinema culture.

For the fan, locating meaning outside the film text and within frameworks of personal experience could often be a way of answering back to the industry's idea of how women identified with cinema and female stars. For novelists like Winifred Holtby, the meaning of a cinema experience was often less to do with the textual encounter and more to do with the activity of

¹ Mulvey focuses upon Hitchcock's *Vertigo* (U.S., Alfred Hitchcock, 1958).

² Influenced by Freudian and Lacanian theory, Mulvey's essay brought together film theory, psychoanalysis and feminism in an attempt to "point to the way film reflects, reveals and even plays on the straight, socially established interpretation of sexual difference which controls images, erotic ways of looking and spectacle" ('Visual Pleasure' 6). Mulvey argued that classical Hollywood cinema placed the spectator in a masculine subject position, constructing the image of woman on screen as an object of desire. Drawing upon Freud's concept of scopophilia and developmental voyeuristic fantasies, Mulvey posited the idea of 'male gaze' in cinema as fundamentally entwined with the basic human need for pleasurable looking. Female characters on screen are "simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote to-be-looked-at-ness" (Mulvey 'Visual Pleasure' 11).

cinemagoing as an urban leisure pursuit. For the newspaper critic, meaning was constructed in the process of critical writing as an interpretive practice.

Attention to where different forms of women's writing place meaning, therefore, is a way of moving away from a view of spectatorship as an exchange of objectified female images, which in turn objectify the spectator. The desire in my own work is to show how written traces reveal the ways in which women position themselves as spectators, rather than the positions in which texts theoretically place them. I aim to read women's self-positioning (e.g. reader-activated in fan letters etc.) against industry preferred readings (e.g. text-activated in film fan texts and magazine/trade papers etc.), whilst simultaneously relating both to broader ideological and cultural positioning (e.g. context-activated reception).

Women as fans, critics and novelists stand at different distances from actual film texts. While the critic explicitly discusses singular texts, the fan often discusses a plurality of texts. The novelist, on the other hand, is frequently less concerned with individual films and more with the physical environment of the space of film consumption. Different frameworks for reception—some more heavily led by attention to context (novelists), some by attention to textual readings (critics)—can be grounded historically by detailed attention to the location of meaning specific to each form of female writing.

Across the thesis as a whole, I have found it necessary to negotiate the boundaries between these approaches in attempting to give greater scope to the specificities of the text/reader relationship. This has been a particularly urgent task where the limitations of indirect access to the thoughts, feelings and reactions of female cinema audiences from the period require a critical repositioning of fragmentary elements of fan 'voice' against textual evidence and contextual knowledge.³

The following exploration of the meanings and significance of a fan letter case study within women's experience of British silent film culture represents an attempt to follow on from Staiger's later work in her 2002 volume *Perverse Spectators*, focusing upon context-activated reception theory which fundamentally "works against the idea . . . that certain forms determine certain responses, and that the spectator plays a passive role in this process".⁴

The fan letter analysis takes up Staiger's call for the precedence of contextual factors over reader psychologies or readings of film texts in "illuminating the reading process or interpretation" (*Perverse* xi). As an example of a "trace" of the encounter between spectator and filmic culture, the fan letter is not directly measured, therefore, against a fixed interpretation of individual films or stars. Staiger's reception methodology places emphasis

³ Fan letters which discuss specific star images in detail, for example, are enriched by the viewing and analysis of surviving film texts in which such stars performed.

⁴ Kemper, ejumpcut.org (see works cited).

upon “why and how films are said to mean certain things for audiences”.⁵ Accordingly, my emphasis in the case study that follows is upon why and how film *culture*—and in particular the pull of female film stardom in general—means certain things for this particular fan writer.

The value in traversing a range of methodological approaches to reception in our encounters with artifacts and texts—from fan letters to trade papers, film texts to social history—centers precisely upon the desire to remain attentive to film history as “a nonlinear, multidirectional flow of information rather than a singular reductive and evolutionary stream of apodictic data” (Callahan 2). Feminism’s specific encounters with the difficulties of film history’s “flow of information” will be explored in greater depth in the second half of the chapter in relation to leisure theory; but first, I return to the fan letter shown at the beginning of the chapter as a way of outlining some of the threads of this multidirectional flow.

‘The Picture Girl’: mapping the fan letter across female film culture

Written by a British girl who identifies herself as ‘D.B., Highbridge’ to the popular British film fan magazine *Picturegoer* in the fall of 1918, the fan letter in figure 1.1 was published in the ‘What Do You Think?’ letter pages in response to a campaign by the magazine to ‘find the next Pictures Girl’ (see figures 1.3.—1.5.). The competition encouraged “any lady reader who aspires to act in photo-plays” (Sept. 14—21, 1918: 271) to submit their portrait.

⁵ Kemper, ejumpcut.org (see works cited).

An underpinning assertion motivating the submission of a letter such as D.B.'s to the pages of the fan magazine is the conviction that cinema is a topic to be written about. Cinema in D.B.'s assessment co-exists easily as both a leisure practice and a potential career, as a generator of female images, and a platform through which to assert one's own personal assessment of appropriate screen—and modern—femininity.

As an example of a generative aspect of women's cinema culture, the details of the letter have several things to tell us about British women in 1918. Beginning from a context-activated stance, we can proceed by relating D.B.'s interpretation of the ideal characteristics of a would-be female film star to what we know of women's cultural experiences in post- WWI Britain.

A "girl" from Highbridge, Somerset,⁶ 'D.B.' is representative of many young working to lower-middle-class British women who engaged daily and weekly with film culture. D.B. offers the researcher greater specificity by locating herself not in any of the larger metropolitan British cityscapes, but rather an average small Somerset market town, with a population of only 2479 by 1921⁷. D.B.'s description of herself as an employed young woman allows us to further locate her within the various shifts in cultural norms surrounding women and work in post-war small town Britain.

⁶ We can reasonably assume she falls within the 15 to 25 year age limit specified by the rules of the Picture Girl competition.

⁷ Figures taken from *Census of England & Wales 1921, County of Somerset, Table 5. Population and constitution by local government areas (registration districts and sub districts)*. London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1921.

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis/dissertation for copyright reasons

Figure 1.3. *Picturegoer* August 10—17, 1918: 168. **Figure 1.4.** *Picturegoer* September 14—21, 1918: 271.

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis/dissertation for copyright reasons

Figure 1.5. *Picturegoer* March 8—15, 1919: 247.

D.B. would have experienced a substantial drop in the male population of England in the aftermath of the war, and the influenza pandemic beginning in June of 1918. D.B. lived in a town in which women were outnumbering men by a margin of 4.2 per cent (113 individuals) on census day 1921, two years after the end of the war⁸—not an insignificant number in a population totalling just under twenty-five hundred. This kind of reduction in the male population in the war years drew women into the nation’s workforce, whilst decreasing immediate opportunities for courtship, marriage and motherhood.

Sue Bruley has documented the way in which the marriage bar “was almost universally applied” (20) in Britain during the tens and teens, however, as an “informal rule or merely a matter of informal pressure” (Bruley 20). For “respectable women” marriage was “regarded as a full-time occupation” (Bruley 20). As such, it is unlikely that D.B. would be married and still be able to boast of her competency as a “good business girl” “in employment”. Work opportunities for unmarried working girls like D.B. in Highbridge were numerous at the town’s markets, on the Somerset and Dorset Joint Railway⁹, at the Buncombe Steamrollers company and the Highbridge Wharf¹⁰, and in the town’s shops, stores and outlying factories.

⁸ Figure taken from *Census of England & Wales 1921 General Tables Comprising: Population, Housing, Institutions, Ages and Marital Conditions, Education, Birthplace and Nationality, Welsh Language*. London: H.M. Stationary Office, 1925.

⁹ In the railway industry women were increasingly employed during and post-war as “carriage cleaners, porters, booking clerks and ticket collectors” (Bruley 42).

¹⁰ Source: ‘Highbridge History: a historical guide to Highbridge, Somerset, UK’ (www.burnham-one--sea.com/highbridge.shtml)

The wry confidence and assertive tone of the letter, suggesting an assured female worker—"in my opinion", "would act if worthwhile"—can thus be read through the lens of women's social history as speaking to a generation of post-war British women experiencing greater independence in the working arena. Such women were generating disposable income to invest in their personal appearance ("good figure" / "just the right face") and personal leisure pursuits, and forging cultural and social identities intertwined with commercial leisure practices like the cinema. By 1921, 5,065,332 women (25.6% of the female population of Britain; 13.4% of the total British population¹¹) were employed in the nation's workforce. 67% of all such working women were in D.B.'s age group at under 35 years (Hakim 1979: 10). In D.B.'s South West region, 27.4% of the female population were in employment by 1931 (Glucksmann 44). These percentages of course do not include unwaged female domestic labour undertaken by huge numbers of women.

Familial pressures and gendered disadvantage went hand in hand with increased work opportunities. Miriam Glucksmann's study of women workers in interwar Britain has traced in detail the common expectation of working glass girls to begin labour as soon as they left school at 14,

¹¹ Percentages calculated from UK population figures on census day 1921—female population figure: 19,811,460; total population figure: 37,886,699 (Source – Whitaker's Almanac 1941, cited on *Genedocs* Geneological Research in England and Wales website, John Hitchcock: 2005, <http://homepage.ntlworld.com/hitch/genedocs/index.html>, date of access: 30 Jul. 2010)

significantly highlighting young women's wages as lower than those of any other social group post-war (35).

D.B.'s remark that she would take up acting "if worth while" therefore holds serious resonance for a working girl facing the potential pressures of familial financial obligation¹², lower wages and the immediate post-war backlash against women workers that was directed most acutely at single young working girls, who were frequently derided in the popular media "as being useless members of society" (Bruley 62).

D.B.'s letter would seem to support Liz Stanley's assertion, therefore, that "'Leisure' . . . has to be understood as part of a conjunction of interests, needs, skills, commitments and obligations in women's lives" (88). Accordingly, D.B. frames her reading of cinema as leisure form and her suitability to performing as a 'Pictures Girl' in relation to her skills as a working girl.

Moving outwards to review the letter as a whole again, we find interpretative vantage points that require alternate methodological apparatus. What does the letter tell us if we view the extract through the lens of fandom, for instance, engaging a more reader-activated approach to reception, leading on from an interest in D.B.'s interaction with ephemeral fan materials like the film periodical?

¹² Glucksmann notes that unmarried working girls were routinely expected to send part of their wage packet to their families.

D.B.'s interpretation of the appropriate qualities of a cinema actress demonstrates fan knowledge of the conventions of cinematic representation and her own assessment of the pleasures of visual spectatorship within the textual encounter of cinema viewing. She places emphasis on her "good figure" and declares that she has "just the face and eyes necessary", surmising an appropriate degree of physical beauty necessary for screen success. She replicates the image of the female face in close-up—"just the face and eyes"—echoing images of stars off-screen in a myriad of extra-textual pictorial discourses (postcards, cigarette cards, posters, star promoted cosmetics etc).

Critics such as Henry Jenkins and Matt Hills have offered detailed work on the documentation and analysis of fan culture, emphasizing the "material signs of fan culture's productivity" (Jenkins 3). In their interaction with fan communities, fans "become active participants in the construction and circulation of textual meanings" (Jenkins 24). Jenkins explains that, while fans "lack direct access to the means of commercial cultural production" (86), they nevertheless assert an identity as "true experts" within popular culture. As such, they constitute "a competing educational elite, albeit one without official recognition or social power" (86).

Fans thus speak with an authority derived from specific knowledge and expertise. Fan letter writers like D.B. articulate their familiarity with cinematic conventions and assert this authority by constructing a platform for voice and

debate through available access points to commercial culture. While unable to directly influence the production of cultural texts, such letter writers nevertheless use their fan authority to produce interpretations and articulated opinions, sharing these within the fan writing community.

Jenkins and Hill's discussion of fan authority offers a useful starting point for interpreting D.B.'s letter as an example of female film practice. The affirmation of cinema as a topic worthy of written debate and interpretation specifically engages notions of highbrow/lowbrow cultural divisions, and the place of cinema within this divide. Fan theory lends us the tools to analyze the deconstruction of the binary of high and low cultural forms in fan activity, which proceeds by "treating popular texts as if they merited the same degree of attention and appreciation as canonical texts" (Jenkins 17).

The fan authority with which D.B. speaks about female stardom is justified by her demonstration of a keen knowledge of a range of qualities needed to succeed on the screen. These include physical beauty ("just the right face" / "good figure"); physical skill and strength ("as strong as a lioness" / "can swim, ride"); technical ability ("can . . . drive"); strength of personality ("witty" / "quite well educated" / "resourceful"), and knowledge of professional practice ("a good business girl").

D.B.'s focus upon the necessary balance between physical strength and feminizing notions of aesthetic beauty—and between practical skills and intellectual wit and flexibility—boasts a firm knowledge of what fan

magazine discourse dictated as the qualities of successful female performers on the silent screen. British fan magazines often focused on presenting female stars as rounded personalities, balancing any discussion of physical skill and daring against 'feminizing' details regarding the aesthetic beauty and domesticity of female stars.

Leading outwards from this, representations of specific models of female stardom in British film culture offer a further way of interpreting D.B.'s letter. The particular emphasis D.B. places upon physical strength—swimming/riding/driving—hints at a preference for the stunting serial queens. Such performers operated with a particularly strong currency between intertextual networks of women's writing about cinema culture (through fan magazines, story adaptations, novelizations and creative fan writing).

Feminist film critics have explored silent film female 'types' as offering specific ideologically charged representations of contemporary femininity.¹³ Shelley Stamp has explored representations of New Woman in silent cinema as serving a "substantial function in reconciling conventional spheres of femininity, like marriage and motherhood, with much more updated incarnations of womanly strength and autonomy" ('Awful Struggle' 149). Ben Singer has similarly viewed serial queen stars and the films in which they performed as "one of the prime vehicles through which the modern

¹³ Lori Landay (2002), for example, has discussed the appeal of 'flapper' stars like Colleen Moore, while Kristine J. Butler (2002) has written about 'Vamp' persona.

imagination explored a new conception of womanhood” (221).¹⁴ The specificity of D.B.’s assessment of the ideal Pictures Girl, therefore, tells us something about the cultural resonance of such feminine representations in Britain in her preference for a model of female stardom that exemplified many of the qualities of the serial star.

Returning to an overview of the letter again, we might ask what it reveals/suggests about women’s points of engagement with the fan magazine as a form. The publication of D.B.’s words as part of a tangible material object of popular culture ephemera, available for purchase and circulation across a female community of readers throughout the UK, places it within the same commercial networks as the women’s magazine and daily newspaper. The critical, assessing tone of D.B.’s letter—“I beg to advise that in my opinion”; “quite well educated”—offers parallels with a developing discourse of women’s newspaper film criticism in the late teens and twenties, in which prominent female figures such as Iris Barry and C.A. Lejeune were free to offer their opinions and interpretations on the subject of cinema.

This signals a different kind of authority to the fan writing of cinemagoers like D.B. Newspaper journalism afforded female film critics a pre-existing framework that gave their writing cultural currency and legitimacy. Critics retained an awareness of their audience as the general newspaper reading public, which included fans, casual cinemagoers, non-cinemagoers and those adverse to the medium. The critic addressed a much

¹⁴ Serial films and serials are explored in Chapter 9.

larger readership than the fan letter writer, therefore, and was obliged to remain attentive to the varied interests of this audience.

There are further points of connection between D.B.'s act of writing and other forms of women's creative responses to cinema. We might turn to authorship as a way of interpreting D.B.'s letter. D.B. mediates the female experience of cinema through a small town background that lends a specificity of cinema practice expounded upon in women's fictional interpretation of cinemagoing in this era. The late 1920s and early 1930s novels of Winifred Holtby, for example (as explored in Chapter 6), describe female cinemagoing encounters in small town Yorkshire. Shifting the focus some 250 miles from D.B.'s Highbridge, Holtby's writing was coloured by the specificities of the Northern woman's experience of daily life in twenties Britain, which nevertheless reflected a similar sense of cinema's place within the routine or everyday work and leisure.

Another lens through which to view D.B.'s letter writing and its concern with female stardom is that of the successful cinema-associated authors of the teens and twenties. D.B.'s emphasis upon self-promotion—"you can find one in Highbridge" / "run down and judge" / "just the face and eyes necessary" / "can swim, ride and drive"—takes a leaf out of the book of successful female writers at the time such as Elinor Glyn, whose literary and filmic career is explored in Chapter 5. Such women crafted authorial star systems around their public personas, which often centered upon cultivating a valued opinion

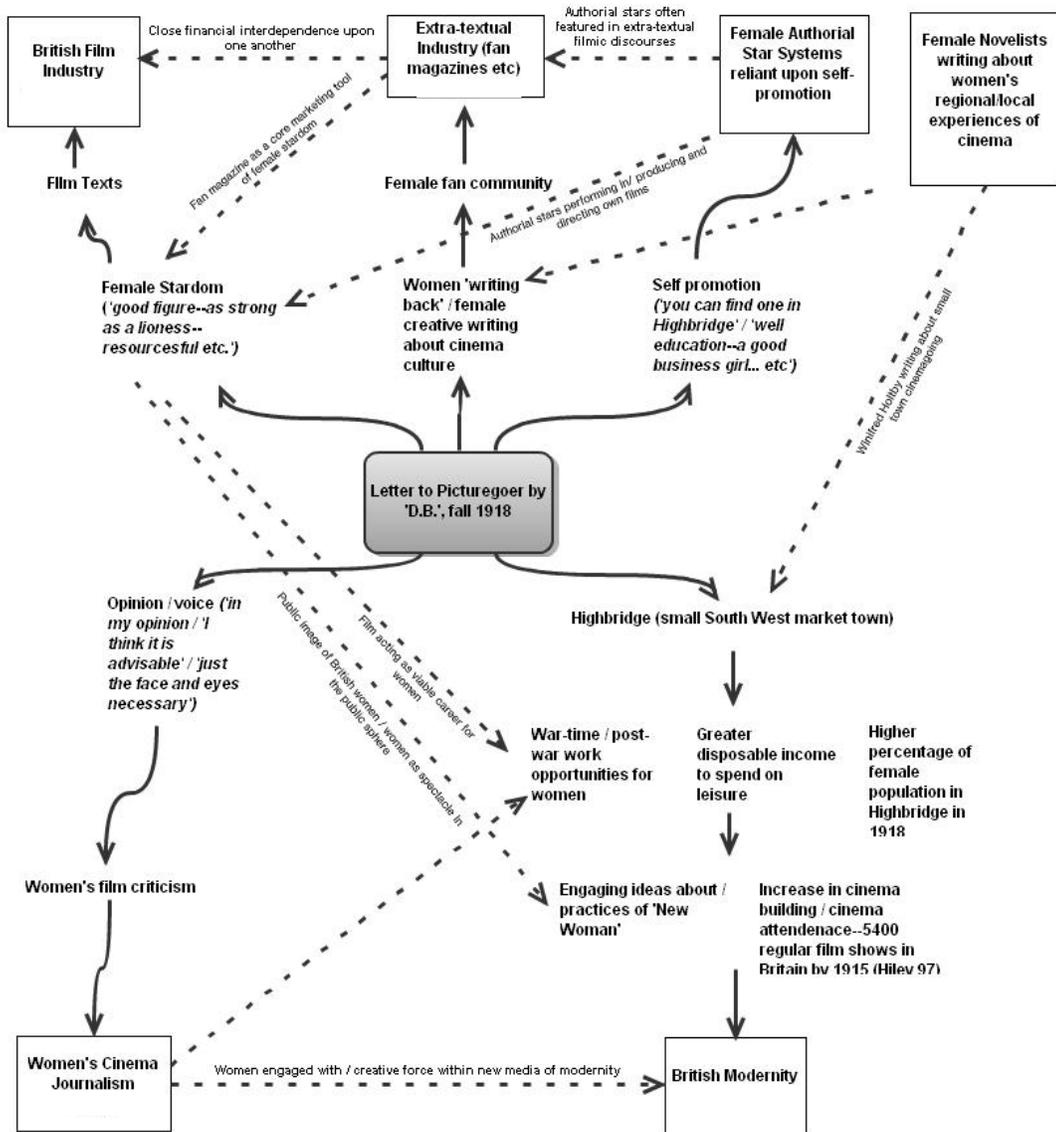
about cinema and female stardom that could be traded for promotional opportunities with the film industry and media.

Reception and resistance

D.B.'s paragraph, as these brief exercises have shown, sits within a varied pool of creative female encounters with British silent cinema culture. This pool is mapped out in detail in figure 1.6. What is essential to recognize in the implicated modes of reception, interpretation and creation outlined in the mapping diagram is that these interconnected textual mediations move beyond binaristic categorizations of active/passive cinematic reception. The distinct yet intertwined nature of each resists the simplistic unification of forms under a banner of resistance to passive female reception.

Matt Hills has explored the trope in cultural theory that gave rise to the notion of reception as measured by levels of consumer resistance. Movements in British cultural studies in the 1980s gained substantial ground in offering greater attentiveness to the complexity of audience reception along these lines. Stuart Hall's 'Encoding/Decoding' (1980) proposed a model of viewer reception based upon three potential spectatorial positionings in relation to the text. "Dominant" or "preferred readings" are those in which the viewer entirely accepts the encoded ideology of the text. "Oppositional readings" conversely see the viewer entirely oppose the ideology of the text. Finally, Hall suggests a third mode—that of "negotiated readings", which accept and

Figure 1.6. Mapping D.B.'s letter across the thesis as a whole



reject different elements of the dominant ideology of the text according to the specific needs of the individual spectator.

Such approaches demonstrated greater attention to the ways in which audiences receive texts and helped move reception studies away from entirely text-activated models. Yet the interpretation of reception along a dominant/oppositional spectrum assumes that all film and media texts reproduce the dominant ideology and that readers and viewers can be easily categorized into socioeconomic groups (Staiger, *Interpreting* 73-74). The influence of such work within fan studies in particular has constructed what Hills assesses as a “rather one-sided view of fandom”, tending to “minimize the extent to which fandom is related to wider shifts in society” (28). The emphasis upon resistance fails to allow for contradictory views or interpretation to be present within individual spectators.

This glossing over of the complexity of individual acts of reception has “reduced the significance of consumption and commodification within fan cultures” (Hills 28). Hills underscores the need to draw attention to the “potentially curious co-existence within fan cultures of both anti-commercial ideologies and commodity-completist practices” (28). Hills identifies an essential conflict in the activity of fans as consumers who,

. . . while simultaneously ‘resisting’ norms of capitalist society and its rapid turnover of novel commodities . . . are also implicated in these very economic and cultural processes (29).

As such, fans both perfectly fit the model of consumption “predicated by the cultural industry” (Hills 29) and at the same time express challenges to consumer ideology.

Ultimately Hills suggests that such practices constitute a necessarily irresolvable contradiction that needs to be “tolerated” by the academic, rather than subsumed under a banner of straightforward totalizing resistance to commercial discourses.

Broadening Hill’s approach and applying this kind of tolerance to the varied textual examples of women’s silent cinema writing would seem to allow for greater adherence to the contradictions and complexities of what such sources suggest to the academic about women’s popular culture. The popular culture such women navigate is not dominated inescapably by a set of determining spectatorial positions of resistance or passivity. Rather, their relation to cinema, as John Storey surmises, “is one of ideological contestation and variability, to be filled and emptied, to be articulated and disarticulated, in a range of different and competing ways” (155).

We might couple this view of popular culture with the model of reception put forward in Staiger’s *Perverse Spectators*. Staiger builds upon her previous advocacy of context-activation reception, proposing that all spectators are “perverse” in that they “use” films in their own way. She outlines this concept thus:

In cultural studies, the triad of 'preferred,' 'negotiated,' and 'oppositional' readings quickly became only hypothetical when applied to various historical events. Almost every reading became 'negotiated,' thus losing much of the relational implications of that term . . . Perversion can imply a willful turning away from the norm; it may also suggest an inability to do otherwise. Thus, the term distinguished itself from the cultural studies triad . . . each act of deviant (*and normative*) viewing requires historical and political analysis to locate its effects and 'judge' its politics (*Perverse* 2-32).

Staiger argues that contextual factors primarily determine our experiences as spectators and how we put these experiences to use in our everyday lives. Crucially, Staiger progresses cultural studies models of reception by removing the meaning of a film from the film text itself, denying the existence of any conception of a pure spectator derived from the analysis of the text alone and its suggested spectatorial positionings.

A desire in my own work to offer greater sensitivity to the "contestation and variability" Storey emphasizes and the "perversion" of spectator practices outlined by Staiger manifests in a need to sidestep some of the limitations of the term 'reception' and its associations with precisely the model of fandom Hills outlines. The sheer variety of sources available for study offer examples of female engagement with silent film that refuse to fall easily upon either side of the active/passive reception binary.

The mapping of D.B.'s letter reveals this network and its various points of intersection. But mapping is only one half of the process. What exceeds the limitations of interpretive models of passive/active reception are the decisions made by the researcher in weighting each of these modes of engagement with cultural practices. To hierarchically reconfigure the map in figure 1.6., for example, we may choose to place women's film criticism at the zenith of genuinely autonomous female opinion, criticism and creativity, drawing upon the relative freedom from the constraints of overt consumerism granted to the newspaper or *Close Up* critic (see Chapter 3) relative to the commercialization of fan magazines.

But in doing so we are again choosing to define fan activity primarily along lines of resistance in privileging the 'freedom' of particular writers to express alternative views and degrading the 'passivity' of fans seemingly saturated by the commercial discourses through which they express themselves.

These decisions of weighting engage the researcher within a core problematic of feminist historiography. This problem arises from the central challenge to balance performing the role of historian—accumulating a plethora of varied sources through which to access women's silent film culture—and the desire to interpret these materials through a feminist lens without reducing their differences, challenges, conflicts and inconsistencies to

a uniform model of reception. What I suggest as a way forwards, therefore, is attention to the processes of *re*-representation in foregrounding these sources.

Re-representation in feminist film history

As a singular source selected from a large range of materials, the D.B. extract speaks to what Amelie Hastie terms “the miscellany of film history” (‘Miscellany’ 230). Writing predominantly on the subject of star scrapbooks such as those made by Colleen Moore in the 1920s, Hastie draws from her experiences of ephemeral archival silent film research the notion of “miscellany” as a kind of methodology” (‘Miscellany’ 229). She expounds:

Women’s histories are inevitably dispersed across genres, forms, spaces. Drawing from these various forms and spaces, our scholarly work is based on miscellaneous acts of collection and of course the collections of miscellany. Through the recollection of miscellaneous objects, writings and histories, the subjects we study come to live in our work as itself part of a new archive. Our analysis – and amassing – of all these texts suggests not just that we turn to archives (this is, after all, always the role of the historian), but that we also recreate them in our own work that writes women back into film history (‘Miscellany’ 229).

Hastie's approach offers greater attention to the complexities of archival based context-activated accounts of reception, viewed as a process in which the researcher re-represents materials.

Vicki Callahan, leading on from Hastie's work, proposes a 'new' feminism—which she coins “Feminism 3.0”—that endorses Hastie's call for attention to miscellany as a cornerstone of feminist methodology. Feminism 3.0 is way of doing film history that progresses both the critical impetus of feminist theory and the recent archival work of feminist historiography in order to forge a “new network of collaboration” (6). Crucially, Callahan emphasizes that difference is not reduced in the network of miscellany (to fuse her ideas with Hastie's), but rather is given the appropriate space in which to play out:

This is not a utopian erasure of differences but rather an open arena of communication that acknowledges, visualizes, and gives voice to the diversity of our experiences . . . The archive becomes in this context not the last edifice standing in a received history, but a dynamic agent of change and a space of becoming (6).

Giving voice to the diversity of experience in film history assists feminist film criticism in exploring the concept of re-representation and progressing onwards from what Callahan surmises as the “rhetorical and historical

baggage, not to mention the confusion surrounding the terms ‘post-feminism’ and ‘Third Wave feminism’” (7).

As Jane Gaines has explored in her essay ‘Film History of the Two Presents of Feminist Film Theory’ (2004), the methodological problem of how to interpret a ‘lost’ feminist film history results a post-feminism double-bind, which Feminism 3.0 attempts to resolve. In recovering a feminist history, the film scholar finds themselves entangled in the need to address the dual omission of each newly discovered female film figure—firstly from the contemporary historical record of their own time, and secondly their place in the formative feminist film criticism of the 1970s.

While Laura Mulvey laid the groundwork for the critical exploration of gender and spectatorship in ‘Visual Pleasure’, the essay critiqued male spectatorship. The essay’s reliance on psychoanalytic theory left little place for the female gaze, denying women the ability to ‘look’ from the position of object. Two key articles responding to and developing upon Mulvey’s work emerged in the 1980s to theorize women’s looking within a psychoanalytic framework; Mary Anne Doane’s ‘Film and the Masquerade’ (1982) and Jackie Stacey’s ‘Desperately Seeking Difference’ (1987).

Doane explored the possibility of female spectatorship through the concept of masquerade, arguing that female spectatorship lacks the necessary distance of voyeuristic spectatorship because woman is the image. Femininity is constructed as “an overwhelming presence-to-itself of the female body”

(‘Masquerade’ 22). The image therefore consumes the female spectator, rather than the female spectator consuming the image. The masquerade offers a way out of this spectatorial positioning in enabling the female spectator to create the necessary distance between herself and the image of woman on screen.

Jackie Stacey addressed the “pleasure of the woman spectator” (‘Desperately’ 365) in ‘Desperately Seeking Difference’. Stacey argued that the “homosexual pleasures of female spectatorship” (‘Desperately’ 365) have been ignored in psychoanalytic and post-structuralist theory. Stacey explored female spectatorship in relation to presentations of dual female protagonists in cinema, where such films “tempt the woman spectator with the fictional fulfillment of becoming an ideal feminine other, while denying complete transformation by insisting upon differences between women” (‘Desperately’ 378). Stacey argued that the psychoanalytic division between identification and desire fails to address such different constructions of female desire within spectatorial practices.

The move towards historiography and the archive characterizes much contemporary feminist film seeking to explore the absent spectator as a subject situated within historical and cultural sensitive frameworks, read from multiple supporting sources of material evidence and sociohistorical contextualization.

As Callahan notes, however, such work has been criticized for its seeming move away from the activism and radicalism which characterizes

the seventies paradigm of theory-led feminist writing. For many scholars, it is precisely the political aspirations of third wave feminism towards “questions of social justice” (Callahan 4) that remain “unfulfilled and . . . indeed missing in contemporary feminism” (4). A totalizing embrace of historical methodology would seem to risk reducing theory’s ahistorical “generalizable woman” (Bean, ‘Towards’ 4) to a linear and depoliticized historical narrative, whereby, as Jane Gaines puts it:

. . . readers of historical narratives, like viewers of the classical narrative realist text, are given the illusion of a privileged relationship to the historical real—a structure more full and completed than ever before encountered (‘Film History’ 116).

Feminist approaches to film history are at risk from either extreme, it would appear—tending towards positing either a theoretically bound and ahistorically passive femininity, or on the other hand a historically narrativized, “seductive feminist utopia” (Bean, ‘Towards’ 10) insensitive to the complexity of historical differences and lacking the politicization of feminism’s radical roots.

Callahan posits the turn to historiography and the archive, however, as “the way out of this dilemma” (4), if embraced as a feminist methodology that “gives us the practical and material information needed to inform our theory” (4). Rather than historicism leading us away from theory, the work of

contemporary feminist theorists such as Staiger and Kuhn is able to “historicize the question of where film history and feminist theory are at present and assert the continued influence of 1970s feminist film studies in relation to the current production of film history and feminist film theory” (Callahan 4).

The question of what form the re-representation of female film history should take is thus of precedence in a study such as my own. Informed by Callahan’s approach, the thesis attempts to retain a core awareness that “the history that we present as feminist always implies a kind of reclaiming, rewriting, and recontextualization of materials” (Callahan 8).

I turn now to address in greater detail feminist theories of leisure fundamental to understanding women’s engagement with film culture and the reclaiming of their written reflections upon it.

Feminist approaches to leisure and consumption

The letter in figure 1.7, a female fan letter published in *Picturegoer* some eight years after D.B.’s, raises several important questions for the feminist researcher about how to approach the subject of women and leisure in the silent era. The letter creates a dialogue about the gendered experience of cinema as leisure practice through the discussion of extra-textual representations of female stardom.

Re-focusing upon Barbara Klinger’s outline of *social and historical contexts* (particularly class, economy, family, ideology), we might begin by exploring



“Irene” says:—“Can you tell me why all interviewers rave and sigh about how simple, sad and sweet are all the stars they ever meet? Apparently *Too Sad!* the poor young dears are almost driven to hot salt tears because they earn so much each week. Their voices break when they try to speak of the ravishing gowns they *hate* to wear . . . and how they loathe the horrid glare publicity forces them to bear! They’d love to live in a small back street and have to fight to make ends meet; they’d sooner wear a gingham frock than queen it in a “Paris shock.” Where *did* they learn this courage pray, that hides their heartache day by day, at having to drive in imported cars and live in mansions (poor little stars!) when all the time they long and pine for floors to scrub and wool to twine. . . Perhaps some day a kinder Fate—will let some sweet star clean my grate, at six in the morning—and light the fire . . . then, then will she gain her life’s desire!”

Figure 1.7. Letter by ‘Irene’ to *Picturegoer* Jan 1926: 66.

how issues of women's cultural positioning relative to their class, labour and leisure pervade the source and inform a web of intersecting socio-historical developments in the period impacting upon women's experience of commercialized recreation.

The central frustration of the 'Irene' letter focuses upon the relationship between work and leisure in the representation of female stars.¹⁵ The letter expresses frustration with the unclear distinction between consumer wealth and privilege and working-class values. The distinction between work and consumption is blurred in the representation of stars as reluctant consumers—the film stars “earn so much each week” allowing them to engage in leisure practices such as fashion (“Paris shocks” / “ravishing gowns”) and driving (“imported cars”), whilst professing to “love to live in a small back street and have to fight to make ends meet”. Irene's frustration with the hypocrisy of what she perceives to be the false modesty of the stars feeds into a central female concern with the unclear division between work and labour.

The letter suggests the varied gender-specific meanings of leisure from the turn-of-the-century as a period in which “leisure and consumption assumed greater prominence in the organization of everyday life” (Rojek 57). More specifically, it demonstrates points of overlap between spheres of

¹⁵ Although Irene does not explicitly state that she is discussing women, she speaks about stars and their “ravishing gowns” and “frocks” / “Paris shocks”.

leisure and work in both private activities within the home (“mansions”) and public activities outside the home (“driving”).

The complex relationship between work and leisure and its points of spatial and temporal overlap has been a fundamental concern for several influential feminist studies, such as Kathy Peiss’ *Cheap Amusements* (1986), Lauren Rabinovitz’s *For the Love of Pleasure* (1998), Sue Bruley’s integrated sections on leisure practices in *Women in Britain Since 1900* (1999) and Claire Langhamer’s *Women and Leisure in England, 1920-1960* (2000).

Langhamer argues that existing critical frameworks for exploring leisure history are not applicable to the study of women’s experiences. Langhamer asserts that decentering the male experience and refocusing upon female leisure enables the researcher to explore “the fluidity within which specific experiences gain definitional validity as ‘leisure’ and ‘work’” (2). Langhamer combines feminist inquiry with attentiveness to the specificity of leisure experience relative to class, locality and age and the differing meanings and activities of leisure for women “over the course of the life cycle” (2).

Langhamer explores the overlapping of women’s leisure with women’s domestic chores and familial responsibilities. Foregrounding the ill-defined distinction between home as a space of leisure and home as a place of domestic labour, Langhamer analyzes the fragmentation of women’s time in which “leisure is slotted into any available space” (17), ultimately challenging

an over-emphasis upon leisure as ‘activities’ rather than leisure as “conceptual constructions” (17).

In reading leisure practices through sources like Irene’s letter, we see this overlapping of women’s work/leisure. In particular, the blurred lines between public leisure and private domestic labour stand out. Irene’s irritated invitation for the stars to “clear my grate, at six in the morning—and light the fire” foregrounds her own experience of domestic labour in the home environment. This significantly is the same environment in which she likely consumed the *Picturegoer* magazine to which she contributes. Spatially, leisure and labour here share a domestic arena.

Langhamer’s research supports this concept of shared labour/leisure space, exploring reading as a leisure activity “which fitted easily into the fragmented nature of women’s time” (176) within the home. As objects within the home that were “easy to pick up and then put down in the course of a days work . . . magazines did provide a real opportunity for relaxation of a type which fitted the realities of women’s everyday lives” (Langhamer 176-177).¹⁶

More detailed hypotheses about the leisure/work overlap can be constructed from Irene’s specific discussion of domestic labour in her debate about stardom and work. The specific references to domestic labour

¹⁶ Further, Langhamer assesses that women’s magazines on the market in the 1920s—publications with which fan magazines shared a great deal in terms of content and tone (see Chapter 7)—did not offer a clear differentiation between leisure and work. The representation of female lifestyle and the unclear distinction between spatial and temporal spheres of work and leisure in these magazines reflected their mode of consumption, illuminating the overlapping of work and pleasure in daily life.

throughout the letter suggest certain things about Irene's background¹⁷—namely that she is lower-class, presumably performing her own domestic duties (clearing “my grate”)¹⁸.

Sue Bruley notes that the “lowest job in the servant hierarchy” (62) in the post-war period was the kitchen maid. Domestic service was “intensely unpopular” in this era yet remained a major source of employment for women (Bruley 63). See, for example, the image of the long-suffering charwoman in the comic postcard of figure 1.8; charring is here proposed as good preparation for the miseries of domestic labour in marriage.

While Irene may or may not be a domestic servant herself, she is of low enough class standing to be laboring in her home without the help of domestic servants, and presumably without the assistance of expensive new home technologies designed to ease and reduce women's domestic labour. The reference to “clearing the grate” and “lighting the fire” retains an older pre-Edwardian feel in an era of middle-class living advancements in “new suburban housing estates, complete with such luxuries as modern kitchens” (Bruley 60).¹⁹

¹⁷ Unlike ‘D.B.’, Irene does not make reference to where in the UK she lives.

¹⁸ The reference to “wool to twine” also reinforces the likely working-class background of the letter writer; the textile-trade, centered in Lancashire, was the biggest employer of industrial women in this era (Bruley 38).

¹⁹ As Bruley assesses, for “poorer married women” (8) in war time and the post-war period, despite middle class domestic technological advances, “there was no escape from the constant round of cooking, washing up, scrubbing, sweeping, and polishing” (8). Grates in particular “had to be black-leaded regularly, which was a very messy job” (Bruley 8). Clearly for Irene, this job was a defining point of misery in her domestic experience “at six in the morning”, every morning.

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis/dissertation for copyright reasons

Figure 1.8. British comic postcard, circa 1900-1920. Source: author's private collection.

Irene's interaction with leisure as cinemagoer and fan magazine reader is coloured heavily by such experiences. The irritated, ironic tone of her letter—jarring in its rhyming joviality—frames a dichotomy between the false humility of the stars as depicted by “interviewers” and the ‘real life’ labours as a mid 1920s working women in the oppositional pairings of different forms of labour and leisure: “floors to scrub”/“publicity to bear”; “gingham frock”/“Paris shock”; “back street”/“mansion”.

Studies such as Kathy Peiss' *Cheap Amusements* and Lauren Rabinovitz's *For the Love of Pleasure* have focused upon the ways in which women's “back street” living impacted upon their participation within commercialized leisure forms like the cinema. These American-based studies of working women and leisure in turn-of-the-century New York and Chicago explore the development of consumer culture and its specific implications for women with lower incomes negotiating work and domestic responsibilities.

Peiss' study locates cinemagoing within a range of city amusements, such as dance halls and amusement parks, as part of the “intensive commercialization of leisure in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries” (4). She describes the effects of such commercialization on lower-class women in detail:

The rapid expansion and commercialization of leisure . . . altered the traditional structure of such popular working-class activities as dancing and excursion-going. Loosening the ties between leisure, mutual aid, and male

culture, commercialized recreation fostered a youth-oriented, mixed-sex world of pleasure, where female participation was profitable and encouraged . . . In these commercial amusement places . . . young women experimented with new cultural forms (6).

While Peiss' study focuses upon the experience of women in New York's east coast community as the hub of urban American turn-of-the-century popular culture, her work has important methodological and historical framing points to offer a study of British women's experience of—and written reflection upon—cinemagoing in early twentieth century Britain.

The UK counterpart to this American culture of commercialized urban leisure was fostered in big cityscapes like Manchester and London, which were increasingly linking female leisure culture to notions of “modernity, individuality and personal style” (Peiss 6). Erica D. Rappaport (1995) has explored, for example, the promotion of women's pleasure in the development of department store shopping in London's West End across the teens and the “overwhelming competition among retailers” that produced “a new way of thinking about consumption, the city, and female pleasure” (130). Langhamer's work also focuses on case studies of women's experience of leisure in Manchester as “leisure capital for its region” offering a “diverse and competing array of commercial and informal leisure opportunities including cinemas . . . dance halls . . . parks and open spaces” (3).

These leisure forms addressed the definitional ambiguity of leisure and work for women by engaging them at points of intersection and overlap between seemingly oppositional spheres, like *work/home* (e.g. magazines consumed in the home in-between housework); *independence/marriage* (story magazine and cinematic fictions depicting greater female independence, whilst ultimately affirming marriage and heterosexual union²⁰), and *public/private*²¹ (accessible simplistic twenties dress styles meant that home dress making was easier and more affordable²²—working girls could labour at home to produce fashions to be displayed in public at the theatre, in the public parks, on the city streets etc., inspired by their engagement with leisure commodities promoting fashions trends).

Irene's letter indicates some of these points of interface for the working class woman. She describes herself as a reader of fan magazines familiar with "all the interviewers" who "rave and sigh" about film stars and their private lives, positioning herself as a regular consumer of commercial female-targeted periodical publishing booming in this era. Irene's public purchase of the *Picturegoer* (the magazine was sold at newsagents and cinemas) presents

²⁰ Chapters 7 and 8 offer an in-depth discussion of women's fan debate about these kinds of romantic narrative conclusions and their impact upon representations of contemporary femininity; Chapter 9 explores the destabilising effect of this type of resolution in relation to female crime narratives in particular.

²¹ See Chapter 2.

²² Source: Weston, Pauline. 'Flapper Fashion 1920s, C20th Fashion History.' fashion-era.com.

the letter writer as a female consumer within a range of spaces and negotiated pockets of free-time in which to peruse the magazine.²³

In her discussion of female stardom, Irene further implicates points of intersection between work and public commercialized leisure. The female stars who “earn so much each week” in their public careers as film performers translate disposable income into public displays of leisure consumption—the sporting of “Paris shock” fashions, the driving of “imported cars”²⁴. Fashion is a subject which would have been closer to the daily experience of leisure with which Irene would have been familiar, particularly in relation to carefully managed disposable income and notions of female participation in the public arena as a space of increasing female spectacle (see Chapter 2).

Irene’s letter thus gestures towards the various ways in which women’s leisure consumption was distinct from men’s in its explicit overlap between home/public, work/pleasure, free time/domestic duties. Further, it suggests women’s critical engagement with such leisure in its rejection of points of

²³ Be this on public transport in the urban space, at home between and around domestic duties, at work on a break, or at the cinema itself (some readers describe visiting the cinema with the *Picturegoer* in hand—“my favourite book beside me” (May 1923: 48).

²⁴ Considering the role of the automobile in public forms of leisure as a display of commercial success, the ownership of a car in 1924 would have been a marker of relative financial prosperity. Post-war, mass production made technology increasingly affordable to the middle classes; the automobile industry shifted from cars as an exclusive luxury item to a more affordable middle-class commodity. By 1922, two years before the writing of Irene’s letter, there were 183 motor companies in the UK—domestic production was dominated by Austin and Morris. While Irene would therefore have seen more cars on the UK streets than ever before, as a woman of working-class origins such things were still a luxury—the specific reference to the “imported cars” of the stars even more so. The concept of the imported luxury car originated in the 1920s (Irene is writing in 1924). Prestige cars produced by companies such as the German Mercedes-Benz and North American Cadillac offered bespoke cars at high prices favoured by public figures like film stars (source: Gartman, David. *Auto opium: a social history of American automobile design*. Taylor & Francis, Inc. 1994).

identification between female stars and female consumers. I now turn to look in detail at the ways in which the conceptualization of women as spectators/consumers within contemporary culture impacted upon the cinema writing of figures like Irene and D.B.

Negotiating the consumer/spectator double-bind

Irene's frustration with the paradoxical tone of fan magazine interviews, encouraging material consumption and simultaneous female humility speaks to broader conflicts concerning women and consumer culture at the time.

Jackie Stacey's work on female stardom in Britain is valuable here in understanding the ways in which the female consumption of female star images is intertwined with British experience of "the expansion of consumer capitalism" (*Star Gazing* 179) from the turn of the century onwards. In *Star Gazing* (1994), Stacey explores "the ways in which female spectators related to Hollywood stars through consumption" (*Star Gazing* 176).

Exploring sites of textual and extra-textual female star representation like the fan magazine²⁵, Stacey argues that cinema "shaped consumer habits" (*Star Gazing* 180) through "the display of the female star as commodity" (*Star Gazing* 180), citing the parallels between "goods and stars . . . on display to spectators as desirable spectacles" (*Star Gazing* 179). Leisure as consumption in surrounding commercial forms used by women—the shopping arena,

²⁵ And the practices of the film industry which linked female spectatorship to female consumption—such as the building of cinema chains near shopping areas and the screening of matinees as a way to encourage women "to combine shopping with a visit to the cinema" (1994; 180).

fashion, cosmetics etc.—is fundamentally intertwined with the consumption of female images.

Irene's letter supports this view, dealing explicitly with the subject of her own consumption of the extra-textual marketing of female stars in fan magazines. Star interviews ultimately perpetuate an ideology of consumer leisure success and prosperity by focusing upon star wealth, consumable commodities such as dresses and cars, and the image of female stars as spectacles which overtly displayed the translation of high wage into consumer goods—"the ravishing gowns", the "glare [of] publicity", queening it in "a 'Paris shock'" etc.

Historically grounded studies of female stardom like Stacey's are able to explore the ways in which such representations signified particular ideological conflicts, codes and meanings for women with specific national and historical timeframes. Stacey's focus upon the 1940s and 1950s provides an invaluable model for placing primary sources like Irene's letter into a complex pool of commercial, industrial and social discourses influencing the way female representations were both constructed by the film industry and encountered and interpreted by female viewers.

Discussing women's interaction with female representations on screen, Stacey explores how female spectatorship has been conceptualized in feminist film theory, particularly that of Mary Anne Doane. Doane posits a model of spectatorship in which

. . . the female spectator is . . . a consumer of idealized images of femininity on the screen, and is also invited to recognize herself in that commodified image which she may be able to recreate through the consumption of particular goods (Stacey, *Star Gazing* 183).

In *The Desire to Desire* (1987), Doane views this relationship as one in which the female spectator's consumption of female stars as commodities prepares her for her own consumption: "The female subject of the consumer look in the cinematic arena becomes, through a series of mediations, the industry's own merchandizing asset" (33).

Doane describes this relationship thus:

In her desire to bring the things of the screen closer, to approximate the bodily image of the star and to possess the space in which she dwells, the female spectator experiences the intensity of the image as lure and exemplifies the perception proper to the consumer. The cinematic image for the woman is both shop window and mirror, the one simply a means of access to the other. The mirror/window, then, takes on the aspect of the trap whereby her subjectivity becomes synonymous with her objectification ('Economy' 31-32).

Doane's work has been important in exploring the specificity of the female experience of cinema's relationship with consumer culture through a feminist

lens. Her attempts to historicize spectatorship offer a fascinating interpretation of the ways in which cinema culture is entrenched within the history of consumer culture for women, and how film culture negotiates spectatorial positions defined by ideologies of consumption.

However, as has already been touched upon, there are several significant problems with Doane's approach, particularly in relation to notions of active/passive spectatorship. Stacey argues that Doane's conception of female consumerism:

. . . robs women of any agency in the reproduction of culture, and may even contribute to dominant notions of female passivity . . . while Doane may have identified the meaning of femininity within culture production, this is not synonymous with the uses and meanings of commodities to *consumers* (*Star Gazing* 185).

Chris Rojek supports Stacey's criticism of Doane's denial of female agency, arguing that "by concentrating on women's powerlessness" (32), feminist scholarship like Doane's has obscured women's active role within cinema as a leisure practice.

Posing an alternate view of female consumer culture, Stacey argues that women are subjects, as well as objects of cultural exchange, in ways that are "not entirely reducible to subjection" (*Star Gazing* 185). Irene's letter would seem to support Stacey's view that women do not passively accept the

commodified images perpetuated by the cinema screen and within the extra-textual discourses surrounding cinematic reception.

Irene's refusal to accept the ways in which the fan magazine attempted to make female stars appealing to women of her class—by claiming they'd "love to . . . fight to make ends meet" despite their riches and leisure indulgence—would seem to speak to a broader tension between the view of contributing readers and models of identification offered by the fan magazine. What Irene takes from her consumption of star images, film star interviews and the presentation of their personal lives is a patchwork of transparent attempts to reassure her of her similarity to these stars. This transparency results in the opposite effect, affirming Irene's sense of self-righteous suffering as a working-class woman genuinely struggling to "make ends meet".

We might view Irene's interpretation, therefore, as an example of a negotiated or resistant reading—a mode of reception which, as explored earlier in the chapter, has been given much attention in the push towards exploring "women's agency as consumers" (Stacey, *Star Gazing* 185) in feminist film theory. Studies such as Angela Partington's work on female audiences (1990) offer alternate perspectives through which to account for the challenges Irene offers as a reader reluctant to accept what she feels she is being sold in filmic and extra-textual representations of women as spectacles and consumers.

Focusing upon 1950s working-class reception, Partington explores the address of Hollywood melodrama to female audiences, looking at the ways in which melodrama's "display of material goods could be used by an audience of working-class women to forge . . . recognizability" ('Melodrama' 59) of a familiar consumer-based socially constructed world.

Melodrama engaged working-class women by its dual presentation of discourses of consumption—both through the narrative fiction of the characters who are "created through clothes, cars and houses" ('Melodrama' 61), and the simultaneous presence of these consumer signifiers as "always already signifying star images" ('Melodrama' 61).

Partington sees this dual targeting of working-class female consumer desire as being primarily perpetuated through extra-textual materials like the fan magazine. The fan magazine presented a conflict between the simultaneous ideological promotion of consumer desire and discouragement of its excesses in impractical fetishization. She expounds:

The marketing industries' incitement to 'look' (e.g. advertising and retailing) may sometimes (though not always) tend towards libidinization (encouraging the consumer to identify with objects), and the cultural leadership's incitement to look (e.g. in the promotion of 'good design') tend towards regulation (discouraging identification) (Partington, 'Melodrama' 65).

The broader cultural emphasis upon regulated consumption for working-class women in this era—good design, practicality—attempts to ground working-class consumer desire for aesthetic excess in a ‘realistic’ appropriation of consumer goods displayed in films and film star personas, moving away from over-identification (libidinization) with consumer products.

Partington argues that working-class women were able to negotiate this conflict, however, in the ways in which they:

... ‘sampled’ and mixed together elements from contrasting images and styles .
... disavow[ing] economic necessity (as defined by professionals and experts) through . . . a mixing of the functionalist and decorative, thereby insisting on relating to objects in ways that the professional elites attempted to monopolize . . . working-class women refused to separate the pleasures of efficiency from the purely aesthetic, therefore their consumption of goods constituted an act of appropriation (‘Consumption’ 179).

Partington’s overall focus, therefore, is upon the ways in which female spectatorship is capable of acts of appropriation and resistance rather than passive acceptance of particular consumer ideologies relating to commercialized leisure and class-targeted goods and products.

Partington’s work is useful for considering Irene’s reading of the consumer excesses of female stars. Irene seeks to challenge the image of stars

she is being sold as “poor”, “sweet”, “simple” and “sad” etc.—yet her desire for them to genuinely attempt the hard physical labour she endures in her own domestic experience demonstrates a belief on her part in the pleasures of the aesthetic over the efficient or practical. Star leisure is based upon spectacle in her description, focused as it is upon “publicity”, and the showing off of “ravishing gowns” and “imported cars” etc. As such, she refuses the oversimplification and romanticizing of working-class values and lifestyle by injecting her discussion with the grim realities of domestic labour. But at the same time, she denies the possible realities of the pressures of stardom as a form of ‘work’ for the “poor” stars who have to “bear” publicity. Offering some parallels with Partington’s work in this way, Irene “appropriates” the pleasures of the aesthetic with her assessment of the realities of domestic labour.

As Stacey highlights, however, studies such as Partington’s, although attentive to historical contextualization and class-specificity in interpreting the consumer address of women’s cinema, fail to offer evidence “of what sense consumers made of different commodities, based on their accounts of their practices” (*Star Gazing* 187).

While Partington’s attention to the possibilities of contestation and appropriation in female reception is valuable for interpreting the hypocritical presentation of stars as reluctant consumers in the Irene letter, one is of little value without the other. Partington’s historical research is illuminated ten-

fold, as has hopefully been shown, by reference to samples of actual female voices like the fan magazine letter. The letter itself, as a singular object of historical source material, is in turn able to offer greater resonance when considered within class-specific historical framing approaches like Partington's research upon the class-address of films and their female stars.

This problem of one-without-the-other illustrates one of the key issues that can arise in women's film history—namely, the demands of dealing with 'actual' consumers, and the interpretive balance needed when weighing the sources related to them. Stacey's criticism brings us full circle to my original discussion, therefore, of the need to address actual consumers in exploring women's experience of film culture as a leisure pursuit.

Is it enough to say that Irene's letter represents an example of resistance to the "complementary systems of capitalism and patriarchy" (Gamman and Marshment 1)? The core problem seems, again, to be one of how to reunite theory and history. Patrice Petro's 2002 volume *Aftershocks of the New* explicitly deals with this issue:

. . . the analysis of individual film goes only so far in explaining the complexities of audience expectation and spectator response. But if film theory cannot exist without film analysis, and if feminism cannot be a formalism, then what precisely is the role of textual analysis in feminist film history? The issue here . . . is not one of retrieving film analysis from the perceived excesses of theory, or of reducing feminist film history to a formalist study of film. It is

instead a matter of rethinking what claims can be made on the basis of film analysis, and of reconceptualizing what constitutes textual evidence in relation to questions of sexual difference (*Aftershocks* 45).

Petro makes a strong case for the reclamation of textual analysis in feminist film history in order to retain the urgency of questions of sexual difference within the texts that women consumed. I would argue, however, that more insistent claims might be made for shifting the focus of textual analysis even more strongly onto reading examples of first-hand accounts of the consumption of cinematic text.

The processes of feminist re-representation need to bring theory and history together in a way which does not close down the nonlinearity of the past, nor offer textual analysis as the reclamation of gendered experience. As Petro insists, “reconceptualizing what constitutes textual evidence in relation to questions of sexual difference” (*Aftershocks* 45) is key. I would draw this reconceptualization towards a leveling of the film text against a plethora of female voices creating texts of their own by engaging with the generation of a female film culture. Here we return to Callahan’s *Feminism 3.0* in its call to adopt a mode of theoretically informed historical scholarship that “acknowledges, visualizes, and gives voice to the diversity of our experiences” (6).

Retaining a plurality of methodological framing devices enables the researcher to be as attentive as possible to such diversity, retaining the socio-

historical specificity of investigative questions while freeing theory, as it were, to move across these different spheres of meaning and different types of female accounts of reception. By moving forwards from a focus upon the ways in which these kinds of materials offer instances of possible resistance to structured ideological codes and forms of consumption within film texts, we break in turn with the shackling effect of textual analysis as evidence of passive/active reception.

I move now to examine the location of women within accounts of modernity through the lens of three different examples of women's cinema writing. The next chapter looks at how the subject of women and modernity has been critically addressed, asking how the national specificities of British women's film culture illuminate the British female experience of modernity. The chapter looks at the blurring of public and private spheres for women, addressing key issues of high and lowbrow division in modern culture and women's location within these debates in relation to cinema.

Chapter 2 British Women and Modernity

Extract A

The reason why so much nonsense is written about cinemas is because the wrong people write about them . . . To appreciate a cinema at its true value, one must live in a mean house in a mean street; one must wear cheap clothing, and eat rough food; one must know the unutterable boredom and discomfort of evenings spent in stuffy rooms, rooms always too hot or too cold or too draughty or too crowded. One must know the misery of cold and damp, faced with inadequate equipment, the fatigue of monotonous work, the absence of a warm-scented bathroom, the absence of grace, colour, romance, change and travel.

To the vast masses who live such lives, the cinema is a fairy tale come true. It is not an entertainment only; it is vicarious life. It is luxury, warmth, comfort, colour, travel; it is scent, romance, sunshine. It is escape.

(Extract from 'Sunday Cinemas', article in *The New Leader*, written by Minnie Pallister, 19th Dec. 1930: 5)

Extract B

Walking up Willoughby Place she realized that she was very tired. At the end of the road she found a super-cinema. It blazed with lights and rippled with palms; a commissionaire in gold-and-scarlet uniform paraded the entrance. Up on the first floor Lily could see ladies in green arm-chairs eating muffins behind great sheets of plate glass.

(Extract from Winifred Holtby's *South Riding*, 1936: 214)

Extract C

The greatest social influence since the discovery of printing is the Cinema. It is yet in its infancy, but as almost every country in the world can testify, it is already pushful and with a power well-nigh incredible in one so young. The "Intelligentsia" on the whole have despised and ignored it, and the creation of the moving pictures which move millions of the "common people" to laughter or to tears has mainly been left to those who are not creators in the divine sense in which a poet or a great author is a creator, but who make these pictures as a commercial enterprise which pays.

(Extract from 'The Unsuspected Future of the Cinema', by Marie Stopes. *The New East*, 3:1, Jul. 1918: 26-28)

The above extracts each, in their own way, offer gendered reflections upon film culture and modernity. Each writer addresses a key aspect of the female encounter with cinema-going from the turn of the century. Minnie Pallister seeks to explain the appeal of cinema through the lens of class; Winifred

Holtby describes the urban cityscape encounter with the cinema as public leisure space; Marie Stopes highlights the divide between the highbrow art forms of modernism and the lowbrow popularity of cinema as mass modern entertainment form.

These writers reflect fundamentally upon the experience of modernity as an amalgamation of industrial, economic and sociological transformations of post-traditional, post-feudal, capitalist, secularized, rationalized nation-state Western society (Barker 2005).

Marshall Berman (1982) divides modernity into three central phases—early, classical and late. Berman describes late modernity, spanning from the turn of the century, as “a mode of vital experience . . . of space and time, of the self and others, of life’s possibilities and perils” (15). Leo Charney and Vanessa R. Schwartz (1995) see modernity as “shorthand for broad social, economic, and cultural transformations . . . familiarly grasped through the story of a few talismanic innovations: the telegraph and telephone, railroad and automobile, photograph and cinema” (1). Anthony Giddens (1998) has described modernity as “a shorthand term for modern society, or industrial civilization” (94); while Judy Giles (2004) describes it as characterized by “the rapid growth of urban developments” (Giles 5).

Attending to the multiple meanings of modernity across the interconnected disciplines that such studies represent—sociology (Giddens); cultural studies (Charney and Schwartz); Marxist theory (Berman); and

feminism and women's studies (Giles), all of which will be addressed throughout the chapter—Ben Singer breaks the concept into six central facets:

. . . modernity as an explosion of socioeconomic and technological development (what is generally labelled 'modernization'); modernity as the reign of instrumental rationality; modernity as a condition of perennial cultural discontinuity and ideological 'reflexivity'; modernity as the heightened mobility and circulation of all 'social things'; modernity as a milieu of social atomization and competitive individualism; and modernity as a perceptual environment of unprecedented sensory complexity and intensity (1-2).

Deconstructing the three examples of women's written reflections on cinema within modernity in Extracts A through C, I explore specific examples of these different approaches. My aim is to relate some of the key ideas voiced by the extract writers to the female experience of the facets of modernity outlined by Singer, whilst piecing together a nationally specific sense of the British experience of cinema as part of the landscape of modernity.

Socioeconomic and technological development

Writing in 1918, Marie Stopes' bold assertion that the cinema represents the "greatest social influence since the discovery of printing" illuminates the resonance of new technologies within the socioeconomic and cultural structure of modern Britain.

Stopes' gesture towards the global reach of cinema—"as almost every country in the world can testify"—implicates the increased networks of communication, information exchange and transportation within modernity that engaged with cinema. The Stopes and Pallister extracts speak to the ways in which cinema was interconnected with new technologies of communication that were exploding a "traditional relationship between times and space" (Singer 26). Telecommunication advances were resulting in an "'annihilation of distance' and 'the shrinking of the world'" (Singer 26). Stopes underscores the sense of an interconnected global community of cinemagoers in referring to its impact in "almost every country in the world". Pallister comments upon cinema's role within this kind of 'shrinking' by underscoring the "vicarious" travel offered by cinematic representations, which were able to show spectators animated illustrations of exotic locations, offering "armchair travel" as the critic Iris Barry coined it in 1926 (*Daily Mail* 18 May 1926: 6).

Developments in transportation technology increased the movement of goods, capital, and people across the global community that silent cinema engaged. The commercial rail system spawned with the railway building boom of the mid 1800s into a national network, connecting the vast majority of towns and cities across the country by 1850. During the 1890s, large cities like London used new electric technology to build rapid transit for urban commuting. Tramways became common in smaller cities, providing one of

the central means of public transport alongside the introduction of petrol-driven bus services in the first years of the twentieth century (Bagwell and Lynth 116).

Both people and information, therefore, were able to move with greater speed and in greater volume than ever before. Women were employed in a wide variety of new forms of labour both produced by and producing these changes in technology and communication.¹ The industrial process of modernization thus transformed women's work. As discussed in the previous chapter, greater work opportunities in turn provided women with greater disposable incomes, facilitating their engagement with popular forms like the cinema.

Some of these developments can be evidenced in Extract B, taken from Winifred Holtby's novel *South Riding*—a novel which focuses upon the experiences of rural and small-city life in 1920s South Yorkshire. In the passage under study here, Holtby reflects upon the ways in which technological and economic change were manifested in cinema buildings, which utilized a range of transformations in new commercial design and architecture.

Holtby describes the character Lily riding “the bus to Kingsport” (212) South Yorkshire, using new public transport to access the urban arena. In the

¹ The 1921 census shows 32,514 women employed in British engineering industries, 38,652 in electrical installations and 49,733 in vehicle building industries by 1931. Sources: *Census of Population* 1932, Industry Tables, Table: B: 714-19 and *Census of Population* 1951, Industry Tables, Table C: 644-8.

cityscape she encounters a “super cinema” illuminated by new electric lighting technology—“It blazed with lights”—and new window display design—“great sheets of plate glass”. Electric street lighting was used for the first time in the UK in Newcastle in 1879, with London’s Savoy Theatre becoming the first public building in the world to be lit entirely by electric lights two years later.² Illuminated commercial signage was soon developed using electric floodlight technology and ‘chaser’ incandescent bulbs placed around sign parameters. By 1910, neon glass tube lighting had been invented³, further transforming the sensory power of store and leisure front advertising.

The exhibition site here employs the same display technologies to target a mobile urban woman with disposable income to spend upon consumption. Socioeconomic transformations in the development of capitalist consumer culture were thus redefining the city space as an arena of spectacle and consumption, drawing upon the technological developments of the era in changing the gendered experience of the cityscape. Cinema was one of many sites—including the department store, the railway station, the tram system, the urban city centre and the technologically revolutionized home—that embodied much that was new in the landscape of modernity.

The public sphere and the circulation of “all social things”

² Source: D'Oyly Carte Opera Company website, on Patience. Retrieved March 1, 2007.

³ Source: <http://www.wisegeek.com/what-are-neon-signs.htm>.

Such city centre cinema engaged women in this changing urban arena at the intersection between public and private. The shifting of boundaries between public and private spheres was a key aspect of the gendered experience of modernity. The relationship between modernity and rationalization and its impact upon the public sphere is addressed in the critical work of Jurgen Habermas.

Drawing upon Marxist theory in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1962), Habermas argued that the transition from feudalism to the capitalistic stage of European cultural development marked the appearance of *Öffentlichkeit*, (the public sphere). This was the first time that a culture emerged beyond the control of the state, marked by the exchange of individual views and knowledge, perpetuated by the growth of newspapers, journals, mass literacy and the changing nature of the family.

In *Theory of Communicative Action* (1981), Habermas argues that enforcing institutions and trends, such as corporate capitalism and mass consumption, rationalized public life, blurring the boundaries between private / public and individual / society. The rationalization of political parties and interest groups meant that a representative democracy replaced a participatory one, reducing democratic public life. As a result, in Habermas's view, "society was polarized by class struggle, and the public fragmented into a mass of competing interest groups" (Fraser 521).

Critical theory since Habermas has sought to re-evaluate his notion of the formation and dissolution of an idealized public sphere under consumer capitalism, particularly by inserting questions of gender into his argument. Joan Landes (1988) and Geoff Eley (1992) have contended that the liberal nature of the public sphere was rhetorical only, in reality founded upon bourgeoisie exclusion, particular in relation to gender and class. Nancy Fraser has addressed the exclusion of women from this concept of an idealized public sphere, arguing that:

. . . the problem is not only that Habermas idealizes the liberal public sphere but also that he fails to examine other, non-liberal, non-bourgeois, competing public spheres . . . for some less privileged women, access to public life came through participation in supporting roles in male-dominated working-class protest activities. Still other women found public outlets in street protests and parades. Finally, women's rights advocates publicly contested both women's exclusion from the official public sphere and the privatization of gender politics.

Even in the absence of formal political incorporation through suffrage, there were a variety of ways of accessing public life and a multiplicity of public arenas. Thus the view that women were excluded from the public sphere turns out to be ideological; it rests on a class—and gender-biased notion of publicity, one which accepts at face value the bourgeois public's claim to be *the* public . . . There were competing publics from the start. (Fraser 522-523)

In order to give greater attention to the female experience of and participation within the public sphere, therefore, Fraser suggests a “post-bourgeoisie conception” in order to consider “strong *and* weak publics” (536) and hybrid forms.

This approach enables us to consider women’s role within the redefinition of public/private sphere boundaries at the turn of the century relative to the varied “outlets” that women found—in suffrage and politics, but also in popular culture. Examples of advertising within film fan magazines of the era speak to the blurring of public / private divides in women’s engagement with cinema practices and women’s involvement with commercialized consumer culture as one of many “competing publics”.

The image in figure 2.1 featured in a late 1920s edition of the fan magazine *Picturegoer*. The advertisement links private and public feminine spheres, combining practices of commercial consumption with health and medicinal discourse, linking both to the public engagement of women with the cinema as an urban practice within city centre leisure space. The medicinal pastilles promise to protect the cinemagoer in the “smoky, germ-laden atmosphere so often prevalent in theatres and other crowded places” (Jan. 1928: 68). Creating a narrative in which the female cinemagoer is centralized within such crowded urban spaces, the illustration depicts a chaperoned young woman walking through rainy streets towards a vision of the crowded cinema hall. The male chaperone’s face is obscured, so that the

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis/dissertation for copyright reasons

Figure 2.1 Advertisement for Allenbury's Pastilles featured in *The Picturegoer* (Jan. 1928: 68)

only figure with which the viewer directly engages is the smiling image of the walking girl, whose line of vision, whilst looking outwards from the advertisement towards the reader, is doubly depicted by the alignment of her head with the beam of light representing the film projector illuminating the cinema screen to her left.

The dual gaze empowers the female figure within the space of the advertisement, both as the decision-maker in the purchase of consumer goods and as the most important figure within the public practice of cinema. Her look at the reader creates an intimate exchange of knowledge about the details of cinemagoing as a physical experience. Turning away from her male chaperone and towards the reader, the exchange creates a sense of privacy, linked by the familiarity of the reader with the experience of being “In Kinemas” and stepping out into the city space.

A diffusion of comparatively “weak” private spheres—minor health issues, romantic encounters—are here combined in an image which testifies, in its attempt to solicit the consumer power of the cinemagoing woman, to women’s economic and spatial influence within the public sphere.

The three written texts speak to women’s movement and influence within other kinds of public spheres in different ways, which again relate to cinemagoing as a female practice in a more liberated urban space. Minnie Pallister’s work and writing exemplifies women’s political transformation from the turn of the century, and as such their engagement within ‘strong’

public spheres that gave them greater freedom of movement and expression. A British socialist writer and critic associated with the Independent Labour Party, Pallister's political activism and authorship⁴ is representative of many women's insurgence into the political sphere with the rise of the suffrage movement,⁵ which engaged directly with cinema in the creation of numerous suffrage films.⁶

Suffrage greatly unsettled divisions between private and public life for British women in the push towards activism, public gatherings, public protest and the promotion of suffrage literary and filmic material in the urban environment. Suffrage thus constitutes, as Fraser indicates, a form of female public sphere practice, engaging women from different levels of society in the creation of 'strong' female public spheres.⁷

Marie Stopes' work signifies particular aspects of modernity's publicizing of women in the private sphere, and the hybridity of 'weak' and 'strong' publics where health science and politics were redefining the boundaries between the female experience of public/private everyday life. A

⁴ Across the 1920s Pallister authored several female-targeted political tracts, notably 'Socialism for Women' in the *Independent Labour Party Study Courses*.

⁵ From 1850 to the late 1890s, British constitutional suffrage societies spawned in a number of different forms—some affiliated directly with the leading political parties and some non-party, like the NSWS (*National Society for Women's Suffrage*). Militant organizations developed during the Edwardian era, continuing in earnest up till the onset of war in 1914.

⁶ Female suffragettes were appearing regularly on the cinema screen in news coverage and short propaganda films.

⁷ Winifred Holtby (who, like Pallister, was also a member of the Independent Labour Party) was in many ways representative of the greater political freedom of middle- and upper-class women against this backdrop of feminist protest and activism. In particular, Holtby represented the freedom to channel political involvement through increased publishing opportunities. Holtby became the director of feminist journal *Time and Tide* in 1926, for example, and authored *A New Voter's Guide to Party Programmes* to support women's participation in national politics in the wake of enfranchisement.

Scottish birth-control pioneer, Stopes published influential and controversial books on contraception and sexual fulfillment in the late teens (*Married Love* (1918) and *Wise Parenthood* (1918)), and began a birth-control clinic in 1921.

Stopes was an influential part of a growing trend in which scientific advances were extended to the domesticity of the feminine private sphere with the increased institutional authority of “health visitors, infant welfare clinics, nurseries, and schools” (Giles 22). Advances in knowledge of birth-control in particular constituted a major transformation of the public conception of female sexuality and women’s marital and maternal rights.

Some of these changes are evidenced within the extra-textual materials of female film culture. Fan magazines of the early twentieth century contain numerous advertising pages in which women’s labour within the home environment is publicly targeted for the marketing of commercialised technological advances. Labour-saving home technologies, for example, are often featured in magazine advertisements, embroccating women’s leisure time with reminders of domestic roles.⁸

Fan magazine advertisements for Persil washing powder and Preservene soap offer a useful example here. The manufacturers of household products were increasingly marketing goods upon the promise of escaping the home to

⁸ Significant dates for the development of modern domestic appliances impacted directly upon women’s experience of domestic labour include the first lightweight electric irons in 1905; the first electrical toaster in 1910; the first practical domestic vacuum cleaner in 1907 and the first refrigerator for home use in 1913. These appliances would have been manufactured by lower class women and purchased by middle to upper class female consumers. Source: ‘Household Appliances Timeline, National Academy of Engineering, reproduced on the Great Achievements website: <http://www.greatachievements.org/?id=3768>.

the leisure and shopping environment. Persil boasted in its pictorial advertisements to have “abolished wash-day” (Dec. 1923: 17) and given “the freedom to a million women . . . to call your day your own” (Apr. 1927: 68). Perservene promised that washing could be finished in “record time . . . to dress and off to the pictures in the afternoon” (Dec. 1923: 17). The manufacturers of domestic modernity were therefore quick to link the revolutionized private sphere to greater female freedom in the public sphere as cinemagoers in particular.

The Persil advertisement in figure 2.2 depicts such a transformation of housework into a “stylish affair” (Humble 11), by focusing not upon the illustration of domestic labour, but on the public excursion of the housewife, liberated by the washing product from the constraints of laundry day. The figure leading the rushing crowds represents the ‘heroine’ of the advertisement narrative. The placement of the advertisement within a film fan magazine adds the further dimension of this woman’s escape to ‘the pictures’, implied without needing to be explicitly stated. The purchase of the domestic product, therefore, is also a purchase of free time to be spent on public leisure practices like cinema.

Looking at the backgrounds of the writers of the three extracts we find other instances of the affirmation of female public spheres in this period. Stopes, Holtby and Pallister, as educated professional writers, represent improved formal educational opportunities for women within modernity.

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis/dissertation for copyright reasons

Figure 2.2. Advertisement for Persil featured in *Picturegoer* (April 1927:68)

Their writing speaks to a generation of lower to middle-class women experiencing a broad improvement in educational access and quality⁹.

A new generation of literate women forged connections in the shared consumption, creation of, and contribution to extra-textual aspects of cinema in print form. Cinema and women's writing intertwined for women of all classes as newly literate working-class girls and middle-class women wrote and read fan letters, cinema-themed essays, stories and novels, and female film criticism. Social changes in education as an integral aspect of modernity thus made popular print culture much more accessible to a larger percentage of women—something that the film industry readily capitalized upon, as did women as cinema writers and commentators.

Leisure, modern female living and urban vision

Extracts A, B and C construct a symbiotic relationship between the conditions of living for the labouring classes of modernity and their enjoyment of leisure practices. Pallister's attempt to explain the appeal of the cinema in the modern environment is one attuned to the oppressive effects of modern living upon the working poor, and the impact this has upon associations between the values of home and comfort.

Pallister offers a vision of working-class modern home life as a space of "discomfort" and "unutterable boredom" in the "absence of grace, colour".

⁹ Bruley explains that "from 1870 primary education became compulsory and both boys and girls attended elementary board schools, which by 1914 meant they were educated up to the age of 14" (16).

She transposes signifiers of comfort and nourishment onto the public urban space as leisure centre by describing the cinema as an arena of “luxury, warmth, comfort, colour”. The association between femininity, home and the private sphere is thus disrupted by the public consumption of leisure within cinema as spaces of comfort and escape.

In Pallister’s assessment, it is the material conditions of modern life and labour for the lower strata of society—primarily, poor quality cramped urban housing (“a mean house in a mean street . . . stuffy rooms . . . too crowded”¹⁰) and mechanized labour (“the fatigue of monotonous work”)—that levels the distinctions between private and public life, home and work, domesticity and sociability. Her passage compresses living and labour, shifting seamlessly from “inadequate equipment” to “the fatigue of monotonous work” and “the absence of as warm-scented bathroom”. Private family life is just as much a routine of “unutterable boredom” as public sphere labour. Cinema’s ability to offer a new form of public entertainment serving private personal needs is therefore explained by Pallister as a modern blessing.

To fully understand cinema’s place within these transformations of the everyday experience of women’s modern lives, we need to establish a clearer picture of the physical and aesthetic transformations of the environments of modernity that British women encountered as mobile urban consumers of

¹⁰ Pallister’s description stands in stark contrast, for example, with Liberal politician C.F.G. Masterman’s description of suburban life in 1909, which described “little red houses in little, silent streets . . . each boasts its pleasant drawing-room, its bow-window, its little front garden . . . the children are jolly, well-fed, intelligent English boys and girls” (58).

public leisure. All three of the extracts speak to cinema's role within a plethora of sensory spectacles seen to characterize the modern urban environment that such women inhabited.

Critical accounts of the sensory stimulation of modernity are often seen to begin with Charles Baudelaire's 1859 work 'The Painter of Modern Life', which was "among the first to express a phenomenology of urban experience" (Singer 34), by associating modernity with "the experience of a constant present tense that is always changing and always new" (Singer 34). George Simmel's 1903 essay 'The Metropolis and Mental Life' similarly perceived of the modern urban environment as one of excessive stimuli. Simmel explored the fragmentation of temporal, visual and cultural stability with the growth of urban industrialisation and consumer culture. He placed a strong focus upon nervous bodily stimulus, instigated by the individual's encounter with the aesthetic and physical chaos of the urban environment, which he saw as producing a "blasé attitude" in the city-dweller. Modernity is hence perceived as pacifying, with the bourgeois intellect emerging as a kind of defence mechanism in protecting subjective experience against the tide of mass stimulus.

The turn of the century brought with it a plethora of material transformations that engaged the individual body in this multi-sensory mode. Sensationalist newspapers and satirical magazines of the era were quick to draw upon these transformations in offering "vivid critique[s] of modern

hyperstimulus”, portraying “urban modernity as a series of sensory shocks and bodily perils” (Singer 8) from the motor car and tram to excessive pictorial advertising and the crush of city crowds.

The link between such stimulus and the entertainment forms of the new metropolis early on affirmed the seemingly reflective relationship between modernity and cinema. Cinema was implicated within the “syndrome of deadened sensation” (Singer 123) outlined by Simmel—a fundamental part of modernity, whilst reflecting and amplifying modernity’s effects upon the individual.

Much contemporary critical work seems to support the view that film’s ability to reflect the hyperstimulus of modernity affirms the cinematic nature of modernity itself. Tim Armstrong (2005) in particular sees hyperstimulus as “part of the psychopathology of modernism” (93), highlighting problems of attention and distraction, whereby the cinema audience needs to be won over by shock and trauma in the wake of its own wandering attention. Modernist cinematic aesthetics hence “stress embodiment and contact” (109).

This line of criticism, which focuses upon modernity-as-stimulus, takes a distinctly male-gendered view, however. Leading on from Baudelaire, the subject of city centre modernity—and the subject of cinema’s connection with the exploitation and amplification of the effects of modernity—has been predominantly gendered male. Baudelaire perceived of the modern city encounter through the figure of the expert city-dweller, which he termed the

flâneur.¹¹ Through Simmel to Walter Benjamin's Marxist adoption of the concept¹² in his *Arcades Project*¹³ to characterize the "expert observer of the urban scene" (Parsons 3), the female experience of the urban environment—and the ways this relates to its 'cinematic' nature—has been neglected. As Judy Giles assesses, in such "standard accounts of modernity the key figures are all male . . . and the key spaces of modernity are also masculine" (Giles 6).

A major study seeking to remedy this omission has been Rita Felski's *The Gender of Modernity* (1995). Felski aimed to reclaim modernity for a feminist perspective, drawing upon cultural theory and historical research to refocus critical attention upon the complexities of the female experience of modernity. Rejecting "abstract philosophical theories of the modern" (8), Felski brings analysis to bear on the subject of modern femininity in recognition of "the profoundly historical nature of private feelings" (3). Felski thus approaches an understanding of women of the era that breaks with retrospective theoretical constructions and deals more directly with historical evidence of women's "complex and changing relationship to diverse political, philosophical, and cultural legacies of modernity" (8).

Adopting Felski's methodology, I return to the extracts as examples of women's writing seeking to relate the experience of modernity's sensory encounter in cinema culture and cinema space to the "profoundly historical

¹¹ From the French masculine noun, which has the basic meanings of 'stroller', 'saunterer', and from the verb *flâner*, which means 'to stroll'.

¹² Benjamin's concept of the *flâneur* is that of a detached yet highly perceptive bourgeois observer of the modern metropolis.

¹³ The project was an a study of Paris in the late 19th century upon which Benjamin worked for thirteen years, from 1927 to his death in 1940.

nature” of women’s increasingly public lives. The cityscape was entangled with the female understanding of and reaction to the experience of cinema. The description of cinema environments and urban living in the given extracts demonstrate gendered responses to the explicitly gendered nature of urban modernity. Attentive to Felski’s emphasis upon “private feelings”, I re-emphasise the significance of the ways in which modernity blurred lines between women’s sense of the emotionally and personally private—needs, desires, emotions, self-conception—and the public engagement of such ‘private’ things within cinema as an urban experience.

Women’s activity within the city centre as cinemagoers presents a gendered reconfiguration of Baudelaire’s concept of the *flâneur*. Deborah L. Parsons has explored the concept of a female *flâneuse* in her work *Streetwalking the Metropolis* (2000). Parsons argues that women were “achieving greater liberation as walkers and observers in the public spaces of the city” (6). Within the three extracts, we can trace the way such women were targeted as the possessors of the *flâneuse’s* “urban vision” (Parsons 6) in public culture, and how through women’s writing in the generative aspects of female film culture, they exercised such vision as a way of reflecting upon cinema’s crucial position in modern female experience.

1920s cinemas, as Holtby describes in her fictional town of Kingsport, were linked explicitly with forms of female shopping and consumption—particularly the larger Picture Palaces. Such exhibition sites catered for

women's practical needs and consumer desires by creating a cinema space in which the screen and film itself were only one aspect of the appeal of the experience. The cover image for *The Kensington Kinema* magazine programme in figure 2.3, for example, promises a "Pleasing Atmosphere" for its patrons, and centers upon an illustration of the grand façade of the site with its high front facing window and queues of patrons approaching its doors. The magazine boasts of restaurant and cafes on the upper floors, which it insists are "open to the general public as well as to Cinema Patrons", focusing upon the exhibition site as a place of multiple uses.

The grandest British cinema buildings in the teens and twenties included crèches, tea rooms (as described in the Holtby passage) and powder rooms. These designs mirrored those of the large city centre department stores. Erica Rapport has shown how "since the 1870s, tea shops, women's clubs, restaurants, and hotels, as well as confectioners and department stores, served as places for women who were alone in the city to refresh themselves" (144). The cinema space in like kind was a place of refreshment, open to unaccompanied women.

In the move away from temporary exhibition sites, managers of major theatres in the teens and twenties encouraged their female spectators into the exhibition space by creating a multisensory consumer leisure environment where, just as they could in the department store, women could lunch, shop and *rendezvous*. As Pallister expounds, the exhibit site offered "luxury,

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis/dissertation for copyright reasons

Figure 2.3. Magazine programme for the Kensington Kinema, London (Piccadilly) (BDC Item no. 19794)

warmth, comfort, colour". This luxury was available at the cost of a ticket and accessible to the lower classes. The "commissionaire in gold-and-scarlet uniform" parading the entrance of the super-cinema described by Holtby is typical of larger exhibition sites which sold cinema-going as an experience, a luxury practice in space, and an escape from Pallister's "stuffy rooms always too hot or too cold or too draughty or too crowded".

Such encounters embodied much that has been critically associated with the experience of modernity—sensory intensity, technological spectacle, large crowds. But they did so along specifically feminine lines, engaging women's urban vision both within and without the exhibition site. Such examples of the sensory experience of urban shopping and cinema culture and their address to the female urban vision helped, as Felski argues, to "shape new forms of subjectivity for women, whose intimate needs, desire, and perceptions of self were mediated by public representations of commodities and the gratifications that they promised" (62).

Consumer spaces and urban vision thus served multiple purposes in British women's everyday lives that moved beyond passive spectator/consumer practices. For Holtby, the image of women on display from behind the plate glass of the exhibition site is an invitation to her wandering female character—an enticement that, as will be explored later in the thesis in a detailed reading of Holtby's work, offers women a place of repose and reflection. Cinema could offer relief from the miseries of lower-

class work and home, as Pallister explains, in its promise of “vicarious life . . . romance, sunshine”. Stopes sees the movie theatre as a space of “laughter or tears” and emotional engagement.

Women used their writing about such experience as a way of exerting authority upon and within cinema culture (at different levels according to both their class and their space of writing). This authority was used to debate the importance of cinemagoing as a female practice in modern urban space, and a mass female engagement with popular aesthetic forms. Women refuted the sidelining of female experience within modernity through such cinema writing.

Pallister in particular urges an interpretation of cinema through the voices of actual spectators, which, she concludes, have been overshadowed by the writing of “the wrong people” due to the “inarticulate” nature of cinema’s mass audience. Pallister asserts her authority to speak for the masses as one attentive to the fundamental symbiosis of class-defined experiences of modern life and the appeal of cheap new leisure forms and leisure environments like the cinema. Stopes, too, stakes a claim for the value of cinemagoing against the dismissal of the “Intelligentsia” who “on the whole have despised and ignored it”, seeing it as influential in its mass appeal and mass popular audience.

Two key things emerge here that are central to the thesis as a whole. Firstly, supporting the argument put forward in the previous chapter,

women's experience within the socioeconomic, technological and cultural transformations of modernity cannot be interpreted by polarizing gendered experience as either active and critical, or passive and acritical. Rather, terms like 'escape' need to be understood as complex modes of engagement with cinematic pleasures (spectatorial and spatial) shaped by women's multilayered encounter with the matrix of modernity as it affected their daily lives, leisure and labour.

The second point spans from the overarching attempt to be as attentive as possible to women's engaged mode of interaction with popular culture. Both Pallister and Stopes highlight a tension between a class of people dismissing, attacking or misrepresenting cinema within British culture and the 'masses' who represent the actual cinema audiences. This tension between lowbrow entertainment forms and highbrow art forms the basis of the next chapter, which looks at women's conception of cinema as a lowbrow entertainment form within modernity, polarized against highbrow experimental modernism.

.

Chapter 3 Female Film Criticism

The tensions inherent in what Andreas Huyssen has coined the “Great Divide” (viii) between modernist ‘art’ and mass culture are complex when read within the framework of the gendered creators and consumers of popular forms than a straightforward polarity between high and lowbrow forms would allow. Female film criticism explicitly addresses the gendered experience of this Great Divide.

As cinema expanded across popular British culture from the turn of the century onwards, film criticism was gradually established in a range of British print media. Professionalised critics rose to prominence in the 1920s as “people started treating film seriously in Britain” (Low 15). Critical film writing appeared in a range of media addressing different audiences.

Popular weekly prints of fan magazines regularly reviewed the latest releases, with features such as *Picturegoer's* ‘Pick of the Pictures’ offering brief reviews either in the positive or negative. Specialised publications such as *Close Up* were also developed in the 1920s as a platform for aspirational debate about the possibilities of cinema for modernist filmmaking projects and the celebration of film as art. Specialised journals and fan magazine criticism addressed seemingly polarised audiences. *Close Up* spoke to a low-circulation readership, whilst fan magazines explicitly targeted a mass audience of lower to lower-middle-class cinema fans. Both forms of critical

writing thus addressed an avid film spectator at either end of the social spectrum.

Newspaper film criticism occupied a place within British print media somewhere in-between these two extremes. Unlike fan magazines, newspaper criticism “was more frequently published, more widely distributed, and designed to be read quickly” (Wasson, ‘The Woman’ 157). By the beginning of the 1920s, various British newspapers were beginning to appoint official film critics and feature regular film columns.¹

Whereas the writing of fan magazine reviews focused upon individual stars and films, newspaper criticism, as Haidie Wasson has shown, made film a subject of everyday conversation and general knowledge. The synergy between daily newspapers and cinema thus “helped to make film writing relevant to a broad reading public and to make talk of the movies common sense” (Wasson, ‘The Woman’ 155). Women’s involvement with film criticism allowed female writers to shape debates about filmic representation and spectatorship practices.

While I return to explore fan magazine criticism in the context of female readership later in the thesis, my intention in this chapter is to focus on the critical writing of female film critics in daily newspapers, and within the specialised, low-circulation modernist journal. Of the former, I explore in

¹ The *London Mercury* launched its film coverage in 1925; the *Sunday Times* appointed Sydney Carroll to the role of cinema reviewer in 1925; the *Daily Express* featured criticism by G.A. Atkinson by the late 1920s.

detail the 1920s newspaper criticism of Iris Barry and C.A. Lejeune. Of the latter, I look at the writing of some of the female contributors to the journal *Close Up*, first published in 1927 and in print a short six years.

I turn firstly to an examination of women's writing in *Close Up*, describing the gendered criticism of the journal and exploring the differing ways in which its female writers approached the relationship between criticism and film audiences. By foregrounding their different interpretations of the gender and quality of mass public audiences, I aim to explore how film criticism was one particular aspect of female film culture, giving access to specific debates concerning the female experience of divisions between highbrow 'art' and lowbrow entertainment.

Close Up: 'art, experiment and possibility'

Bringing together several prominent voices within international literary modernism, *Close Up's* regular contributors included filmmaker and writer Oswald Blakeston; the British historical novelist Bryher; French Surrealist poet Rene Crevel; American poet H.D.; London-based writer Robert Herring; Freudian Psychoanalyst Barbara Low; Scottish artist, filmmaker, photographer and novelist Kenneth Macpherson; British novelist Dorothy Richardson, and Berlin-based psychoanalyst Hanns Sachs.²

² Also writing for the magazine were Paris correspondent Marc Allegret; Moscow correspondent Petra Attasheva; Geneva correspondent Freddy Chevalley; American and Canadian correspondent Simon Gould; Hollywood correspondent Clifford Howard; Berlin correspondent Andor Krazna-Krausz; second Paris correspondent Jean Lénaur; New York correspondent Harry Alan Potamkin, and Vienna correspondent Trude Weiss.

The journal's title, from the technical term for magnification through the film lens, embodied its dedication to close scrutiny and analysis of film. The journal sought to champion avant garde cinema, offering intellectually engaged and artistically constructed critical reflection upon those films, filmmakers and performers it considered worthy of attention.

Across its brief seven years of publication, *Close Up* featured four main female writers within its group of seventeen regular contributors. In doing so, *Close Up* brought together a core group of some of the most significant female figures within literary modernism. The British poet and novelist Bryher (Annie Winifred Ellerman) was assistant editor of the journal. The American Imagist poet H.D. (Hilda Doolittle) contributed a three-part article on 'Cinema and the Classics' in 1927, along with several other extended articles³ and poetry. British Freudian analyst Barbara Low offered a single contribution to *Close Up* in an article entitled 'Mind-growth or Mind-mechanization', published in September 1927, and English writer Dorothy Richardson contributed a regular column for the journal titled 'Continuous Performance'.

As the varied list of contributors demonstrates, *Close Up* was very much an international and interdisciplinary project, bringing together writers from a range of locations and a range of backgrounds, often combining literary analysis with psychoanalytic insight in the writing of figures like Barbara Low, H.D. and Hanns Sachs. As such, the *Close Up* writers created a discourse

³ These included essays intended to accompany *Boderline*.

about cinema that was both “artfully designed” and “psychologically astute” (Friedberg 3).⁴

The circulation of the journal was as international as its contributors, yet minimal in volume. 500 copies were printed for each issue and distributed to bookshops in New York, London, Los Angeles, Geneva, Paris and Berlin, bringing together news and developments of the cinema in these principal cities. In Britain the journal sold for 1 shilling, making it substantially more expensive than both the daily newspaper and the weekly or monthly film fan magazine. As Rachel Low assessed in her *History of British Film 1918-1929*, the journal’s writers “addressed the magazine and a few books to each other and a small circle of film initiates” (22).

This exclusivity, and the journal’s commitment to “approach films from any angle but the commonplace” (*Close Up* advertisement for *transition*, 1, April 1927), set it distinctly apart from other forms of critical film writing. Compare the two images in figures 3.1 and 3.2, for example. The *Close Up* cover is entirely plain, save the pumpkin orange of its wrappers. Devoid of illustration, the cover declares the journal’s intellectual intentions, championing its exclusivity as “the only magazine devoted to film as an art” and clearly stating that its contents feature “theory and analysis”. The journal

⁴ For many of the *Close Up* writers, psychoanalysis and cinema were “closely identified projects, historically and conceptually” (Marcus 100). In the writing of H.D. in particular the “poetics and politics of cinema and psychoanalysis” (Marcus 100) were deeply entwined. Applying psychoanalytic methodology and interpretative tools to the analysis of the ‘art’ of the silent film qualified the journal’s criticism as intellectually highbrow, theoretically rigorous and thoroughly contemporary.

„This image has been removed by the author of this thesis/dissertation for copyright reasons□

Figure 3.1 The October 1928 cover of *Close Up*.

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis/dissertation for copyright reasons

Figure 3.2 Advertisement for the May 1922 *Picturegoer*

stresses the seriousness of its criticism to the degree that it openly states “No Gossip” on its cover page.

As the advertisement in figure 3.5 demonstrates, the fan magazine was far more focused upon individual stars (the cover image here is of Mary Pickford, in full colour, dominating the entire page) and promised “Magic” in its cover. The pictorial image of feminine stardom attempts to appeal to the fan reader by gesturing towards the fan magazine’s ability to offer greater intimacy with such stars. By declaring the cover image “magical”, the advertisement is far removed from the “theory and analysis” of the *Close Up* cover manifesto.

H.D.: ‘the lump and the leaven’

In attempting to supply “theory and analysis” in the place of “magic”, the female critics contributing to *Close Up* had a strong sense of the journal’s aesthetic intentions. Regular columnist H.D., in a letter to Viola Jordan in 1927, spoke thus of her participation with the journal:

. . . am doing a little critical work for a new very clever movie magazine, supposed to get hold of things, from a more or less ‘artistic’ angle . . . I feel [film] is the living art, the thing that WILL count but that is in danger now from commercial and popular sources (qtd. Marek 129).

This sense of the threat of popularism—and, increasingly, its feminised quality—pervades H.D.’s criticism. A poet and novelist, H.D.’s involvement with film culture was both as a critic and creator of experimental films.

Bryher, MacPherson and H.D. were film practitioners in addition to their film writing, forming the Pool Group as a filmmaking collective. The screen captures in figures 3.3 and 3.4 show Bryher and H.D. performing in their only surviving silent experimental film *Borderline* in 1930 (U.K, Kenneth MacPherson, 1930). Bryher produced the film with MacPherson, who wrote and directed.⁵ Commenting on film culture for these critics, therefore, went in hand with being actively involved in the production of film culture.

The Pool Group promoted their film work through their *Close Up* writing. Figure 3.5. shows a screen shot and promotional caption for their 1929 film *Wing Beat*. The caption offers a portrait of H.D. as an aesthetic “genius”, linking the highbrow quality of her work literary within modernist projects to her film writing within *Close Up*. Appearing as it does in the very first issue of the journal, the image and caption seek to establish H.D. from the outset as a film writer concerned with aesthetics and experimental non-mainstream film—and the role of the critic as the creator of a better quality and more intellectually rigorous type of cinema.

H.D.’s film writing throughout *Close Up* consistently sought to affirm and legitimise the experimental work of the Pool Group, and the

⁵ H.D. appeared in all three of the Pool films—*Borderline*, *Wing Beat* (U.K, Kenneth MacPherson, 1927) and *Foothills* (U.K, Kenneth MacPherson, 1928), while Bryher’s role as performer was restricted to *Borderline*.

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis/dissertation for copyright reasons

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis/dissertation for copyright reasons

Figure 3.3 and 3.4. Screenshots showing Bryher (above) and H.D. (below) performing in the film *Borderline* (Kenneth MacPherson, U.K, 1930), an experimental project conceived and performed by several of the *Close Up* contributors as part of the Pool Group, directed by *Close Up* writer Kenneth Macpherson.

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis/dissertation for copyright reasons
Figure 3.5. A promotional piece for the film *Wing Beat* featured in *Close Up* (Vol. I. no. I. July 1927). The film was part of the Pool Group's experimental production venture.

inspiration that such work took from European avant garde art cinema. As such, the critic firmly located the artistic potential of film as existing beyond the confines of mainstream Hollywood cinema. She praised the work of G.W. Pabst, Lev Kuleshov and Sergei Eisenstein, citing films such as *Joyless Street* (Germany, Georg Wilhelm Pabst, 1925), *Jeanne Ney* (Germany, George Wilhelm Pabst, 1927) and *Mother* (Russia, Vsevolod Pudovkin, 1926) as examples of 'great' cinema.

Much of her early work for the journal, however, betrays a central anxiety about the problems of audience, rather than the commercial films such audiences consumed. The following passage from her first article for *Close Up*, entitled 'The Cinema and The Classics: 1 Beauty', illuminates the poet's attitude to the popular cinema experience:

The word cinema (or movies) would bring nine out of ten of us a memory of crowds and crowds and saccharine music and longdrawn out embraces and the artificially enhanced thud-offs of galloping broncos . . . (cinema = movies), boredom, tedium, suffocation, pink lemonade, saw-dust even: old reactions connected with cheap circuses, crowds and crowds and illiteracy and more crowds and breathless suffocation and (if 'we' the editorial 'us' is an American) peanut shells and grit and perhaps a sudden collapse of jerry-built scaffoldings. Danger somewhere anyhow. Danger to the physical safety, danger to the moral safety, a shivering away as when 'politics' or 'graft' is mentioned, a great thing that must be accepted (like the pre-cinema days circus with abashed guilt,

sneaked to at least intellectually. The cinema or the movies is to the vast horde of the fair-to-middling intellectuals, a Juggernaut crushing out mind and perception in one vast orgy of the senses (*Close Up* Vol 1., no. 1 Jul. 1927).

The image H.D. conjures is powerfully physical, intensely concerned with the sensation of exhibition space. The images flowing from the screen are entwined with the sights, smells, sounds and crushing pressure of the crowd.

The experience is tainted with a suggestion of the feminisation of this kind of mass entertainment. The content of cinema screening—the “saccharine music” and “long drawn out embraces” echoes the romantic and sensational quality of a conceptualisation of women’s cinema in this period.

As critics such as Nathalie Morris have shown, film production companies in the silent era had a strong investment in the “feminine interest” (25) surrounding romantic and sensational films, frequently drawn from best-selling women’s romantic and sex novel fiction. The publicist for British production company Stoll, for example, referred to adaptations of romance novels as providing “the sort of film story that appeals to women and girls by the thousand” (qtd Morris 25). H.D.’s reference of sensation and sentiment on the screen is linked to the “crowds and crowds” of audience, echoing Stoll’s “thousands” of female spectators.

Audience, environment and filmic representation are thereby firmly linked in H.D.’s conceptualisation of a feminised cinemagoing mass. The poet envisages the aesthetician’s only entry into this carnivalesque arena as one of

guilty pleasure, “sneaked to”. Perceiving of the intellectual spectator as free from the feminisation of the uncritical general spectator and the popular culture they consumed, H.D.’s primary concern is the cultural division between the everyday cinemagoer and the critical observer. Her work thus engaged “a volatile relationship between high art and mass culture” (Huysen vii). Modernism as an aesthetic movement “constituted itself through a conscious strategy of exclusion, an anxiety of contamination by its other: an increasingly consuming and engulfing mass culture” (Huysen vii). Huysen calls this polarisation of high and lowbrow culture the “Great Divide” (viii), whereby high modernism insists upon “the autonomy of the art work” and a “radical separation from the culture of everyday life” (vii).

In H.D.’s writing, we see the insistence upon a “Great Divide” between mass audience and intellectually privileged aesthete. H.D. subjects this divide to detailed scrutiny in her work for *Close Up*, polarising the critic as “leaven”—a transforming influence—and the public audience as “lump”—mass, solid, multitude:

. . . the leaven, turning in the lump, sometimes takes it into its microscopic mind to wonder what the lump is about and why cant the lump for its own good, for its own happiness, for its own (to use the word goodness in its Hellenic sense) *beauty*, be leavened just a little quicker? The leaven, regarding the lump, is sometimes curious as to the lump’s point of view, for all the lump itself so grandiloquently ignores it . . . And so with me or editorially ‘us’ at just

this moment. Wedged securely in the lump (we wont class ourselves as sniffingly above it), we want to prod our little microbe way into its understanding. Thereby having the thrill of our lives, getting an immense kick out of trying to see what it is up to, what I am up against (*Close Up* Vol 1., no. 1 Jul. 1927).

The mass audience are here reduced to an object of critical curiosity for the intellectual "point of view". H.D. engages with the cinema audience by subjecting it to spectatorial observation, recasting the public cinemagoer as a subject to be looked at as they in turn occupy this position in relation to objects and individuals on screen. The threat of the popular power is diminished by the excessive focus upon its feminised passivity, unable to better itself.

H.D. describes the failings of the critical faculties of the lump audience and its inability to recognise 'art':

The lump heaving under its own lumpishness is perforce content, is perforce ignorant, is perforce so sated with mechanical efficiency, with whir and thud of various hypnotic appliances, that it doesn't know what it is missing. The lump doesn't know that it had been deprived of beauty, of the flower of some producer's wit and inspiration. The lump is hypnotised by the thud-thud of constant repetition . . . he or it or the race consciousness is so duped by mechanical efficiency and saccharine dramatic mediocrity that he or it doesn't

in the least know, in fact would be incapable (if he did know) of saying what he does want (*Close Up* Vol 1., no. 1 Jul. 1927).

America functions as a cipher for lowbrow, bad quality film—the ‘American’ comes to signify the lowbrow audience at large, the *Americanised* mass public on both sides of the Atlantic who constitute a “hypnotised” “race consciousness”.

America offered an apt symbol for this kind of degradation of artistic value and unique quality by its contemporary associations with mass production in particular. H.D.’s attention to the effects of this kind of “mechanical efficiency” as it is refracted through art and commercial entertainment pre-empts some of the key ideas associated with the Frankfurt School, who, following Marx, were concerned with the development of twentieth century capitalism and its effect upon social change and rational institutions.⁶ Philosopher and sociologist Walter Benjamin’s work within the School explicitly addressed issues of art and mass culture, outlined in his seminal 1936 essay ‘The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction’

Benjamin saw film as an art form made possible by the advent of mechanical reproduction and technologies that enabled singular art works to be accessed by wider audiences. The mode of reproduction and

⁶ The term ‘Frankfurt School’ arose informally to describe thinkers association with the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research founded in 1925.

communication of the era, Benjamin argues, is influential in determining relationships between the working classes and bourgeois society.

Benjamin sees the accessibility and mass reproduction of the cinema as diminishing the “aura” of the work of art. The mystique of the original object is torn from the “fabric of tradition” (‘Work of Art’ 211) in a way which lessens the distance between artist and society. As such, the “false distinctions between the social roles of artists and educators are negated”.⁷

Unlike H.D., however, Benjamin sees the mass consumption of cinema in the age of mechanical reproduction as potentially empowering the viewer with critical faculties. Distinct from the experience of the theatre, the cinema spectator views a pre-recorded performance, or series of performances. As a result, “the audience’s identification with the actor is really an identification with the camera” (Benjamin, ‘Work of Art’ 228). This process enables the viewer to take a critical position; meaning that the audience no longer occupies a position of reverence when viewing the performance of film, since there is no live actor before them.

Art is thus transformed in the removal of film “from the realm of the ‘beautiful semblance’ which, so far, had been taken to be the only sphere where art could thrive” (Benjamin, ‘Work of Art’ 230). These processes disrupt “the distinctions that normally are considered important in art”.⁸ By presenting itself as an object of simultaneous collective experience, film

⁷ Kazis, ejumpcut.com (see works cited).

⁸ Ibid.

makes “everyone . . . an expert: enjoyment and criticism are intimately fused”.⁹

Benjamin sees the practices of exhibition and distribution as hindering the radical potential of such a position, however, by forcing the mass spectator back into a passive spectatorial position. By creating cultures of personality around star personas in particular, the film industry recreates a “false aura”, generating false distinctions between actor and audience.

Both H.D. and Benjamin see the capitalist forces behind film production and exhibition as pacifying the spectator. Benjamin sees this occurring through the creation of false aura, whereby the “spell of personality” is “the phony spell of commodity”, denying participation within the art form by emphasising participation as consumption only. In H.D.’s view, this occurs through the cultural saturation of “mechanical efficiency”, “hypnotic” in nature.

H.D.’s critique, unlike Benjamin’s, brings potential gender issues into the debate. Her references to “hypnotic appliances” could just as easily refer to the female experience of the transformation of the domestic space in the wake of a pervasive consumer culture. Household technologies brought “mechanical efficiency” into the feminine domestic space. H.D.’s disdain for the pacifying influence of the effects of such efficiency could be seen to extend to a broader culture of domestic, de-radicalized and apolitical femininity engaged by consumer culture, post-war and post- major suffrage activism.

⁹ Kazis.

Yet H.D. is less concerned than Benjamin with the political potential of this mass audience. While Benjamin's writing professes a desire to "give the people access to and representation in their own spectacles"¹⁰, H.D. views the mass public as relatively incapable of change, culturally indoctrinated to accept the lowest of aesthetic forms and representation as sufficient. She does not seek to empower this feminised audience with any radical potential, nor to posit a way of generally improving their critical faculties.

H.D. effectively declares the mainstream audience a cultural wasteland. Mechanical reproduction is a trick which "dupes" the feminised audiences into failing to demand the reinstatement of the sense of the aura of the artwork. By privileging "beauty . . . the flower of some producer's wit and inspiration", H.D. places the burden of such restoration in the non-gendered and thereby critically and intellectually free hands of the critic alone, who attempts to bring art to film form in the creation of experimental cinema.

Dorothy Richardson: the editorial 'we'

Novelist, essayist and poet Dorothy Richardson constituted the second most prominent female writer in the early issues of *Close Up*, and is perhaps the only significant voice within the journal that attempted to engage directly and seriously with mainstream cinema and the practices of mainstream cinemagoing. Richardson's writing cultivated a strong sense of herself as a female audience member, and as part of a cinema-going community, which

¹⁰ Kazis.

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis/dissertation for copyright reasons

Figure. 3.6 Dorothy Richardson. Photograph by Man Ray (1930). Source: <http://www.fotopedia.com/items/flickr-2929879366>.

she saw as spontaneous in organization, gendered predominantly female and organic in its ebb and flow to-and-from the cinema, daily and weekly. Her 'Continuous Performance' articles were fundamentally concerned with the experience of cinema-going as a multi-sensory and gender-specific social and emotional encounter.

Titling these articles 'Continuous Performance', Richardson draws upon the exhibition practice of screening continuous shows "attracting casual visitors with a mixed programme that ran through the project eight or nine times every day" (Hiley 28). This was an older exhibition practice, more prominent in the tens and early teens. By the mid teens most exhibitors were capitalizing on an awareness that audiences were "prepared to spend much longer in the auditorium, and would tolerate individual films" (Hiley 98), enabling them to run separate afternoon and evening performances. Richardson's use of the term underscores her observation that, despite changes in exhibition and production practices, the core female audience of the cinema retained an older awareness of the sense of cinema space as retreat in a variety of gender-specific forms.

Richardson's writing explored such subjects as the effect of musical accompaniment, the individual cinemagoer's encounter with other audience members, and the experience of slum and city-centre theatres. By subjecting this material to sustained reflective writing, Richardson demonstrated greater faith than H.D. in the interpretative capabilities of the engaged 'everyday'

spectator. Richardson was more concerned with the status of cinema and its audience as she found it, reflecting upon her own sense of its everyday realities.

The 'we' in Richardson's writing is less 'the editorial "we"' of H.D., therefore. Richardson recurrently positioned herself as the "we" of the public audience: "*We* trust the pictures" (Vol.1 no.3 Sept 1927); "*Our* first musician was a pianist" (Vol 1. no.3 Aug 1927); "Once through the velvet curtain *we* are at home"¹¹ (Vol. 1. no.5, Nov. 1927).

Attempting to analyze cinema audiences by leveling herself as an audience member, Richardson continually reflected upon the experience of cinemagoing in passages such as the following:

Such illumination as there will be, moments of the familiar sense of the visible audience, of purposefully being somewhere, is but hail and farewell leaving our party again isolate amidst unknown invisible humanity. Anyone may be there. Anyone *is* there and everyone, and not segregated in a tier-quences background nor packed away up under the roof. During the brief interval we behold . . . everyone, filling the larger space, oddly ahead of us (Vol. I. no.6. Dec. 1927).

The mix of people is organic—"not segregated". The critic moves amongst the crowds of "unknown invisible humanity", seeking to make the masses visible

¹¹ My italics.

and known through her writing, acutely aware of the way in which they “fill the larger space”.

For Richardson, the movie theatre represents a polygonal cultural hub where the tedium, sensation, pleasure and desire of individual spectator intermingle with the multitude of this audience sharing the dark-space of the theatre. Richardson describes the vital cultural function that such a space offers as a site of multiple gendered and social uses:

Refuge, trysting-place, village pump, stimulant, shelter from rain and cold at less than the price of an evening’s light and fire, drunkenness at less than the price of a drunk. Instruction. Peeps behind scenes. Sermons. Homethrusts for him and for her, impartially (Vol. 1. no. 6 Dec. 1927).

Echoing Minnie Pallister’s detailed description of the multiple purposes of the exhibition space as explored in the previous chapter, Richardson sees cinema as a spatial, temporal, sensory experience, rather than an abstract aesthetic artistic ideal or degraded representational medium.

In Richardson’s assessment, cinema could mean everything and anything to its watching audience precisely because of its physical and sensory slippage between “sanctuary” and sensation, engaging a fundamentally gendered slippage between private and public in women’s experiences. Escapism is envisaged not as an act of mindless submission, but as a core communal need, engaging the spectrum of human experience across

private and public boundaries. It offers opportunities for courtship (“trysting place”), physical comfort (“shelter”), intoxication (“drunkenness”), information and education (“peeps behind scenes. Sermons”) and safety and retreat (“refuge”). Cinema was thus: “School, salon, brothel, bethel, newspaper, art, science, religion, philosophy, commerce, sport, adventure; flashes of beauty of all sorts” (Vol. 1. no. 6 Dec. 1927).

In constructing an understanding of cinema as a public space serving these multiple social needs, Richardson paid particular attention to female experiences. Richardson’s first article for the journal offers a carefully observed passage on the female cinemagoing audience and their behavior within the exhibition site:

It was Monday and therefore a new picture. But it was also washing day, and yet the scattered audience was composed almost entirely of mothers. Their children, apart from the infants accompanying them, were at school and their husbands were at work . . . Tired women, their faces sheened with toil, and small children, penned in semi-darkness and foul air on a sunny afternoon. There was almost no talk. Many of the women sat alone, figures of weariness at rest. Watching these I took comfort. At last the world of entertainment had provided for a few pence, tea thrown in, sanctuary for mothers, an escape from the everlasting *qui vive* into eternity on a Monday afternoon (*Close Up*, vol. 1, no.1 July 1927).

Richardson is keenly aware of the theatre as marked female space sought out by a gathering of weary women. The reference to washday reinforces the notion that this particular picture house populace is dominated by the lower-class domestic woman, bringing the world of private domestic and maternal labour into contact with the modernity of the city centre theatre and moving-image entertainment.

By explicitly referring to the cinema as being the first form of cheap and accessible entertainment to “at last” provide “sanctuary to mothers”, Richardson offers the first in a series of case studies discussing different types of female audience.

In a column from December of 1927, Richardson describes cinemagoing as a female experience in urban public space. Cinema here is not the refuge from maternal and domestic labour, but rather the public arena of the working-class young woman, able to spend her disposable income on public leisure:

. . . the trip to town revives the unfailing bright sense of going out, lifts off the burden and heat of the day and if the rest of the evening is a failure it is not an elaborately arranged and expensive failure.

. . . And it's all so nice nothing poky and those fine great entrance halls everything smart and just right and waiting there for friends you feel in society like anybody else if your hat's all right and your things and my word the ready-mades are so cheap nowadays you need never go shabby and the

commissionaires and all those smart people about makes you *feel* smart. It's as good as an evening as you can have and time for a nice bit of supper afterwards (Vol. I, no.6. Dec. 1927).

Shifting here from 'we', to 'you' in her address, Richardson moves emphasis away from herself as the narrator and towards the reader as pseudo-participant, constructing the reader as a character. In doing so, she makes a claim for a detailed understanding of the emotional, physical, and social experience of cinemagoing relative to a specific type of female audience. By erasing the distance between critic and cinemagoer, Richardson attempts to speak as an audience member rather than for or about them as an undistinguished mass.

Richardson's biography is worth considering in relation to her attempts at identification. Her own class background, while not hereditarily working-class, was heavily tempered by the experience of city life and work. Despite her upper-class roots as a daughter of English gentility, Richardson's family had very little money when she was a child, and from aged seventeen she had to make her own living, working as a governess in Hanover and later taking up work as a secretary in London. She was eventually able to move out of this work as her freelance journalism and translations became more lucrative.

The affinity Richardson expresses with the working-class audience is evidenced, therefore, in her references to the "burden . . . of the day" and to cheap, non tailored "ready-made" female fashions. An awareness of the cost

of things, the careful spending of hard-earned disposable income and the pleasures of relief from the day's work colours the passage. Richardson cultivates a sense of understanding the female urban presence and the ways in which the cinema as public spectacle engaged the urban female body through social interaction ("the unfailing bright sense of going out . . . waiting there for friends you feel in society"); physical work and rest ("the trip to town revives . . . lifts of the burden and heat of the day") and economy ("it is not . . . elaborately arrange and expensive" / "ready-mades are so cheap nowadays you never need go shabby").

The spectacle of the exhibition site underscores the sense of a cinema outing as a treat—a temporary adoption of faux luxury where everything is "smart" enough to make the female cinemagoer "feel in society". The grandeur of the environment and cinema staff ("commissionaires and all those smart people") offers an excuse for a degree of extravagance, granting inexpensive access to a veneer of semi-luxury—"makes you *feel* smart."

By adopting the second person in describing this environment, Richardson is able to represent the luxury of the experience from a lower-class female perspective without diminishing or patronizing this perspective. The cinema hall is a place of important feminine information exchange, where fashions are shared and assessed amidst a community of "friends". Spectacle extends beyond the screen to the self-conscious exhibition of the female

cinemagoers as bodies observed in the public space, engaged in rituals of significant self-expression linked to class and gender.

Fundamentally, Richardson seems to position such female cinemagoers as self-aware leisure consumers and film spectators. She affirms this view in a later 'Continuous Performance' article, in which she assesses the significance of the chatter of the female spectator throughout film screenings:

Meanwhile here we are, and there . . . she is innocently, directly, albeit unconsciously, upon the path that men have reached through long centuries of effort of thought. She does not need, this type of woman clearly does not need, the illusions of art to come to the assistance of her own sense of existing. Instinctively she maintains a balance, the thing perceived and herself perceiving . . . Not all the wiles of the most perfect art can shift her from the centre where she dwells.

. . . And the dreadful woman asserting herself in the presence of no matter what grandeurs unconsciously testifies that life goes on, art or no art, and that the onlooker is part of the spectacle (Vol. II, no. 3, March 1928).

Her address shifts again, from the second person to the position of character-narrator. She is part of the 'we' of the audience in the scene she describes, choosing to narrate the chattering female spectator from the position of observer. Her observation thus retains an objective authority, while

remaining carefully grounded within the framing device of her narrative positioning as a fellow audience member.

The female gaze as it is directed towards the screen in the passage does not render the spectator an empty vessel onto which meaning is infused, channeled from the cinematic image outwards. Rather, Richardson asserts that woman spectating is capable always of maintaining a simultaneous recognition and assertion of her own interpretive and self-asserting presence within the process of spectating.

The “instinctive” balance achieved by the female spectator testifies to Gaylyn Studlar’s conception of an “I-know-but-nevertheless” (‘Perils’ 269) form of cinematic encounter in the silent era, whereby escapist pleasure does not come at the expense of the surrender of self-awareness. Studlar argues that fan magazine discourse in particular in this era “did not encourage a total investment in an illusion” (‘Perils’ 293). Rather, as Marsha Orgeron has argued, fandom offered “a practical way for women to become actively involved with movie culture and, in the process, to negotiate their own identities beyond the limited realm of their day-to-day experiences” (79).

The description of the female spectator as a “dreadful woman” in Richardson’s writing takes new meaning, therefore. On the one hand she is a potential irritant to her fellow audience, a clichéd embodiment of the unintelligent cinemagoer unable to curb their emotional outbursts. Figure 3.7 shows a caricature of such a female figure in a fan magazine—a middle-aged

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis/dissertation for copyright reasons

Figure 3.7. Figure 4 of a four part cartoon featured in *Picturegoer* (Sept. 1918), depicting a stereotypical audience irritant. The woman 'who can't control her emotions' exclaims: 'I knew he'd do it! I knew he'd do it didn't I tell yer!' The cartoon is accompanied by the caption: 'Our artist depicts a few of the picturegoer's pet aversions'.

female spectator exclaiming loudly her reaction to the narrative on screen, to the annoyance of her fellow spectators. Yet “dreadful” also implies power. Richardson draws strength and wry triumph from the insistent presence of the chattering woman amidst the darkness of the theatre as a figure capable of boldly asserting that “life goes on”.

For Richardson, therefore, the “lump”, when addressed as gendered female audience, is not a faceless mass appeased by cinema as a lesser art form, as evoked by H.D. Richardson does not see this audience as needing to be improved and educated in the true value of aesthetic artistry in order to fully engage with the cinema as art.

Rather, Richardson finds the female audience to be a source of artistry in their own right. The sensory encounter of this audience with the aesthetics of the screen and the cinema space can, in Richardson’s assessment, be in itself a source of instruction. Detailed observation and analysis of this audience offers points of valuable contemplation for the inquiring intellect or literary modernist critic in understanding the relationship between viewer and object viewed, spectator and the spectating space, art and entertainment, public and private, everyday life and aesthetics. Where H.D. degrades a popular audience, therefore, Richardson champions it, specifically where this audience is female.

Tabloid critics

. . . newspapers shaped cinema, playing a constitutive role in our most basic idea of what cinema is and how it functions in daily life. If reading about movies became a basic condition for watching movies, then newspapers (and other textual forms like them) played a key role in forming expectations, framing debates, defining interests and augmenting experience before and after people attended movie theatres (Wasson, 'The Woman' 156).

Although the intended readership of specialized film journals and daily newspapers would seem to stand in opposition to one another as intellectual and social polarities, many of the attitudes professed by the *Close Up* writers are echoed in the newspaper criticism of British writers Iris Barry and C.A. Lejeune. Whilst Lejeune's criticism shared a hostility towards the mainstream cinema and its audience akin to the writing of H.D., Barry's *Daily Mail* column and work with The Film Society professed an optimism about the aesthetic and cultural possibilities of silent cinema, aligning her writing more closely with Richardson.

By exploring the newspaper criticism of Iris Barry and C. A. Lejeune, writing in turn for the *Daily Mail* and the *Manchester Guardian* during the 1920s, the chapter now turns to examine how these women understood their position as cultural critics; how they viewed the relationship between cinema and audience, and how this raised questions of gendered authorship in the generation of female film culture.

Haidee Wasson has explored the ways in which newspaper criticism in the 1920s indicated “a very particular development in film culture – a lasting synergy between the two media” (“The Woman’ 155). This synergy “helped to make film writing relevant to a broad reading public and to make talk of the movies common sense” (Wasson, “The Woman’ 155).

Wasson argues that both cinema and newspapers were signifiers of urban modernity as “transmitters of information” and “invitations to, and catalysts for, pre-cinematic spectacles and fractured modes of experience . . . borrowing longstanding practices in publishing such as serial fiction” (“The Woman’, 156). The film industry in particular viewed newspapers as “integral to expanding the audience for cinema, introducing movie talk to a new reading audience” (“The Woman’, 156), using newspapers as a key resource for advertising and creating interest in forthcoming releases.

Film criticism emerged as a distinct form of newspaper writing in the 1920s. Reflecting upon film newspaper criticism as an emerging new journalism, the Editorial of the *London Mercury* in November of 1925 assessed the question of what form this type of writing should take:

. . . the criticism of the movies offers certain difficulties not present in relation to the other arts. There are no criteria, or practically none, established by masterpieces of the past, and if there were the critic would have great difficulty familiarizing himself with them; there is no British Museum or National Gallery for classic films (Nov. 1925).

Like the *Close Up* writers, the columnist here underscores the tension between film as entertainment and the role of the critic as the observer of “art”. Silent cinema had no existing canon of great works, nor easy access to repeated viewing or the detailed analysis of such works broken down into individual parts.¹² The privileged spectatorial access to works within the gallery or museum was inapplicable to the swift-moving culture of film, in which individual texts disappeared from easy public access once their runs had concluded on British screens. Unlike the literary work, a film could not generally be purchased and revisited, nor kept available for repeated viewing in a public facility.

Existing models of literary and artistic criticism, therefore, did not seem directly applicable to silent cinema as a distinct visual discourse which produced new imagery, narratives and famous faces with an unprecedented rapidity and instigated a unique spectatorial position for the viewer. Criticism thus needed to find an appropriate language with which to respond to film culture and its transitory texts. The two prominent female newspaper critics I explore here approached the task of forging a new critical language for film in different ways.

C.A. Lejeune: language, sincerity and the ‘exceptional audience’

¹² As there would be decades later with the development of personal viewing and video technology, and their preservation of film in cultural centres such as the British Film Institute.

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis/dissertation for copyright reasons

Figure 3.8 C.A. Lejeune (source: Lejeune, C.A. *Thank you for Having me*. London: Hutchinson, 1964).

C. A. Lejeune, who had been promoted from opera critic at the *Manchester Guardian* to the original position of film critic in 1922, titled her columns "The Week on the Screen." Lejeune generally headed each instalment with an indication of theme using an "On" format—e.g., "On Hairdressing" (*Manchester Guardian*. 6 Sept 1924), "On Sincerity" (3 Feb 1932). The implied tone was one of autobiographical reflection upon the given topic, with the reviewer's name absent in the title but always implied.

Lejeune structured her columns, usually around 800 words in length, in two sections. The first provided a general viewpoint or commentary on an aspect of cinema culture she wished to discuss, whilst the second half consisted of an overview of the week's releases. Lejeune's criticism was not merely a matter of discussing films as isolated texts, but of situating them within broader discourses surrounding cinema culture. Topics under discussion included what she saw as the distinct characteristics of national cinemas, the future of the British industry, audiences and specific directors.

In contrast to Richardson, however, Lejeune did not attempt to position herself within the everyday audience, nor to critically interpret the class and gender specificities of the appeal of cinemagoing. Her work retained an intellectual detachment from the general public audience. Rather than speaking on behalf of any conception of a privileged elite of cinema enthusiasts, she spoke of her own experience and opinion. In this sense she

shared the forthrightness of many letter writing female fans who contributed to fan magazines—yet lacked their sense of community.

Lejeune was prone to debate the role of the critic in her column in its early years. Whilst this was in one sense a means for affirming her position within the paper and as a cultural commentator, it also provides an insight into what kinds of criticism Lejeune envisaged as rising in popular culture as a response to cinema practices.

Lejeune reflected on the various types of cinema critic that currently existed in February 1922:

There is the critic who despises the kinema. He has no sympathy with it, sees no value in it, and produces a very readable article by exploiting his own wit at its expense. Then there is the critic who treats the kinema as an inferior branch of the stage play, applying the same tests to both and blaming the film because it does not answer them. There is the critic who has not troubled to study the technical side of his job, and the critic who has learnt everything a layman can learn about construction but has formed such clear ideas of a film aesthetic and has never considered the relationship to the other arts . . . Artistic progress in the film world is threatened from two sides, by the “intellectual” who sees not beauty anywhere in the output of the motion picture camera, and by the film fanatic who sees beauty everywhere (4 Feb. 1922: 11).

The film critic is distinguished from the fan by the possession of greater knowledge of the “technical side” of the industry and film production. Further, the film critic is distinct from the critic of existing art forms in their ability to analyse film on its own merit, not attempting to apply the analytical tools of theatrical criticism to the medium. Lejeune characterises the ideal film writer as the “lay critic,” able to act “as interpreter between producer and public, guiding the taste of the impartial, and bringing to the notice of the cynic beauties of acting and production” (4 Feb. 1922: 11). The newspaper film critic occupied a unique position between producer and public, therefore—neither a fan nor a filmmaker, but instead a mediating influence.

Such mediation was frequently nationalized in Lejeune’s writing, particularly in relation to the negative effects of American film upon British screens. Lejeune systematically degraded American cinema in her column, arguing that it “set more store on her spectacle and her triumphs of film machinery” (26 Aug. 1922: 11) than quality film. As she saw it, America had embraced cinema as:

A glorious and rollicking liar. She has seen in this piece of clever mechanism an instrument, long-sought, for popularizing the artificial and of selling luxury for a 25-cent check. Her rule is merely this: to escape from things of everyday, to turn her back upon bits of real life; to be deliberately artificial (16 Jun. 1922: 11).

This concern with artificiality was Lejeune's primary complaint against American film, which "at its worst produces the *vamp de luxe* . . . and syrupy sob-stuff, in all of which insincerity is the key-note" (16 Jun. 1922: 11).

Films such as *The Glorious Adventure* (UK, J. Stuart Blackton, 1922) paraded 'vamp de luxe' performers like Lady Diana Manners, who Lejeune assessed as having "all the significance of a sugar fondant dropped into the blazing centre of a barbecue" (*Thank you for Having Me* 81). Cecil B. DeMille's films, such as *Why Change Your Wife?* (U.S., Cecil B. DeMille, 1920) came in for particular criticism in her writing as representing "an orgy of affluence" (*TYFHM* 81). Serial films she characterized as "inartistic", of no "intellectual value", created to meet "an uneducated demand" (20 May 1922). Female-led serials like *The Perils of Pauline* (U.S., Louis J. Gadnier and Donald MacKenzie, 1914) were, in her assessment, akin the lowbrow "shilling shocker" (6 Sept. 1924) fiction.

Hollywood for Lejeune was by and large "a world of tinsel scenarios and false production" (3 Feb, 1923: 11). Reacting strongly against this type of film culture, Lejeune downplays its value as escapist entertainment. She pinpointed greater sincerity as an essential condition of quality film-making. Attention to sincerity was an intrinsic part of her seeming refusal to cultivate an appreciation of the medium as popularist form distinct from more highbrow literary and theatrical discourses.

Tied into this view was Lejeune's conception of the public cinema audience, and the ways in which film culture was constructing new forms of discourse through which to interact with this audience. For Lejeune, the structure of film culture ensured a lower-class audience not trained in the more high-brow arts, and as such failed to create a demand for more highbrow pictures. On the reverse side of this, however, such an audience was increasingly trained in cinematic discourse as a unique popular language and culture of its own.

An overriding sense of the troubling nature of this mass picture-going public pervades Lejeune's column. Rarely are film audiences portrayed in a positive light, but rather are described in various articles as "invertebrate" (15 Sept. 1923: 11); a "dumb weight of numbers" (27 Sept. 1924: 11); "uneducated" (20 May 1922: 11); "artistically uncritical" (18 Mar. 1922: 7) and "mentally incapable" (18 Mar. 1922: 7). This almost obsessive focus upon the non-intellectual masses betrays Lejeune's concern with their dominating presence, echoing the language of H.D.

Setting these concerns in context, there were around 5400 regular film shows in Britain by the end of 1915, with 21 million tickets sold each week by 1917 (Hiley 97). Roughly half the UK population were regular cinemagoers by the late teens¹³. The cinema audience was indeed vast by the time Lejeune became a film critic, and the working classes made up a large part of this audience. As Nicholas Hiley has shown, affirming Dorothy Richardson's

¹³ The UK population is estimated at 37,886,699 in the 1921 Census.

conceptualisation of female uses of the cinema space, such cinemagoers “did not buy films, but bought time in the cinema, which they used for a variety of purposes” (101). The exhibition site welcomed the entire family, making it easier for working classes to cheaply attend, and offered an alternative to the public house. The low cost “and the fact that patrons could wear their work clothes” (Hiley 100) drew large number of working-class patrons.

The structure of early film culture thus courted this kind of mass audience, and in doing so created a system of popular knowledge—of stars, films, filmmakers, etc—through which to speak to this audience. Lamenting the problem of attracting a “better” class of patrons to the cinema, Lejeune cites a substantial power in the cultural currency of film knowledge exercised by the mass audience, asserting that: “It can speak. It understands film talk, knows the stars and the producers, knows the possibilities and the subterfuge. It is a multitudinous force” (27 Sept. 1924: 11).

The ominous impression of the “multitudinous force”—in other articles referred to as “the vast masses” (27 May 1922: 11)—is for Lejeune an excluding culture, standing in the way of a potential intellectual revolution of the cinema precisely because “the coveted public does not speak the language nor read film history” (17 Feb. 1923: 11).

Further, the powerful knowledge it retains is gender coded. Lejeune describes an informed fan audience who “knows the stars and the producers”. Fan audiences were predominantly female, and fan materials

such as fan magazines were accordingly female-targeted. The language of which she speaks—"film talk"—is therefore an overridingly feminine language, learned from interaction with the extra-textual networks of film fan culture. This fan network seemingly provides no access point for the better class of coveted spectator, for whom "the title of a film, the star, the producer are no indication of quality" (17 Feb. 1923: 11).

Lejeune's suggestions for how to remedy the situation vary, at times denying the possibility of this feminised cinema culture as evolving into anything more than entertainment and reducing it to the status of "an art that does not exist . . . [and] has nothing to say" (17 Feb. 1923: 11). At other points, her writing implies a need to impose established theatrical standards to resolve the non-status of cinema as art and unravel the power of the feminised mass audience. She insists that change would require "a moneyed philanthropist with sound ideas on art" to produce "better films" to be shown in a "modest kinema which would make no attempt to compete with its more flamboyant neighbours, but which . . . would gradually draw to itself an audience as loyal and individual as that of St. Martin's theatre in London" (15 Sept. 1923: 11).

Attempting to break with popular film practices, Lejeune pushes for a film culture less focused upon stars, giving greater critical attention to film producers and thus moving away from the central aspects female fan culture. She attempts to position the film producer as author, applying the standards

of literary analysis to raise the status of film from entertainment to possible art form. She argues that:

. . . every film should be an expression of the producers ideal . . . the 'star' may have a name to conjure with in two continents, a name that will fill a poster to the exclusion of all others when the picture is released to the public, but 'on the floor' she is merely an instrument in the producer's hands (22 April 1922: 11).

Existing feminised cinema audiences and their focus upon fandom and the discourses of stardom are thus the central problem for Lejeune in her struggle to find a way to "bring together the exceptional film and the exceptional audience" (27 Sept. 1924: 11). Her columns imply a pressing need create "correct" demand for "showing sincere films in a sincere way" (15 Sept. 1923: 11):

If . . . the educated man would give active support to the better pictures . . . better pictures would be shown, more frequently, and at every showing converts would be won from the ranks of the uncritical. Gradually the preference for cheaper ware would become the hall-mark of an isolate party, which would have no influence upon the general development of the kinema art (18 Mar. 1922: 7)

Lejeune argues that the screening of higher quality pictures would ensure with each viewing that “a certain number of the public goes over from this non-critical party to the critical party” (18 Mar. 1922: 7). The potential division she envisages remains exclusive—the “certain number” are not all, but rather the enlightened few, pitted against the feminized fan populace.

Lejeune’s praise for European productions and a belief in the quality and potential of English cinema was entangled with this view of audiences. She was particularly praiseworthy of German and French cinema, describing watching the “beginning of a German film” as “like opening a fairy tale or embarking on a voyage of discovery” (23 Jun. 1923). In a later column from 1924, she focuses on the image of a French actress torn from a French film magazine, which she retains as “a pledge of hope”; the promise of “beauty still in the kinema, a spiritual beauty . . . grateful to the eye after restless painted faces that the movies crowd upon us everyday” (6 Sept. 1924).

Championing these kinds of films and images, Lejeune insisted that Europe, and England especially, had “a finer artistic taste than her western neighbours” (1 Apr. 1922: 11). Of the British industry, she singled out filmmaker Cecil Hepworth and British stars Alma Taylor and Chrissie White as standing “for all that is best and most foresighted in British entertainment” (11 Feb. 1922: 7). She saw the progression of the Hepworth firm as a force of artistic quality, capable of ensuring that “no film producing company in the world today can force us to take second place” (11 Feb. 1922: 7.) She praised

the “dignity” (1 July 1922: 11) of the English character and the “foresighted” (11 Feb 1922: 11) quality of “British entertainment” (11 Feb 1922: 11). Again, Lejeune reacts against Americanised fan images and opts for performers who embody more traditional feminine norms.¹⁴

The newspaper column for Lejeune, therefore, was a critical platform separate from film culture in general and, most importantly, from female fan culture. Her critical goal was to suggest ways in which cultivating a better class of audience could generate demand for a better class of films.

Iris Barry and the *Daily Mail*

Iris Barry’s criticism for the *Daily Mail* during the 1920s reveals a substantially different critical voice to Lejeune’s. The *Daily Mail* provided Barry with a less rigid format than the *Manchester Guardian*, more tailored as it was towards popular culture and the foregrounding of women’s issues and leisure practices in general. Viewing the two papers side by side (figures 3.10 and 3.11) reveals a distinct aesthetic contrast.

The *Manchester Guardian* features denser text and less imagery. The paper as a whole carried only a few full print photographs and very little pictorial advertising. Significantly, both a photo and advert appeared on the same page as Lejeune’s column, generally advertising women’s clothing.

¹⁴ Taylor in particular was an actress who’s star image was excessively low-key, showing a disinterest in modern fashions and media exposure Taylor is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 8.

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis/dissertation for copyright reasons

Figure 3.9 Iris Barry (source: ouchtouchpublishing.blogspot.com)

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis/dissertation for copyright reasons

Figure 3.10. Lejeune's "The Week on the Screen" column in the *Manchester Guardian*. ("What the Public Wants."
18 March 1927: 7)

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis/dissertation for copyright reasons

Figure 3.11 Barry's film column in the *Daily Mail*. ("Actors who Dream of Films." 24 Nov. 1927: 10)

Cinema was linked in this way to the pictorial centre of the paper and to women's consumption.

Lejeune's 'The Week on the Screen' was positioned towards the rear of the *Manchester Guardian* following the formal news sections, whereas Barry's writing was often found in different sections of the *Daily Mail*. The *Mail* was Britain's "most widely distributed newspaper" (Wasson, 'The Woman' 154), and included full page spreads dominated by photography (usually depicting society women, theatrical or cinema stars), and designated whole pages to pictorial advertising for cosmetic and domestic products explicitly targeted at women. Barry's column, usually between 300 to 500 words, was also frequently illustrated with photographs of the screen stars discussed in her writing. The pictorial format of the *Daily Mail* shared similarities with fan magazines and trade paper advertising in this way, as did its less formalised print structure and font headings, which typically became larger and bolder in the women's pages.

An extremely prolific figure across British silent film culture, Barry has come to the attention of feminist film historians. Both Haidee Wasson and Leslie Kathleen Hankins have offered critical interpretations of Barry's cinema writing. Charting Barry's extensive career, Wasson describes the critic as a figure who "worked to transform the institutional and material conditions in which films were seen, studied, written about, and discussed" ('The Woman', 154). She describes Barry's *Daily Mail* persona as

“internationalist, opinionated, argumentative, sometimes populist, sometimes highbrow” (Wasson ‘The Woman’, 159).

Hankins explores Barry’s role across British film culture and concludes that the critic was “one of the most prolific and influential figures in film forums of her day” (488). Hankins describes Barry as a “truly ‘public’ intellectual, committed to communicating with all” and “profoundly inclusive” (509). Both Hankins and Wasson focus upon Barry’s ability to forge an engaged, sophisticated, yet accessible critical voice, making talking, knowing about and debating film culture, its industry, its audience, its stars and texts, part of everyday British culture.

Alongside her work with the *Daily Mail*, Barry provided film articles for the up-market women’s fashion magazine *Vogue*, the influential monthly periodical *The Adelphi*, and the weekly magazine *The Spectator*. The *Daily Mail* stands out from this group in its audience address. The paper was “conceived as an inexpensive, accessible and national daily . . . specifically designed to appeal to women . . . by including articles on fashion marriage, recipes and housekeeping” (Wasson, ‘The Woman’ 158). Unlike the up-market and subject-specific female address of the fashion magazine *Vogue* and the right-of-centre political and cultural magazine *The Spectator*, the *Daily Mail* offered accessible news and entertainment. By coveting a broad female audience from the middle and lower classes, the newspaper brought film language and knowledge to a daily national readership.

Attentive to her conception of the interests of this audience, Barry's critical voice in her *Daily Mail* writing is tonally distinct from Lejeune's. She rarely employed a first person narrative, but rather provided short essays on cinema culture, its audience and film releases. Her columns included individual topic headings but did not fall under "The Week on the Screen" format used by Lejeune. This allowed her a greater scope of subject matter, so that she was not bound to reviewing—but instead could offer various observations, perspectives and commentary on cinema culture.

Barry demonstrated faith in the existing critical capabilities of cinemagoers, asserting that "the public can always be relied upon to recognize the first-rate talent" (18 Mar. 1927), and that "the public is demanding sense in its kinema" (2 Mar. 1926: 8). Cinema for Barry was not a lower-class entertainment to be scorned or reclaimed, but rather a significant public practice which played "an important and ever-increasing part in the social life of all civilized countries" (18 May 1926: 6).

The direct tone of Barry's criticism professed value judgments as evidence of her personal taste in film, and conception of how adherence to certain production values and ideas of stardom could improve the British film industry's output in particular. Some examples of female performers favored by the writer included the Mexican star Dolores Del Rio, who she praised as possessing a rare intelligence in her performance. Barry frequently emphasized performative talent over aesthetic beauty in her discussion of

female stardom, speaking of the stars Colleen Moore, Betty Balfour, Clara Bow, Gloria Swanson, Marie Prevost and Estelle Body as successful actresses because of their “ability to get their personality across, rather than for their looks” (28 June 1917).

An example of a film which came under particular praise in her writing was the mid twenties hit *Stella Dallas* (U.S., Henry King, 1925), starring Ronald Colman and Bette Bennet. The film was a female-centered melodrama, based on the 1920 novel of the same name by Olive Higgins Prouty. Barry’s praise ranged from quality mainstream productions such as this to films which pushed the boundaries of popular cinema, such as Chaplain’s *A Woman of Paris* (U.S., Charles Chaplin, 1923), which she described as “remarkable because it was a first attempt at filming human beings instead of types” (13 Sept. 1926: 8).

Barry further celebrated popular genres in general, such as melodrama, westerns, serials, cartoons and travel films. She enjoyed the cartoon character Felix the Cat, and strongly praised American director D.W. Griffith, considering *Intolerance* (U.S., D.W. Griffith, 1916) to be his masterpiece.

Her appreciation of cinema was thus wide-reaching, from an enjoyment of the “laughter, romance, [and] armchair travel” (13 Sept. 1926: 8) that film culture offered to a fascination with the technological achievement of the medium, describing viewing pictures of speeded plant growth and extreme

close-ups of the moon's surface as "an awe-inspiring experience" (26 March 1926: 8).

Barry generally demonstrated a greater willingness than Lejeune to embrace the majority of American productions, stars and production values, asserting that aspiring British filmmakers would do well to "sit under the best of the American directors" (17 Dec. 1925)—like Griffith—to learn their trade. While Lejeune saw America as relying upon star power to "pull through a mediocre five reeler" (*Manchester Guardian*, 15 July 1922:7), offering largely "syrupy sob-stuff" (16 June 1922) and artificiality, Barry found value in the "obvious pleasures" (*Daily Mail*, 18 May 1926: 6) that American film had to offer.

Hollywood film was for her an "easy and inexpensive relaxation of the mind and body as well as a change of ideas. It refreshes and soothes millions everyday" (17 Dec. 1925). Attuned to the needs of the public "millions", Barry was aware, therefore, of the way cinema functioned as a leisure pastime within the stresses of daily life.

Her enjoyment, however, was not without aspiration for improvement. Like Lejeune, Barry had a notion of a better or ideal cinema, in which films of greater quality could be produced and exhibited. Her involvement within other aspects of film culture reveals her strong feeling for and belief in the value of non-mainstream cinema. Her role as a founder of The Film Society in particular speaks to this aspect of Barry's engagement with film culture.

Established in 1925, The Film Society offered private Sunday screenings in London of foreign cinema previously unseen in Britain. The society was supported by Barry and by male film critics such as Ivor Montagu, who wrote for *The Observer* between 1925 and 1926, and Walter Mycroft, film critic for the *London Evening Standard* between 1922 and 1927. Montagu wrote the Society's programme notes, which championed such international avant garde productions as the German *Das Kabinet Des Dr. Caligari* (Germany, Robert Wiene, 1919) and the French film *L'Inhumaine* (France, Marcel L'Herbier, 1924).

The Film Society's prospectus stated that the organization:

. . . had been founded in the belief that there are in this country large numbers of people who regard the cinema with the liveliest interest and who would welcome an opportunity seldom afforded to the general public of witnessing films of intrinsic merit whether old or new (Montagu 220).

Barry's deep involvement with The Film Society from its inception reveals the critic as champion of such cinema of "intrinsic merit", qualified by the attendance of a more film-educated and professional audience than the average *Daily Mail* reader.¹⁵ The annual membership fee of £1 5s also priced the society well beyond the means of the working class *Daily Mail* audience.

¹⁵ The society's membership was littered with major names in the film industry, such as the *Daily Express*' film critic Geroge A. Atkinson; the film director Anthony Asquith, and filmmaker George Pearson. Other members were drawn from relatively elite and highbrow cultural and political fields,

Unlike Lejeune, however, Barry did not see an essential class divide inherent in her quest to improve the cinema and champion its quality productions, nor express a need to create an elite, highbrow, technical film language with which to qualify the critical interpretation of the medium and its films of “merit”. Whilst she used her *Daily Mail* column to put forward a general view that the public needed to ask more of the cinema in order to get more enjoyment and quality from what they consumed, she was keen to suggest strategies for improvement that included such audiences, and took seriously their needs and wants.

The distinguishing quality of her aspirational criticism was her belief in this inherent “common sense” that merely needed to be prompted for a better cinema on a more universal scale, accessible to this existing public rather than exclusively to an intellectual elite.

The issue of improving Britain’s domestic film production was one which Barry saw resting in the hands the mass audience:

It is incumbent upon the nation now to see to it that superb English films take their place on our screen. We need to be reminded of the valor, the innate cheerfulness and divine common sense of the English man, of the spirit of the nation. It has never yet been expressed through any film; and until it has been we shall not be making the best possible use of this best of all relaxations (18 May 1926: 6).

such as the artist Claire Atwood, theatre director Edith Craig, the authors Heinrich Fraenkel and George Bernard Shaw, the social theorist John St Loe Strachy, and H.G. Wells.

Barry's concern with sincerity, therefore, was more to do with her conception of herself as a critic. Sincerity required an informed and less judgmental understanding of the actual, rather than ideal cinema audience and a careful positioning of herself as part of that audience, recognizing and championing its influence as the "best of all relaxations".¹⁶

Barry, like Richardson, positions herself as part of the "we" implied in her assertions of what the mass audience desired from or appreciated in its cinema. She asserts that "*we* must contribute to the future of the kinema" (13 Sept. 1926: 8), that "*we* in England . . . must avoid slavish imitations" (13 Sept. 1926: 8). She too was a fan, and endorsed the concept of fandom, thereby endorsing the female and 'feminized' mass audience that H.D. and Lejeune reacted against. Barry saw sincerity in this feminized audience by recognizing them as discriminating viewers, choosing their favourite films and stars "as they choose their friends" (28 Jun. 1917).

Rather than seeing the cinema as an "art that does not exist" (Lejeune, *Manchester Guardian* 17 Feb. 1923: 11), therefore, Barry was happy to profess her faith in the cinema as an "inspiring and far-reaching" (1 Sept. 1926: popular art form. The medium was able to "evoke fine emotions just as plays and books can . . . [and] break down the narrow confines of daily life" (19 March 1926: 8). Barry thus appears to have understood her position as film

¹⁶ Hence her avoidance of the first person and preference for inclusive statements such as "all our hearts [are] set upon better British pictures" (2 Jun. 1928: 8)..

critic as less of a mediator across a perceived class and intellectual divide, and more as a voice for a mass public that she respected. Her writing, while offering distinct opinions, critical commentary and strong ideas about 'good' and 'bad' cinema, ultimately seemed to strive to speak on behalf of and directly to this audience.

Gendered film criticism

Women's involvement in cinema criticism at an early stage in cinema history says a great deal about the twenties as a unique period in which the boundaries between traditionally high and low cultural forms were blurring. This blurring was enacted in a manner that was specifically beneficial to women's writing. In finding a way to voice a critical understanding of cinema as a popular new medium, journalism opened itself up to new commentators and writers attempting to create an appropriate discourse for film debate.

A handful of women successfully found in silent film journalism a unique moment of opportunity, not only to enter national journalistic spheres, but in doing so to create an distinctive journalistic discourse of their own. As such, we might look to women's early film criticism as an example of a more overtly gendered journalism, insofar as these writers had an opportunity to escape pre-existing male-defined journalistic styles in finding a new voice with which to discuss film.

Since newspaper journalism was generally dominated by male columnists and editorial staff in this era, the heading of a column with a

woman's name was in itself a noteworthy statement of gendered authorship, whether or not specifically feminine issues came to bear in the column itself. Speaking of her decision to become a film critic in her autobiography, Lejeune recounts, for example, how she was deterred by the fact that "women had very little standing yet as journalists. They were relegated, nameless, to the back pastures of the paper's 'Women's Page'" (70). Opportunities for women were wider than before, yet still limited by class-specific restraints, so that more often than not female writers like Lejeune were cultured, relatively financially secure, and retained a degree of social currency through familial connections.¹⁷

There are strong traces of an understanding of—and particularly in Barry's case, an insightful attentiveness to—the significance of film culture as a feminine cultural practice.

Wasson observes that:

. . . in the 1920s, constructs of gender were corralled by newspapers and by women to concretise not just links between cinema and consumerism but between cinema and domestic life, ritualised daily leisure and worldly engagement ('The Woman' 160).

¹⁷ Both Barry and Lejeune were from middle-class families, and Lejeune in particular attained her place on the *Manchester Guardian* through a family friendship with the paper's editor C. P. Scott who was a "regular visitor" (Lejeune 37) to her home whilst she was growing up.

As newspapers changed at the turn of the century, reconfiguring their content “to include articles on everyday matters, popular leisure, and the domestic” (Wasson, ‘The Woman’ 158), the inclusion of cinema criticism within these changes forged an association between the ‘feminine’ spheres of leisure and domesticity. The location of cinema criticism in the new style of daily tabloid journalism aligned it with female-targeted content and news.

Although Lejeune frequently seemed unwilling to truly take the cinema seriously, a rare extended passage from her column offers a reflexive and intuitive aside on the value of such female film culture. Lejeune here links the pleasures of cinema culture to the specifically feminine experience of modern life, underscoring the value of women’s cinema writing as a way of offering acute insight into working-class women’s experiences:

The ordinary woman . . . who has a home to run, and children, who has a typewriter to drive, perhaps, or a dinner to cook, a market basket to fill, a counter of goods to sell, has made her shadow friends in the kinema long ago and finds happiness in them, in seeing them every now and then, reading of what they are doing, remembering what they have done. She is no fool, this woman, no sluggard in criticism. The first to notice the inconsistencies of a production, the bad workmanship, the flaws in thought. She has no illusions about her screen friends and their quality. She knows when their work is bad just as surely as she knows when the film around them is bad. She knows every one of their faults and weaknesses—knows that this one is ugly, this one is

miscast, that this one cannot act. She knows and does not care . . . Let no one mock this personal loyalty in women. It is sprung, more often than men can understand, from the keenest of intuition. It is full of shrewd pity that a shrewder wisdom hides. It is incomparable and the source of endless power (*Manchester Guardian*, 16 January 1926: 9)

Her writing here echoes the commentary of Minnie Pallister in its sensitivity to the ways in which the material, physical and emotional conditions of lower-class female everyday life are deeply intertwined with their engagement with cinema culture, cinemagoing, and female stars. Lejeune's assessment of their response to, appreciation and criticism of film culture foreshadows Pallister's remarks four years later about the value of cinema to the "vast masses" who experience the difficulties of working class life within modernity.

While such moments of explicitly gendered commentary are rare in both Barry and Lejeune's criticism, they nevertheless attest to the centrality of women within cinema culture, and more specifically the centrality of cinema within the everyday experiences of women. Where H.D. is critical of the cheap thrills and sensations of the cinema which appear to shackle the medium to the intellectually void nature of this everyday environment and its popular mass leisure forms, Richardson, more than any of these female film critics, sees this shackling effect as a source of cultural importance and value for female cinemagoers.

Women's film criticism henceforth was deeply entwined with specifically gendered transformations within material and class-bound British culture within early twentieth century modernity. The acquisition of influential critical positions within daily tabloids mark Barry and Lejeune as symbolic figures for women's increased standing within the nation's workforce, and the lessening of the gender restrictions placed upon particular fields of work. Their work as tabloid critics helped make film part of everyday news, gossip, advertising, culture and consumption, legitimizing the language and influence of cinema within British culture at this time.

This sense of women and cinema as a fundamental aspect of contemporary popular culture in general is expressed elsewhere within sites of women's cinema-related writing. The next chapter moves to explore the cultural impact of cinema as it is evidenced in popular women's fiction of this era, from cheaply printed sensational novels to film novelizations and story magazines.

Chapter 4 Cinema and Women's Fiction

Cinema's place within popular British fiction of the early twentieth century, penned by and consumed by women, is manifested in a number of ways. Cinema was used as a metaphor, as a narrative device, and as a staging for events in the works of many popular female authors. References to cinemagoing, films, film stars and exhibition sites can be found in a spectrum of genres within silent era popular fiction—appearing in crime fictions, romantic novels, and yellowback sensation fiction.

Popular literature was also a ready source for cinematic storylines, characters and fictions. Contemporary novels were regularly adapted to the screen, and vice versa, with the novelization of original screen stories. Female authors frequently found their work subject to such adaptation, and to varying degrees were involved in the process of bringing their fictions to the screen. Some authors, like Elinor Glyn (explored in the next chapter), went on to produce film adaptations of their own novels, casting and directing them, and even appearing in cameo roles within them.

Female novelists in general were becoming increasingly public figures, beginning to engage similar discourses of advertising and personality that were employed in the marketing of female film stars. The business of book selling and

the generation of media attention around particular authors paralleled many aspects of the promotion of film personalities as media commodities.

Examples of the ways in which cinema culture overlapped and engaged with literary culture demonstrate the importance of popular literary forms to the female film history of the silent era. Exploring points of connection between cinema and female literature, this chapter looks at two issues. Firstly, it explores the ways in which the cinema was manifested in popular women's literature. Secondly, it offers brief case studies of particular authors—Ethel M. Dell and Marie Corelli—who were representative of a new sense of female authors as media celebrities, in some cases achieving media profiles akin to cinematic stars. An exploration of the career and media interaction of these authors and their connection to cinematic adaptations is offered as a prelude to the detailed study of authorial and filmic 'star' Elinor Glyn in Chapter 5.

Cinemagoing stories

Cinema exhibitors were quick to recognize the marketability of cinemagoing as an experience that could be narrativized and presented to spectators as a familiar subject for storytelling. Figure 4.1, for example, is a book of 'storyettes' produced by the Scala Cinema in Longbrook Street, Birmingham, in 1927, celebrating fourteen years since the opening of the establishment. Cinemas frequently produced such pamphlets and programmes as a way of promoting their

. This image has been removed by the author of this thesis/dissertation for copyright reasons

Figure 4.1 Cover of the 1927 Scala Tatler (source: Bill Douglas Centre. BDC item no. EXEBDC18)

screenings, and the comforts and features of their exhibition sites, running competitions and raising extra funding by the inclusion of local business advertising. These magazines often included short stories as an added extra, narrativising the cinemagoing experience or serializing a major film release.

The Scala Storyettes were penned by a female writer, Lilian Lane, and cover a surprising range of writing styles and framing devices. All the stories are around a page in length, offering quick reads and snapshot narratives, with titles such as 'The Queue', describing a young woman finding romance in the cinema line; 'Grannie Goes to the Pictures' describing an older woman's experience at an afternoon screening, and 'The Modern Picture Craze', exploring the place of the cinema in the rush and bustle of modern urban life. Mixing prose with poetry, Lane also mixes fantasy with detailed observation, offering stories to suit different classes of readers and describing the experiences of wealthy stars, everyday audiences, middle-class industry tradesmen and rich producers.

The publication of this kind of story book was not unusual, and was aligned with serializations and story versions of film releases in fan magazines and story magazine inserts that accompanied these papers, such as *Films Illustrated's* 'Picture Stories Magazine' (fig 4.2). This small magazine was included with every issue of the periodical and contained story versions of new films illustrated by head-shots of featured stars.

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis/dissertation for copyright reasons

Figure 4.2 *Picture Stories Magazine* Feb.1915 No. 18. Vol. III. Insert mini magazine with *Illustrated Films Monthly*. (Source: Bill Douglas Centre. BDC item no.: BDCEXE27366).

Where the Tatler paper is more distinct, however, is in its narrativizing of *cinemagoing*, rather than screened stories. Like popular female novelists using cinema references as a way of speaking to the familiar experiences of their female readers, as I go on to explore, Lane's collection of fictions bases its storytelling on the premise that the cinema space can function for a plethora of uses and meanings.

Cinematic fictions

Cinema found its way into other cheap and accessible forms of women's fiction in Britain, particularly lowbrow novels. Free libraries, which had originated in the previous century, were increasingly accessible across the country, stocking this type of women's fiction for free usage, whilst subscription circulating libraries stocked many of the most popular novels in large volume at cheap subscription prices.

Alongside lending facilities, book selling companies like W.H. Smith's rose in the latter half of the nineteenth century and came to dominate the cheap book market by the turn-of-the-century, capitalizing on the compression of the three-volume novel into the cheap single volume 'yellow back' reprint by marketing inexpensive reading material to the increasingly mobile urban consumer. Railway travel in particular created a market for station stores selling fiction for short journeys and the daily commute.

Women novelists sold well within these sites, and attracted large female fan bases. As Drowne and Huber assess,

Popular literary tastes ran toward romance novels, historical fiction, westerns, crime stories, and other, more traditional literary genres. Authors who combined romance, history, and intrigue in their novels often attracted a large fan following that would last, in some cases, for decades (170).

Among the most popular and best-selling female fiction writers in 1910s and 1920s Britain were authors such as Ethel M. Dell, Marie Corelli, Anita Loos, E.M. Hull, Stella Benson, Rebecca West, Lady Rhondda, Elinor Glyn, May Sinclair, Agatha Christie, Dorothy L. Sayers and Margery Allingham. Cinema can be found in the works of these popular British female novelists across the teens and tens, particularly in the novels of Ethel M. Dell and Stella Benson. These authors employed filmic references to describe sensations and characters within their fictions.

In Dell's bestseller *The Way of an Eagle* (1912), a character is described as "having eyes that made you think of a cinematograph"¹. The character Chris' experience of nostalgia is vocalized through a cinematic image in *The Rocks of the Valpre* (1914): "The dead dreams of her childhood had flickered out like pictures

¹ Project Gutenberg. June 4, 2004 [Ebook #12516].

on a screen”². In *Tetherstones* (1923), another reference can be found to the moving image: “She threw him a fleeting smile . . . It faded almost instantly as a picture fades from a screen” (11). Stella Bensons’ use of cinema in character description reveals her own familiarity with its narrative conventions when she describes Richard in *Living Alone* (1919) as having “a heroic and almost cinematic gift for being on hand at the right moments”³.

Cinema is here mobilized as a way of remembering, describing, desiring and imagining. Such passages testify to the influence of silent cinema upon conceptions of vision and representation—particularly in the adoption of the screen as a metaphor for internal vision, stream of consciousness or memory. The use of cinema in this way suggests an assumption on the part of these popular female authors of the popular practices of their readership.

As Annette Kuhn has shown in her work upon cinemagoing and cultural memory, cinema experiences are often remembered in terms of spatial, social and cultural practices, rather than individual stars or films. Interviewing cinemagoers from the 1930s generation, Kuhn observes that:

. . . for the majority, going to the pictures is remembered as being less about films and stars than about daily and weekly routines, neighborhood comings and goings

² Project Gutenberg. September 27, 200 [Ebook #13547].

³ Project Gutenberg. February 4, 2005 [Ebook #14907].

and organizing spare time. Cinemagoing is remembered, that is, as part of the fabric of daily life (*Everyday Magic* 100).

As part of the everyday experience, cinema infiltrates ways of seeing, thinking and remembering. Its presence as a descriptive device and mobilization as a way of remembering and imagining speaks to a cultural familiarity with such infiltration, and cinema's place within the lives of the female readers of popular female fiction.⁴

Benson and Dell's references to the conventions of cinema narrative and character offer other points of identification for a broader popular female audience. The casual reference to the cinematic clichés of heroism—"an almost cinematic gift for being on hand at the right moments"—underscores the fact that, by the late teens, cinematic conventions were known culturally as familiar clichés. Inserting these kinds of references into fictions which were predominantly read by female audiences displays a strong understanding of women's participation within new popular commercial leisure practices.

⁴ References to other ways of conceptualizing of the cinema and cinematic 'effect' are evident in the Dell passages. The conceptualization of internal vision in Dell's reference to dreams and memories "like pictures on a screen", suggests the influence of psychoanalytic ideas and developments across culture in this period. Sigmund Freud's writings appeared in English translation from 1909; the London Society for Psycho-Analysis was founded in 1913. Sally Alexander assesses that, in the lead up to the first world war, "novelists, poets, and artists were the first to scatter references to psychoanalysis, or unconscious mental processes, through their work" (136). The influence of psychoanalytic ideas upon conceptions of cinematic spectatorship are strongly evidenced in the writing of the *Close Up* authors discussed in the previous chapter, who frequently brought their own experience of Freudian analysis and psychoanalytic theory to their interpretation of cinematic encounters and the techniques of experimental film (particularly H.D.).

A substantial market existed for these kinds of female-targeted, female-written romantic or sensational fiction which featured references to cinemagoing. As Karen Chow has argued, the production and selling of cheap women's fiction constituted "a woman-made market of desire" in which women were "active participants" (73). Lowbrow romantic and sensational fiction, exemplified by Dell's bestsellers and the writing of other hugely popular female writers such as E. M. Hull and Marie Corelli was written "mostly by women, for women" and was "cheap enough to be enjoyed by lower-middle-class and working-class women" (Chow 73).

This "woman-made market"⁵ created overlaps between female cinema culture and female literary culture, where such novelists referenced cinema conventions and cinemagoing, but also where their work was adapted to the screen in film productions which explicitly courted a female audience.

Ethel M. Dell (1881-1939) in particular was a major figure on the UK popular fiction market in the early twentieth century, and an author whose bestselling novels were adapted to cinema in the late teens and twenties. While her work was frequently derided critically, her popular audience was vast.

Writing in the late 1920s, Patrick Baybrooke remarks of Dell that she is a writer of "cheap melodrama" (52):

⁵ Chow's conception of woman-made markets is a concept I will be employing consistently through the thesis to describe the various intersection woman-made markets of female fiction and female cinema culture.

Miss Dell is the kind of novelist who can be read when the mind is too tired to undertake any intricate process of thinking . . . she is out with the whole strength of her being, to create something that is entertaining (52).

This brand of entertaining, escapist literature targeted the same lower-class female audience as the cinema. Baybrooke's depiction of the tired reader seeking entertainment and escapism echoes the figure of the "tired woman" as characteristic of cinema viewer patronizing the theatre as a place of rest and escapism.⁶

Baybrooke characterizes the average Dell reader as "the servant girl who sits in the dark kitchen and revels in the gamut of love that oozes out of Miss Dell's books" (53). The reader escapes the trials of daily working-class labour into the exoticism and romance of the Dell 'brand' of fiction, characterized by its colonial settings, high drama, excessively feminized heroines, and a sensational mix of violence and religious sentiment.

Dell's first novel *The Way of an Eagle*—which embodied all of these traits—was published in 1912, and became an instant hit, going through thirty printings by 1915. Her subsequent twenty-eight novels and short story collections

⁶ Iris Barry, as explored in the previous chapter, similarly located the general appeal of cinema in its ability to offer "tired . . . women a varied, easy and inexpensive relaxation of the mind and body" (17 Dec. 1925); Dorothy Richardson further described the "tired women, their faces sheened with toil" (*Close Up*, vol. 1, no.1 July 1927: 35) at weekday screenings in *Close Up*.

produced across the 1910s and 1920s sold in the tens and hundreds of thousands (Morris 24). Dell's list of published works shown in figure 4.3 demonstrates how remarkably prolific the author was across the silent era, producing roughly a novel per year. While Dell's relationship as an authorial persona with broader media forms was limited—she was a reclusive figure, frequently refusing press interviews⁷--her work rapidly crossed over into other entertainment spheres. Much of her early writing was published in magazines, and her brand of literature was used a source of parody for lowbrow reading tastes in the novels of George Orwell, Winifred Watson, P.G. Wodehouse and James Joyce.⁸

Cinematic adaptations of Dell's work were produced on both sides of the Atlantic, with the first British adaptation of *The Way of an Eagle* in 1918 (U.K., G.B. Samuelson, 1918), and an American version of *The Safety Curtain* in the same year (U.S., Sidney Franklin, 1918), produced by and starring Norma Talmadge. The latter told the melodramatic, romantic story of a musical hall dancer married to abusive husband, rescued from a fire on stage by an army officer, with whom she begins a new yet haunted life.

Figure 4.4 shows a promotional poster for the adaptation, with Dell's name featured prominently. The association of her authorial brand of feminine,

⁷ Very much the opposite of her contemporary Elinor Glyn.

⁸ In *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* (1936), Orwell's protagonist makes numerous comments about the quality and readership of Dell's fiction. In *Miss Pettigrew Lives for a Day* (1938), Winifred Watson's lead character draws upon Dell to encourage a young gentleman to "sock" it to a rival. In several Wodehouse stories, Dell is burlesqued as the character Rosie M. Banks, a writer of "the world's worst tripe". Joyce's use of free indirect monologuing with the Gerty MacDowell character in *Ulysses* (1922) is written in the style of a Dell novel.

Figure 4.3

Ethel M. Dell novels, 1912 - 1930

- *The Knave of Diamonds* (1912)
- *The Way of an Eagle* (1912)
- *The Rocks of Valpré* (1914)
- *The Keeper of the Door* (1915)
- *The Bars of Iron* (1916)
- *The Safety Curtain and Other Stories* (1917) – collection
- *The Rose of Dawn* (1917)
- *The Hundredth Chance* (1917) - also as *The Hundredth Chance*
- *Greatheart* (1918)
- *The Lamp in the Desert* (1919)
- *The Top of the World* (1920)
- *The Desire of His Life* (1920)
- *The Tidal Wave and Other Stories* (1920) - collection
- *Rosa Mundi and Other Stories* (1921) - collection
- *The Obstacle Race* (1921)
- *Charles Rex* (1922)
- *The Odds and Other Stories* (1922) - collection
- *The Knight Errant* (1922) - 1922 movie, novel's date uncertain
- *The Swindler and Other Stories* (1923) - collection
- *Verses* (1923)
- *Tetherstones* (1923)
- *The Unknown Quantity* (1924)
- *The Passer-By and Other Stories* (1925)
- *The Black Knight* (1926)
- *A Man Under Authority* (1926)
- *The House of Happiness and Other Stories* (1927) - collection
- *The Gate Marked Private* (1928)
- *By Request* (1928) - U.S. title *Peggy by Request*
- *The Altar of Honour* (1929)
- *Storm Drift* (1930)

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis/dissertation for copyright reasons

Figure 4.4 Promotional poster for the 1919 adaptation of Ethel M. Dell's *The Safety Curtain*, starring Norma Talmadge.

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis/dissertation for copyright reasons

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis/dissertation for copyright reasons

Figure 4.5 Ryerson Press 1925 edition of Dell's *Charles Rex*.

Figure 4.6 1921 G.P Putnam's Sons edition of Dell's *Rosa Mundi*.

sensational and romantic fiction here works in conjunction with the dramatic image of the couple embracing. Compare the image, for example, to some of the original 1920s artwork for her fictions in figure 4.5 and 4.6. The novels are heavily marked generically, both pictorially and in taglines punctuated by emotive terminology—“romance”, “love”, “pathos”, “passion”, “emotion” etc. The entangled couple featured in the 1925 *Charles Rex* cover echoes the embrace of the two film stars in the 1919 *Safety Curtain* poster.

Film companies targeted an existing woman-made market of literary consumers through such adaptations. As Nathalie Morris (2009) and Lawrence Napper (2008) have shown, there was “undoubtedly a large cross-over between the novel-reading and cinema-going populations before and during the interwar years” (Morris 23), with bestselling novels becoming an “increasingly important commodity for filmmakers” (Morris 23). The feminine fictions of female authors were considered a lucrative source for adaptation successes on the screen.

E. M. Hull’s *The Sheik* (published in 1919, adapted in 1921), Margaret Kennedy’s 1924 novel *The Constant Nymph* (published in 1924, adapted to the stage in 1926 and to the screen in 1928), and Anita Loos’ *Gentleman Prefer Blondes* (published in 1925 and first adapted for cinema 1928) were amongst some of the most successfully adapted popular fictions.

The British company Stoll produced the largest number of Ethel M. Dell adaptations in the silent era, securing the rights to many of her works and

producing adaptations of *The Rocks of Valpre* (U.K., Maurice Elvey, 1919), *The Swindler* (U.K., Maurice Elvey, 1919), *Greatheart* (U.K., George Ridwell, 1921) and a further fourteen titles between 1919 and 1922 as part of its programme for adapting the works of 'Eminent Authors'. Figure 4.7 Shows a Stoll advertisement for its adaptation of Dell's *The Tidal Wave* (U.K., Sinclair Hill, 1920). The design work capitalizes on the renown of the book, marking the adaptation strongly as a feminized romance, described as a "thrilling story . . . of romantic love". The author's name is featured repeatedly in each of the three illustrated panels. Dell's name functioned as a pre-constituted cultural signifier for this type of woman-made, female-targeted product that could be harnessed to sell the adaptation.

Nathalie Morris' research into women's cinema in silent era Britain has shown how film companies like Stoll had a very strong conception of the "Feminine Interest" (25) surrounding such popular female-written romantic literature. Stoll's publicist, Pearkes Withers, hailed the commercial benefits of producing adaptations of this kind of literature in its embodiment of "the sort of film story that appeals to women and girls by the thousand" (qtd. Morris 25).

Recognizing the economic significance of this audience body, the industry's perception of female audiences and woman-made markets took seriously the wants, desires, and established preferences of female spectators. As such, working relationships with female authors were sometimes constructed in order to privilege the creative input of these writers and their influence upon the

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis/dissertation for copyright reasons

Figure 4.7 Advertisement for the Stoll adaptation of Ethel M. Dell's *The Tidal Wave*. (Source: Natalie Morris ' [2010]).

production of adaptations of their works. This is particularly the case with Elinor Glyn, who, as I shall go discuss in the next chapter, aggressively pursued a creative influence over the adaptation process and marketing networks of her fictions. It was also true of writers like Dell. Although reclusive as a cultural ‘personality’, Dell had an active hand in the film adaptation of her works.

Dell was the Stoll Film Company’s “most regularly adapted author” (Morris 24), and, as Morris documents, the company’s writers and directors “were careful to discuss each of these [adaptations] with her and nothing was done without her agreement” (24). Scenarios were thus submitted to Dell for her approval. Director Maurice Elvey recalled that the author was “more concerned with holding some authority over the script . . . than with the money she was going to make out of it” (qtd. in Gifford 119). As a consistently bestselling writer, Dell’s interest in adaptation thus appeared to reside with the upkeep of her authorial brand.

Other writers such as popular sensational and romance author Marie Corelli⁹ forged similar relationships with film companies adapting their works. Several of Corelli’s works were adapted within her lifetime. Before her death in 1924, fourteen adaptations of her novels had been produced—including four of *Thelma* (1911; 1916; 1918; 1922) and four of *The Sorrows of Satan* (1917; 1921)—

⁹ Corelli published twenty-four bestselling novels between 1886 and 1923, along with four short story collections, two non-fiction tracts and fourteen individual short stories.

testifying to the persistent popularity of her brand of lowbrow female fiction. A full list of the silent era adaptations of her work is given in figure 4.9.

Corelli began to take a minor hand in the creative processes of these adaptations towards the end of her life in a similar fashion to Dell. The Drednought Film Company proposal for a film of *The Sorrows of Satan* in 1916, for example, was shown to Corelli for her approval, which she refused unless she was allowed to write an entirely new scenario (the project never took off). The major adaptations of her work came about immediately after her death, however, with D.W. Griffith directing a big-budget feature adaptation of *The Sorrows of Satan* in 1926, starring Carol Dempster and Adolphe Menjou (the poster for the production is show in figure 4.23).

Corelli's potential influence upon the adaptation of her works, had she lived longer into the 1920s when the international film industry continued to create successful productions of her fictions, may have been considerable. Her interest in these adaptations was clear. Not only did she demand to write the scenario for the Drednought production, but she also pre-arranged the production of a film based on her novel *Temporal Power* with the studio Marquis de Sierra, and corresponded with Globe to produce *The Treasure of Heaven* and with R.C. Pictures Corporation for a production of *Vendetta* in 1915.¹⁰

¹⁰ Salmonson, violetbooks.com (see works cited).

Figure 4.8 Adaptations of Corelli's works, 1915—1926

- *The Sorrows of Satan* (1926) U.S. Directed by D. W. Griffith. Famous Players-Lasky Corporation.
- *The Young Diana* (1922) U.S. Directed by Robert Vignola & Albert Capellani. Cosmopolitan Productions.
- *Thelma* (1922) U.S. Directed by Chester Bennett. Chester Bennett Productions.
- *Innocent* (1921) U.K. Directed by Maurice Elvey. Stoll Picture Productions.
- *Leaves from Satan's Book* (1919) Denmark. Original title *Blade af Satans Bog*. Directed by Carl Theodor Dreyer. Nordisk Film.
- *Il mistero di Osiris* (1919) Italy. Directed by Aldo Molinari. Vera Film.
- *God's Good Man* (1919) U.K. Directed by Maurice Elvey. Stoll Picture Productions.
- *Thelma* (1918) U.K. Directed by A. E. Coleby & Arthur Rooke. I.B. Davidson.
- *The Sorrows of Satan* (1917) U.K. Directed by Alexander Butler. G.B. Samuelson Productions.
- *Holy Orders* (1917) U.K. Directed by A. E. Coleby & Arthur Rooke. I.B. Davidson.
- *Il Potere Sovrano* (1916) Italy. Directed by Percy Nash & Baldassare Negroni. Tiber-Film.
- *A Modern Thelma* (1916) U.S. Directed by John G. Adolphi. Fox Film Corporation.
- *Wormwood* (1915) U.S. Directed by Marshal Farnum. Fox Film Corporation.
- *Thelma* (1911) U.S. Selig Polyscope Company.

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis/dissertation for copyright reasons

Figure 4.9 Promotional poster for the 1926 D.W. Griffith adaptation of Corelli's bestselling novel *The Sorrows of Satan*. The poster gives the author billing above the name of the principle stars.

Corelli, it seems, sensed the extension and bolstering of the popular power of her fictions in their adaptation to the screen. As the poster for Griffith's production affirms, her name as cultural brand within marketing materials carried sway after her death as a way of selling adaptations of her works to her existing audience base.

Allowing Dell and Corelli creative input was clearly an economically motivated move on behalf of film companies, recognizing the cultural influence of female authors and their ability to draw a coveted mass female audience. Since Dell and Corelli's novels were proven financial successes, it made economic sense for the adaptors of these texts to remain as true to the Dell/Corelli 'formula' as possible, and to draw upon the Dell/Corelli brands by incorporating the authors' names in marketing materials.

Novelizations and re-issues

In an effort to court a shared female readership and cinema audience as pervasively as possible, both the publishing and film industry thus drew upon the success of each other's woman-made productions in the creation of a profitable synergy between film and literary culture. The adaptation of such woman-centered novels was therefore often cyclical. Re-issues of adapted works with new covers featuring images and illustrations of film performers were often released as part of the general publicity push of a film adaptation.

Figures 4.8 to 4.11 show the original novel covers and re-issued, post-production adaptation covers of two of the bestselling female sex novels of the 1920s—E.M. Hull’s *The Sheik* (1921) and Anita Loos’ *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (1925). The reprint covers both show a distinctly stronger focus upon the female heroines of these stories, particularly in the case of the *Sheik*. The original cover features the hero alone in an image of action, exoticism and adventure; the reprint inserts the figure of the heroine in the foreground, reframing the book more directly as a romance novel by its central pairing of the romantic couple, hinting towards its sexual content by depicting the heroine strewn across an exotically decorated bed.

Such marketing strategies targeted the female spectator as the consumer of a range of woman-made forms of commercial leisure, capitalizing upon and reinforcing points of overlap between literary culture and film culture. Figure 4.12, for example, shows an advertisement for the novelization of the romantic drama film *The Virgin of Stamoul* (U.S., Tod Browning, 1920) in *Picturegoer*. The fan magazine was an ideal place to market such novelizations at the intersection of female reading and female viewing. The advertisement plays into the fan magazine’s ability to promise greater intimacy and ‘insider’ knowledge with and about female film stars and film culture by promising that the book “tells fully” (10 Jan. 1920: 38) the film story, marketing the novel as an essential purchase for any fan.

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis/dissertation for copyright reasons

Figure 4.10 First edition cover for Anita Loos' bestselling novel *Gentlemen Prefer Blonde.s*

Figure 4.11 Photoplay of the 1928 adaptation *Gentleman Prefer Blondes*, illustrated with (1925) scenes from the Paramount film.

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis/dissertation for copyright reasons

Figure 4.12 Early cover of E. M. Hull romance novel *The Sheik* (this edition—1921, published by Maynard and Company).

Figure 4.13 Reprint of *The Sheik*, issued in conjunction with the release of the 1921 Paramount adaptation of the film. George Newnes Limited Publisher.

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis/dissertation for copyright reasons

Figure 4.14 Advertisement for the novelization of *The Virgin of Stamoul* in *Picturegoer*, 10 Jan. 1920: 38.

The exploitation of such points of overlap between female writing, reading and spectating were further reinforced by the marketing of individual female writers as authorial personas akin to cinematic stars. Marketing techniques frequently mirrored one another across cinematic and literary culture in the promotion of female authors, female stars, and conceptualizations of 'women's cinema' and 'women's fiction'.

Women novelists as public figures

These points of overlap speak to the development of popular culture as an industry in early twentieth century Britain. Drawing upon Marxist and Hegelian theory of dialectical materialism and historical materialism, Theodor Adorno and Max Horkeimer's work in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1947) characterised twentieth century popular culture as akin to a factory in the production of standardised goods. Central to their theory is the conception that all the many forms of popular culture—film, literature, magazines, radio etc—operate as a single culture industry, in which “each branch of culture is unanimous within itself and all are unanimous together” (Adorno and Horkeimer 94).

By standardising consumer wants and needs, the industry creates consumer desire for the products it produces, minimising the individuality of consumers. The “culture industry”, as Adorno and Horkeimer coined it, thus produces works of art whose every detail is tailored to the needs of mass consumption, devaluing the experience of art and dulling the critical faculties of the consumer.

While Adorno and Horkeimer's theory is not without problems,¹¹ it offers valuable observation nonetheless upon the effects of industry attempts to standardize consumer desires in a conceptualization of a particular type of mass audience.

Elements of standardization in female consumer culture during the 1910s and 1920s surface in the intertextual marketing strategies of popular women's

¹¹ Namely, the popularity of mass products relating to the actual enjoyment of individuals, and the critics' apparent lack of faith in any radical potential from the working class masses.

cinema and popular women's literature. This is evident particularly in the adoption of similar models of marketing strategy for the promotion of literary and cinematic 'stars'. As Rita Felski assesses, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century "popular literary success was becoming increasingly linked to skilful marketing strategies and the manufacture of a glamorous and visible public personality" (116).

Female novelists were now the 'headliners' of literary advertisements, whose bold lettering and occasional pictorial decoration shared common ground with cinema advertisements in the printed press. A thumbnail sketch of author Rebecca West, for example, along with the writers Lady Rhondda and Rosita Forbes, appears in several full page adverts for subscriptions to *The Times* in the mid 1920s (figure 4.15), amidst a collection of authors, male and female, "Who Have Helped to Make *The Sunday Times* Supreme" (*The Times*. 20 Nov. 1924: 19). The inclusion of these likenesses points towards the increasing interest in the private lives and physical presence of female writers, and their influence across a network of interlinked literary and media spheres.¹² The pervasiveness of their cultural presence is affirmed by their promotion as 'stars' of *The Times*.

Such images of women writers were beginning to be widely circulated in newspaper advertising into the 1920s, therefore, just as star images were free-floating across varied literary and ephemeral sites in journalism, magazines, and

¹² All of these writers wrote in numerous forms—as journalists and novelists, some as travel writers (Forbes), some as political writers (Asquith) and some as film writers (Forbes).

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis/dissertation for copyright reasons

Figure 4.15 Full page advertisement from *The Times* (20 Nov. 1924: 19) depicting a number of female authors amidst a collection of *Times* contributors, including explorer, writer and filmmaker Rosita Forbes; autobiographer and novelist Mrs Asquith (Dame Margot Asquith of Oxford); Welsh suffragette, feminist, philanthropist and writer Viscountess Sybil Margaret Thomas Rhondda; and English author, journalists, literary critic and travel writer Rebecca West.

novelizations. Female literary stars could be used to sell other forms of print materials targeting female readers, such as women's magazines. Figure 4.15 shows an advertisement for the first edition of the women's magazine *Good Housekeeping*, featuring as its centrepiece a short list of women writers, including Marie Corelli, Clemence Dane (aka Winifred Ashton) and Kathleen Norris, bringing together pictorial and written discourses in the promotion of popular women's fiction and magazine consumption.

In some instances, major female literary figures and female cinema stars were featured together in marketing materials. This frequently happened in magazine writing and promotion, for both women's magazines and film magazines. Figure 4.16, for example, another advertisement from *The Times* in 1925, depicts a mixture of female film stars and authorial personas in the promotion of the magazine *Women's Pictorial*. The tagline boasts "Brilliant Contributions by the foremost Women Writers of the Day", but extends the definition of "writer" to female media personality in general by the inclusion of English film and stage actress Fay Compton alongside novelists Sheila Kaye-Smith, Edith Wharton and Rebecca West, politician and diarist Lady Helen Violet Bonham Carter, and short story writer Lady Cynthia Asquith.

This broadening of the definition of literary/media personality embraced the same marketing strategies used to promote female stars, where film performances were only one aspect of marketable material. The media persona

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis/dissertation for copyright reasons

Figure 4.16 Newspaper advertisement for the first edition of the women's magazine *Good Housekeeping*, promoting Marie Corelli as a featured writer. (*The Times* 23 Feb. 1922: 6)

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis/dissertation for copyright reasons

Figure 4.17 *The Times*. 4 Feb. 1925: 11.

of female stars and the presence of their voice, writing, image and opinion in extra textual materials like the fan magazine and the woman's magazine worked to keep the star image in circulation across media sites.

Such marketing generated interest about the star as a particular personality which engaged a range of elements of contemporary culture (fashion, domesticity, economy, labour, literature etc.). Advertising techniques linked popular female authors semantically and aesthetically to the female film star by focusing upon pictorial representations and creating the sense of an authorial brand akin to female 'types' on screen (e.g. Mary Pickford's identity as a performer of child roles, or Colleen Moore's flapper persona). Female literary marketing overlapped, worked in conjunction with, and profited from strategies of film and film star marketing in this way. Such strategies suggest a unified endorsement of female film and literary culture as economically powerful, centralising women as creators and performers.

I move now to discuss the British author, Elinor Glyn, as a figure who capitalised explicitly upon this overlap between discourses of authorial and filmic stardom throughout the silent era.

Chapter 5 Elinor Glyn and Authorial Stardom

Perhaps the most enduring example of a female novelist as a hybrid literary and filmic media personality resides with Elinor Glyn (1864-1943). Through the sustained manipulation of various intersecting media discourses, Glyn created for herself a powerful and pervasive international persona during the silent era, which crossed from literary into film culture.

This chapter aims to illuminate Glyn's influence upon Hollywood and British film culture. Exploring Glyn's transition from successful author to film industry 'insider', the chapter asks in what way Glyn's vantage point was distinct from that of the average cinemagoing female fan or female film critic. Glyn came to constitute a creator of film culture in her production, writing and directing in the 1920s and early 1930s. Further, Glyn assigned herself the role of the 'creator' of two major female stars in helping propel the careers of Gloria Swanson and Aileen Pringle. Whilst dealing with the same subject matter as both fans and critics, therefore, Glyn offers different reflections upon issues of female stardom in women's cinema in the silent era, cultivating a distinct voice of authority and mediation between filmmakers and film consumers.

The chapter firstly traces Glyn's career as a novelist between 1900 and 1920, balancing biographical information drawn from Glyn's archive, her autobiographical writings and existing critical work on the author with evidence

of media coverage surrounding Glyn on both sides of the Atlantic. These sources illuminate Glyn's cultivation of an omnipresent media persona as an author and cultural commentator that facilitated her later transition from film maker to British film industry consultant.

Secondly, the chapter re-examines some of the significant feminist critical work done on Glyn's Hollywood career by bringing original material from Glyn's personal papers to bare upon her own conceptualisation of her role as a Hollywood author and as a star-maker, tied to her particular view of an Anglo-American hybrid as an ideal of female stardom.

In the last section, the chapter moves to examine the final and least discussed stage of Glyn's film career, exploring her return to Britain and adoption of the role of film industry consultant. Utilizing previously unexplored material from the author's personal archive, the chapter balances a reading of Glyn's personal and business correspondence against the industrial context of the British industry at the turn of the decade. The analysis poses questions vital to archival feminist methodology in the reading and weighting of specific archival sources—such as the unpublished letter and publicity planning documents—vital to understanding Glyn's conceptualisation of her own role as a Hollywood 'star', star-maker, and film consultant.

Glyn as author, 1900—1920

Glyn began her career as a fiction writer with the contribution of articles to *Scottish Life* magazine in 1898, later publishing a series of letters documenting her Edwardian weekend visits to upper-class house-holds as her first novel *The Visits of Elizabeth* (1900). Glyn's work was characterised by its extravagant and ornate prose, lavish settings, aristocratic characters, risqué depictions of female sensuality and sexually dominant female characters. Appendix A offers a chronology of Glyn's life and career up to the end of the silent era.

Building upon the sales of *Visits*, the publication of *Three Weeks* in 1907 marked the first major financial and popular success of Glyn's career, and established Glyn's presence within the national consciousness. The novel built upon the confessional tone of *Visits* to tell the story of a young Englishman's affair with an exotic woman, known only as 'The Lady'.

At this point her career, Glyn's agent persuaded the publisher Jonathan Cape¹ to bring out a cheap edition of her books at a shilling each. Entering the cheap book market populated by the works of E.M. Hull and Ethel M. Dell, the shilling publications brought Glyn's literature to the same mass female audiences who later consumed her fictions on screen in the numerous adaptations of her novels during the 1920s and early 1930s.

British and American newspapers and magazines' interaction with Glyn and her fictions in this period reveal the author to be an astute judge of the

¹ Who published other prominent popular female authors in this period such as May Sinclair.

cultural currency of the female sex novel writer. A strong example of Glyn's conceptualization of the generation of an audience for her fiction can be found in an article for *Grand Magazine* in 1920. Here Glyn comments upon the power of gossip and word-of-mouth in the interpretation of her novels:

The general reading of 'Three Weeks' has been like this:

A, says to B, 'Have you read Elinor Glyn's new book? It is very warm.'

B, replies, 'No! Is it? I must get it at once then—how disgraceful!'

B, having begun it influenced by his friend's remarks, and thus with the idea to search for improprieties, skips every page except those containing the actual descriptions of the joys of love. His senses are thrilled, and he says it must be a thoroughly bad work! . . . And upon this class of reasoning I have often been condemned as an immoral writer (Mar. 1920, Vol XXXVII, No. 11: 3).

Glyn was acutely aware in moving into the shilling-fiction market that the rapid growth of such unofficial reading communities could be fuelled by gossip and the exchange of fleeting—yet often fanatically embraced—cultural fads, images and ideas. Such discourses constituted a powerful exploitative tool for generating hype and interest in the purchase, borrowing and circulation of Glyn's brand of fiction. What Glyn describes in this passage is a variation on the formation of a fan community around her writing.

Viewing fandom as a “social process though which individual interpretations are shaped and reinforced through ongoing discussion with other readers” (45), Henry Jenkins has argued that fan communities constitute a collection of individual acts of reception which do not exist in isolation, but which are “shaped through input from other fans and motivated, at least partially, by a desire for further interaction with a larger social and cultural community” (76). Spurred by fan discussion, unofficial channels of information and knowledge exchange (word of mouth, gossip) assist in the building of fan communities. The “condemnation” Glyn speaks of functions in this way as a vital source of the generation of fan interest in her works.

The marketing techniques Glyn approved for her fiction fed upon these discourses, evidenced in the colourful, titular cover artwork commissioned for her novels, shown in figures 5.1 – 5.4. The artwork signals the genre and gender address of the novels, similar in style to those of Ethel M. Dell shown in the previous chapter. Each of the titles shown here depicts a romantic couple, relying upon the overall impression that her fictions were, as she says, “warm”, and “thrilled the senses” of the reader.

The promise of something hidden, private and titillating—as she describes, the avid reader “skips every page except those containing the actual descriptions of the joys of love”—acts as a lure for the reader. This structure of the promise of hidden or exclusive information was a key feature of the marketing techniques

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis/dissertation for copyright reasons

Figure 5.1 *Six Days*. J.B. Lippincott Co. (1923)
First Edition.

Figure 5.2 *Philosophy of Love*. Auburn, New
York: Authors' Press (1923)

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis/dissertation for copyright reasons

Figure 5.3 *Love's Blindness*. New York: Cacauly
Co. (1926) First edition.

Figure 5.4 *On Love*. Readers Library, 1928.

of silent era film fandom. As Marsha Orgeron has shown, film fan magazines transformed the life stories of female stars into market commodities, whereby a “tacit and reciprocal encouragement of publicity . . . institutionalised” (76) curiosity in relation to cinema. This meant that, as Robert Sklar explains, “movie players could speak to the public about their divorces and love affairs with at least some of the frankness they used among themselves” (81). This “legitimization of gossip” (Orgeron 76) was a process that Glyn harnessed, recognising its influence in the popular reception and marketing of her fiction.

Glyn further recognised the powerful position that her strong sales afforded her as a sought-after literary personality frequently interviewed by British and international media. Glyn appeared frequently in the British Press from the publication of *Three Weeks*. She was a regular feature in popular journals such as *P.I.P* and advertisements for her novels appeared in major newspapers.

Glyn built upon this public media persona through her promotional tours. The most highly publicised of these was a visit to America to promote the release of *Three Weeks* in 1907. Glyn gave a plethora of interviews about her experiences of American culture for the American and English press during her visit to the U.S., cultivating a strong sense of the importance of her opinion and expertise as cultural commentator.

The New York Times offered substantial print space for the author’s articles and commentary on subject such as “What Authors are Doing” (5 Oct. 1907);

“Mrs. Glyn Praises American Men” (5 Oct. 1907); “Her American Critics” (6 Oct. 1907); “How New York Appears to Elinor Glyn” (13 Oct. 1907—see fig. 5.11); “Critics Idiots—Mrs. Glyn” (17 Nov. 1907); “Mrs. Glyn Serves an Ultimatum” (15 Dec. 1907) and “Mrs. Glyn on her Own Book” (18 Dec. 1907). A fairly combative relationship with her critics is matched by her enthusiasm for America in these articles, which she describes as a “great Nation” (13 Oct. 1907). Her interest in pleasing the public, if not the literary establishment, was something upon which she readily capitalised as she toured America, creating her own unique form of gendered and distinctly nationalised commentary as a British media personality.

Key to this persona was the negotiation of Glyn’s English origins with modern American norms surrounding women’s contemporary gender identity. Glyn retained many of the trappings of a traditional conception of aristocratic British femininity.

As a mature woman whose lavish tastes were dictated by a distinctly older, Edwardian sensibility, Glyn presented a “vivid exception to the general rule” (Harwick 234) of youthful beauty in female celebrity culture at this time. A key strategy for asserting this distinct identity upon her visit to America was the adoption of the prefix ‘Madame’. Glyn was aware of the cultural currency of aristocratic titles across the Atlantic; unable to officially call herself ‘Lady’ Glyn, Elinor adopted ‘Madame Glyn’ as a suitably aristocratic sounding moniker.

Maintaining this persona afforded Glyn a degree of cultural authority regarding notions of female taste and decorum. She constructed a unique balance of Anglo-American feminised sensibilities, flattering the modernity of the female experience in America while retaining a sense of English manners.

In terms of domestic British audiences, Madame Glyn was able to achieve a negotiation likely to have resonated with female cinemagoers in their encounters with American films. The dominance of American film stars on British screens, discussed in greater detail in the latter half of the thesis, presented modern incarnations of American femininity seemingly out of step with a more conservative domestic culture. Glyn's blend of traditional English ideals with a whole-hearted embrace of American modernity, and her constant commentary for both the American and British press about the precise nature of the British woman's encounter with all things new, presented an exciting yet familiar voice with international popular culture.

Glyn goes to Hollywood

Film adaptation of Glyn's works began in 1914, seven years after the publication of her first major bestseller. By 1920, Glyn was in Hollywood taking an active hand in the production of her works (a full list of adaptation of Glyn's works during the silent era is shown in figure 5.5; a chronology of the films in which Glyn took an active hand is shown in 5.6).

Figure 5.5 Adaptation of Glyn's works, 1914—1930

- *Three Weeks*
Dir. Perry N. Verkoff. Perf. Madlaine Traverse, George C. Pearce, John Webb Dillon and Joseph C. Fay. U.S.: Reliable Feature Film Co., 1914.
- *One Day*
Dir. Hal Clarendon. Perf. Jeanne Iver, Victor Sutherland, Bradley Barker, and Robert Broderick. U.S.: B. S. Moss Motion Picture Corporation, 1916.
- *Három hét*
Dir. Márton Garas. Perf. Jenő Balassa, Sári Fedák, Dezső Kertész and Adolf Sieder. Hungary: Hungária Filmgyár, 1917.
- *Érdekházasság*
Dir. Antal Forgács. Perf. Jenő Törzs, Sándor Szőke, Gustáv Vándory and Tiber Lubinszky. Hungary: Glória Filmvállalat, 1918.
- *The Man and the Moment*
Dir. Arrigo Bocchi. Perf. Manora Thew, Hayford Hobbs, Charles Vane and Maud Cressall. U.K.: Windsor, 1918.
- *The Reason Why*
Dir. Robert G. Vignola. Perf. Clara Kimball Young, Milton Sills, Florence Billings and Frank Losee. U.S.: Clara Kimball Young Film Corporation, 1918.
- *The Career of Katherine Bush*
Dir. Roy William Neill. Perf. Catherine Calvert, John Goldsworthy, Crauford Kent and Mathilde Brundage. U.S.: Famous Players-Lasky Corporation, 1919.
- *The Great Moment*
Dir. Sam Wood. Perf. Gloria Swanson, Alec B. Francis, Milton Sills, and Frank Butler. U.S.: Famous Players-Lasky Corporation, 1921.
- *Beyond the Rocks*
Dir. Sam Wood. Perf. Gloria Swanson, Rudolph Valentino, Edythe Chapman and Alec B. Francis. U.S.: Famous Players-Lasky Corporation, 1922.
- *Six Days*
Dir. Charles Brabin. Perf. Corinne Griffith, Frank Mayo, Myrtle Stedman and Claude King. U.S.: Goldwyn Pictures Corporation, 1923.
- *Three Weeks* aka *The Romance of a Queen*
Dir. Alan Crosland. Perf. Aileen Pringle, Conrad Nagel, John St. Polis and H. Reeves-Smith. U.S.: Goldwyn Pictures Corporation, 1923.
- *His Hour*
Dir. King Vidor. Perf. Aileen Pringle, John Gilbert, Emily Fitzroy and Lawrence Grant. U.S.: Louis B. Mayer Productions, 1924.

- *Man and Maid*
Dir. Victor Schertzinger. Perf. Lew Cody, Harriet Hammond, Rénee Adorée and Paulette Duval. U.S.: Metro-Goldwyn Pictures Corporation,1925.
- *Soul Mates*
Dir. Josph Conway. Perf. Aileen Pringle, Edmund Lowe, Phillips Smalley and Tony D'Algy. U.S.: Metro-Goldwyn-Maryer (MGM),1925.
- *It*
Dir. Clarence G. Badger. Perf. Clara Bow, Antonio Moreno, William Austin and Priscilla Bonner. U.S.: Famous Players-Lasky Corporation, 1926.
- *Love's Blindness*
Dir. John Francis Dillon. Perf. Pauline Starke, Antonio Moreno, Lilyan Tashman and Sam De Grasse. U.S.: Metro-Goldwyn-Maryer (MGM),1926.
- *Mad Hour*
Dir. Joseph C. Boyle. Perf. Sally O'Neil, Alice White, Donald Reed and Larry Kent. U.S.: First National Pictures,1928.
- *Red Hair*
Dir. Clarence G. Badger. Perf. Clara Bow, Lane Chandler, William Austin and Jacqueline Gadsden. U.S.: Paramount Famous Lasky Corporation,1928.
- *Knowing Men*
Dir. Elinor Glyn. Perf. Carl Brisson, Elissa Landi, Helen Haye and C.M. Hallard. Elinor Glyn Productions Ltd., 1930.
- *The Price of Things*
Dir. Elinor Glyn. Perf. Elissa Landli, Stewart Rome, Walter Tennyson and Alfred Tennyson. U.K.: Elinor Glyn Productions Ltd., 1930.

Figure 5.6 Glyn filmography 1916 – 1930, where the author was credited in capacities other than source novel

- *One Day* (1916)
Glyn's role: scenario
- *The Great Moment* (1921)
Glyn's role: screenwriter
- *The Affairs of Anatol* aka *A Prodigal Knight* (1921)
Glyn's role: actress
- *The World's A Stage* (1922)
Glyn's role: story
- *Three Weeks* aka *The Romance of a Queen* (1923)
Glyn's role: screenplay
- *How to Educate a Wife* (1922)
Glyn's role: story
- *The Only Thing* (1925)
Glyn's role: screenwriter / producer / supervisor / manager
- *Man and Maid* (1925)
Glyn's role: continuity / producer / screenwriter / supervisor / manager
- *Studio Tour* (1925)
Glyn's role: herself
- *Love's Blindness* (1926)
Glyn's role: screenwriter
- *Screen Snapshots* (1926)
Glyn's role: herself
- *Ritzy* (1927)
Glyn's role: story
- *Three Weekends* (1928)
Glyn's role: story
- *Show People* (1928)
Glyn's role: herself
- *What Is 'It'* (1929)
Glyn's role: herself
- *Knowing Men* (1930)
Glyn's role: producer / director / screenplay
- *The Price of Things* (1920)
Glyn's role: producer / director
- *Such Men are Dangerous* (1930)
Glyn's role: story

Glyn was initially drawn to Hollywood as part of Famous Players-Lasky's Eminent Author's Programme.² The programme was constructed to attract prominent contemporary authors to screenplay writing in an effort to improve the quality of scripts. Its overarching goal, however, was to increase the marketability of productions by branding them with authors' names, drawing upon preexisting brand identity in the established sales and audience-base of prominent British writers such as Glyn, W. Somerset Maugham, Gilbert Parker, and Arnold Bennett. As Vincent Barnett has shown, the commercial potential of adapting novels such from prominent contemporary authors "was accepted by movie producers even in the early studio era, with the marketing advantage of pre-sold materials being obvious" ("The Novelist' 3).³

Barnett sets the context for Glyn's entry into the American studio system in this period:

Although competition among the Los Angeles studios increased in the 1920s as they expanded their operations both extensively and intensively, it was generally a successful period for many of them . . . A reasonably smooth increase in profits for both MGM and Paramount was experienced between 1920 and 1930 . . . Industry-wide investment reached over \$110 million in the second half of the 1920s . . . It

² Lasky was the studio which produced the major adaptation of E.M. Hull's *The Sheik* in 1921, clearly recognizing the financial possibilities of adapting popular women's fiction.

³ In the early twenties other studios swiftly followed Lasky's lead, setting up author programmes of their own, such as Goldwyn's Eminent Authors Pictures company, established in 1921.

was this rising trend that enabled the significant growth seen in production and also in the employment of personnel (such as salaried writing staff) in the film industry across the 1920s . . . In tandem with this growth, the average cost of production of a feature film made in Hollywood had increased from \$20,000 in 1914 to £60,000 in 1920 . . . This particular factor in the movie-making equation would turn out to be a significant element in the financial success (or otherwise) of some of Glyn's film adaptations ('The Novelist' 15-19).

Lasky, and MGM, who Glyn moved to work with when her initial contract ended, were both formed to produce these kinds of prestige films, and thus had the finances to invest in the acquisition of Glyn's skills and the lavish adaptation of her works. Lasky was the first company "devoted to releasing a series of high-quality multiple-reel feature films" (Quinn 99) in the U.S. MGM in particular "had a strategy of aiming at the 'high end' of the American movie market, as it was constituted in the mid-1920s, by making a high proportion of first-class big-budget productions" (Barnett 'The Novelist' 20).

Working with these two studios, Glyn's aristocratic English identity could be lucratively combined with her popularist sex novel fiction in the production of romantic adventure films with high production values and big name stars. The posters featured in images 5.7 to 5.9 show some of the most commercially successful of these adaptations. All three featured major 1920s stars (Clara Bow,

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis/dissertation for copyright reasons

Figure 5.7 Film poster for the Famous Players-Lasky adaptation of Glyn's story 'It' (Clarence G. Badger, U.S., 1927), starring Clara Bow and Antonio Moreno.

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis/dissertation for copyright reasons

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis/dissertation for copyright reasons

Figure 5.8 Poster for the Goldwyn Pictures adaptation of *Three Weeks* (Alan Crosland, U.S., 1924), starring Aileen Pringle and Conrad Nagel.

Figure 5.9 Poster for the Paramount adaptation of *Red Hair* (Clarence G. Badger, U.S., 1928), starring Clara Bow and Lane Chandler.

Aileen Pringle and Antonio Moreno); all three were produced by prestige studios on large budgets⁴ and overseen by reputable directors⁵.

The posters show the substantial space given to Glyn's name in the marketing of these productions. The value of securing this Glyn brand was reflected in the high royalties Glyn was contracted to receive from the adaptations of these works.⁶ On all these posters, Glyn's name appears before any of the stars, represented in a cursive font to give the impression of a handwritten addition as if the author has signed her name across the material. This allusion to writing reinforces the status of Glyn as an authorial 'star', encouraging the spectator to equate these productions with the popular prestige of her novels.

Glyn's brand of authorial stardom drew upon pre-existing star systems in British and international entertainment forms. Theatrical star systems in Britain, France and America had strong traditions from the nineteenth century and an abundance of popular performers (MacNab 7). As shown in the previous chapter, media attention surrounding popular authors was increasing from the turn-of-the-century. Bestseller lists combined with the public profile of female

⁴ *Three Weeks*, for example, was produced by MGM on a budget of \$314,728.05 (Barnett 'The Novelist' 286).

⁵ Clarence G. Badger directed *It* and *Red Hair*; *Three Weeks* was directed by Alan Crosland, who went on to direct *The Jazz Singer* (U.S. 1927).

⁶ For *Three Weeks* Glyn received royalties of \$65,130.09 from MGM, roughly 20 per cent of the films budget and representing 40% of the film's net profit (Barnett 'The Novelist' 286).

authorial personas to create literary star systems that offered parallels to theatrical discourses surrounding high profile performers.

The rise of stardom within cinema culture was not an immediate development with the birth of the medium, however. Richard de Cordova pinpoints 1909 as the year in which the 'picture personality' began to emerge in cinema culture—some thirteen years after the first public film screening in 1896.

Despite domestic difficulties in creating and successfully promoting original screen star personalities⁷, the international star, and the American star in particular, circulated heavily within British film culture and fan discourses from around 1911 onwards with the founding of the first film fan magazines. When she entered the film industry in the 1920s, Glyn was already entangled within British discourses of stardom from both the literary sphere and the theatre, propelled as an authorial star by Duckworth's publicizing of the release of her novels in major newspapers and entering the realm of theatrical stardom in her controversial appearance in the role of The Lady in the stage adaptation of *Three Weeks* in 1908.

Glyn the authorial star was thus of clear value to the film industry as a high profile author of financially successful and widely popular contemporary

⁷ This issue is explored in greater detail in Chapter 8.

fictions, despite her total lack of experience in films.⁸ Privileging the marketability of the author over her practical experience, Lasky publicized the acquisition of Glyn with a press announcement on the 29th October 1920. *The New York Times* reported that “Elinor Glyn was now on her way to Hollywood, Cal., to complete a scenario which she is writing for Paramount” (31 Oct. 1920).

Glyn’s move into films was heavily documented in the press on both sides of the Atlantic, guaranteeing awareness in both domestic and foreign audiences of her attempt at crafting a transition from sensationalist literary persona to filmic personality. A *Times* article from August of 1921, a year after her official move to Hollywood, reports on the success of her filmic transition:

Miss Elinor Glyn, who came to the United States to fulfill a contract to write film plays, has decided to remain at Los Angeles, directing her own company. She will not only write her own scenarios, but also supervise all other details of the productions. She expects to make four films a year. The first will be entitled *Six Weeks* (23 Aug. 1921: 6).

The details of the report were never a reality—in 1921 Glyn was still contracted to Lasky, having produced one original screenplay with *The Great Moment* and as

⁸ Glyn recalled in her 1936 autobiography that, upon being commissioned by Lasky to write an original screenplay, she was “entirely ignorant concerning motion pictures, and had only seen one or two war films” (292).

yet not involved in any other element of production. Nevertheless, the article demonstrates both the power of film industry marketing in generating hype and interest around the film exploits of the author, and the cultural currency of Glyn's name as a news-worthy subject in the daily tabloid press at this time.

The transition from author to successful Hollywood writer was not an easy one to make, however, according to other female novelists of the era. Popular 1920s author Joan Sutherland complained in a 1928 issue of *Picturegoer*, for example, that it was "the hardest thing in the world to sell books to film producers, and novels once so posted or delivered vanish into the blue" (Dec. 1928). Another female novelist who attempted to write in Hollywood at this time was British gothic romance author Marjorie Bowen. She describes her attempts to write for the screen as "almost tragic" (*Picturegoer* Dec. 1928), finding the adoption of a new style of writing in screenplay production unsuited to her dramatic craft as a novelist.

As Anne Morey has explored in detail, Glyn's ability to make a seemingly rare commercial success of her move to Hollywood was based not on her actual writing, but on her promotion as a film personality. Largely sidestepping the difficulties of learning a new writing craft in the creation of original or adapted screenplays in her early Hollywood career, many of Glyn's works were adapted by other writers, such as Monte Katterjohn, Ouida Bergere, Jack Cunningham, Carey Wilson and Tom Geraghty. As Morey affirms:

This reliance upon outsiders suggests that Glyn's most important contributions remained at the level of story conception rather than execution; what was marketable was the phenomenon of 'the Elinor Glyn story' rather than what might be termed the 'Elinor Glyn touch' within a story. Glyn was ultimately more successful as a branded article that she was as a screenwriter ('Hollywood Labourer' 110).

Glyn's recognition of how to use the star power of her name and brand stood her apart from other less successful authors who made the Hollywood transition, and chimes with the comments of female novelists of the era who saw the writing of the novelist as distinct and unsuited to the style of the screenwriter.⁹

Seemingly affirming these views, many of the successful female script writers whose names and reputations were prominent in the late teens and twenties were writers who worked solely for the screen, with no background in novel writing. *Picturegoer* lists a "vast army of feminine writers whose names appear upon the screen today" (Nov. 2—9, 1919: 449) in 1918, name-checking the likes of Anita Loos (fig. 5.18), Margaret Turnbull, Edith Kennedy, Ella Stuart

⁹ Margaret Kennedy, author of the immensely popular novel in the 1920s *The Constant Nymph* (which was adapted to cinema in 1928 by the British company Gainsborough without her direct involvement) argued that "established authors" were "not the most promising writers of film stories", since: "the screen writer must be a good story-teller, but he need have no command of language at all, and since an author's whole business is to acquire such command he is wasting his especial talent if he writes for the screen" (*Picturegoer* Dec. 1928). Marjorie Bowen shared this opinion in asserting that "many novels and plays are not at all suited for filming" (*Picturegoer* Dec. 1928).

Carson, Frances Marion (fig. 5.19)¹⁰; screenwriter and actress Jeanie Macpherson (fig. 5.20) and screenwriter and Broadway playwright Marion Fairfax. These women were all successful screen writers whose careers began in film or theatre.¹¹

Glyn's place within this body of female writers was therefore distinct insofar as she was neither strictly a scriptwriter, nor consistently a scenario writer. Yet her experience was familiar in finding her initial scripts rejected and her work heavily altered. As Richard Fine has explored, it was common practice in the 1920s for Hollywood to lure novelists to film "by offers of large amounts of money and the promise of challenging assignments; once in the studios they were set to work on mundane, hackneyed scripts" (3). Instead of "receiving prestige because they were writers, they found themselves *denied* prestige, because of their profession" (Fine 128).

Accordingly, as Morey observes, Glyn was:

. . . ultimately more successful as a branded article than she was as a screenwriter, a fact that she acknowledged (however reluctantly) through the use of the tag line associated with a number of her productions, which were described as 'made under the personal supervision' rather than 'by Elinor Glyn' (111).

¹⁰ Marion was reportedly the best-paid writer, male or female, in Hollywood in the twenties *Variety* reported in 1926 that she was to be given a colossal \$100,00 to write exclusively for Sam Goldwyn.

¹¹ With the exception of Frances Marion and Anita Loos, who became novelists in addition to being screenwriters after establishing themselves successfully within the film industry.

The disparity between novel and screenplay writing encouraged Glyn to cultivate the persona of film personality rather than film writer.

The illustration in figure 5.10 is a pertinent demonstration of the circulation of this image of Glyn as a unique film personality. The cartoon, entitled 'When the Five O'Clock Whistle Blows in Hollywood', featured in the September 1921 edition of *Vanity Fair*¹², and depicts Glyn as one of a cluster of powerful Hollywood figures including Douglas Fairbanks, Buster Keaton, Bebe Daniels, Mary Pickford, Rupert Hughes, Harold Lloyd, Bill Hart, Wallace Reed and Gloria Swanson.

Glyn's inclusion in this list of extremely prominent stars firmly marks her as a star in her own right, and both aesthetically and semantically positions her at the centre of the Hollywood crowd, influential and highly visible. Further, she is the only character depicted in the cartoon who is not a performer (the image does not include high profile directors such as Cecil B. Demille or D.W. Griffith). The force and cultural currency of her filmic persona places her within the realm of the performers, reinforced by her close association with several leading female Hollywood stars.

¹² The American society magazine which would later merge into the high-end fashion magazine *Vogue*.

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis/dissertation for copyright reasons

Figure 5.10 This 1921 Vanity Fair caricature by Ralph Barton shows the famous people who, he imagined, left work each day in Hollywood; Glyn is featured in the centre, a scarf wrapped around her head (*Vanity Fair Magazine* Sept. 1921)

Star-maker: Gloria Swanson and Aileen Pringle

In bringing the unique nature of Glyn's film persona to public awareness, Glyn's relationship with American star Gloria Swanson was of major significance. Glyn's initial film contract with Lasky was to write a suitable screenplay as a vehicle for Swanson. Glyn took the connection between the two women much further, however, exploiting the publicity potential of their interaction and fostering a mentor / protégé relationship.

Prior to her role in Glyn's *The Great Moment*, Swanson had appeared in Mack Sennet splapstick comedies and in "bad-but-good-girl roles" (Hardwick 229) under the direction of Cecil B. de Mille. According to Hardwick, Glyn sought to "improve Gloria's diction, her hair-do and even sent her to seek the advice of her own dress designer" (230). Morey suggests that such actions imply that Glyn "was at least partially interested in remaking Swanson as a kind of surrogate or model for her philosophy of romance" ('Hollywood Labourer' 113).

Unpublished material contained within Glyn's archive supports this view. In a draft publicity document entitled 'Gloria Swanson as I Knew her' written in 1930, Glyn recalls her first meeting with the star:

I saw immediately that she was full of charm and magnetism, which emerged even through the queer clothes and "dressed" head which represented "chic" then in Hollywood . . . I remember trying to persuade her not to stoop, and to exercise

her neck and shoulders . . . She entered into all my ideas, and made a perfect heroine. When the picture was finished and I left for Europe again I noticed a great change in her. She had gained poise, she held back her shoulders, and no longer stooped—her head was normal size, and her clothes came from New York . . . I do not want her ever to be “kinda cute”, or to act a foolish, tipsy widow part again, nor that of a cartwheeling flapper, but to be the graceful siren enslaving the hearts of men, while her blue eyes show the soul within, lovely, aloof, undaunted, its possibilities still a mystery, its desires unsatisfied by all else but Eternity.¹³

The highly romanticised image of Swanson is here posited as Glyn’s own construction, detailing her physical and emotional moulding of the star according to her specific ideal of romantic allure. Glyn thus affirms a narrative in which Swanson’s stardom was insignificant prior to the guiding influence of the author and construction of the star as an extension of herself.

This conceptual recasting of Swanson as a youthful incarnation of Glyn herself links back to Glyn’s project of forging a hybrid Anglo-American identity as an aristocratic cultural commentator. Glyn engaged film culture as a focal point for the meeting of the more traditional feminine ideals concerning romance, sex and courtship portrayed within her novels with the progressive and modern aesthetic art form of the moving image. Endorsing cinema as an exciting new story-telling form, Glyn simultaneously remained resistant to

¹³ Source: Elinor Glyn papers, University of Reading special collections, MS 4059.

quintessentially 'new' incarnations of femininity, reacting against the representation of radical modern women on screen—particularly, as she notes, the “cartwheeling flapper”¹⁴. Placing Swanson before the camera as a youthful embodiment of her ideal conception of femininity, appearance and decorum, Glyn could channel the screen success of Swanson’s performance into the affirmation and endorsement of her own media image.

Glyn’s power as an authorial star thus extended to the ‘authoring’ of screen stars as extensions of her Anglo-American persona, contained within specific fictional environments which called for the near fetishistic attention to details of coded ‘English’ and ‘aristocratic’ interiors, settings and costuming. Glyn recalls how in *The Great Moment*, for example, “tall rooms and English stateliness were shown for the first time on screen”, which led to “all films dealing with ‘society’” having “better settings” (298). By shaping the environment, Glyn in turn was able to shape the presentation of the female performer, thereby creating a conduit through which to channel the ideals of her own star persona.

Glyn was not unique as a female star-maker within this period. Shelley Stamp has explored the role in relation to Lois Weber. Working as a Hollywood

¹⁴Although Glyn’s fictional heroines were strong-willed and often sexually dominant, they nevertheless confirmed to older ideals of feminine beauty and romance. As previously mentioned, Glyn often dismissed modern, more liberated incarnations of femininity. In an article for *The New York Times* entitled ‘Wives Too Egotistical: Elinor Glyn on “Problems” That Confront the Women of This Country’, for example, Glyn argues that “women are not meant to have too much of their own way. They are happier when ruled by wise and brilliant men. It is the law of nature” (7 Nov. 1920). In a later article for the same paper, Glyn declares herself “wholly out of sympathy with the extreme feminist expression” (‘Elinor Glyn Back.’ *New York Times* 18 Sept. 1921).

director in the silent era, Weber fostered the talents of actresses who “became celebrated performers under Weber’s tutelage” (‘Lois Weber’ 131). Stamp argues that Weber’s work as a filmmaker, however, was drastically overshadowed by the press interest in and promotion of her role as a maker of young female stars. By over-emphasising the role of the female filmmaker as a fosterer of female stardom, the reality of her powerful position as a director and authority within film culture could be downplayed and diminished.¹⁵

In Glyn’s case, the star-maker persona was one she actively coveted as a way of sidestepping her exclusion from control of the creative process and final creative decisions. While Stamp sees the narrativizing of the female star-maker discovery as “limiting her power largely to an appreciation of beauty” (‘Lois Weber’ 139), Glyn saw this limitation as her key strength.

Glyn’s publicity work in promoting her star-maker persona was accordingly focused upon the manifestation of these conceptions of feminine aesthetics and performance. The publicity shot in figure 5.11 shows Glyn with her protégé Swanson in 1921. Glyn is pictured holding a copy of one of her fictions, *Elizabeth Visits America* (1909). The choice of this book in hand offers a parallel between the fiction, the author and the star protégé. Glyn’s writing

¹⁵ Stamp explain that: “Stories of Weber ‘discovering’ young talents almost by accident, and elevating them to the ranks of superstardom seemingly overnight, only perpetuated this displacement, for they cast the actress in wholly passive roles, simply waiting to be noticed and appreciated, and largely obscured the labour and training involved in acting for the screen” (Stamp, ‘Lois Weber’ 137).

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis/dissertation for copyright reasons

Figure 5.11 Glyn with film star Gloria Swanson in 1921. Glyn is pictured holding her novel *Elizabeth Visits America*.

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis/dissertation for copyright reasons

Figure 5.12 Rudolph Valentino and Swanson in the adaptation of Glyn's *Beyond the Rocks*. The hand-kissing gesture was a suggestion of Glyn's.

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis/dissertation for copyright reasons

Figure 5.13 A publicity photograph of Glyn and Aileen Pringle from 1923 to promote the release of *Three Weeks*.
(Images source: Hardwick).

frequently built upon and sensationalised biographical aspects of her own life experiences; the story of the *Visits* in particular was a reimagining of Glyn's adventures upon her first trip to America retold through the romanticised heroine 'Elizabeth'. Holding the book which essentially signifies the translation of personal experiences into a romanticised fictional persona of the Anglo-American heroine, the novel functions to mirror the presence of Swanson, who herself acts as an embodied persona for Glyn's projected ideals.

Figure 5.12 shows Swanson performing in the adaptation of *Beyond the Rocks* (U.S., Sam Wood, 1922). The stylised gesture of the romantic couple, according to Hardwick, was performed in the film "following Elinor's instructions" (216). The authoring of Swanson was twofold, therefore, enacted on the level of her star persona in terms of dress and hair styling, and on the level of film performance.

This mirroring occurs even more directly in the publicity shot in figure 5.13, depicting Glyn and the actress Aileen Pringle side by side during the filming of *Three Weeks* (U.S., Alan Crossland, 1924). While Glyn's personal relationship with Pringle was less intense than her connection to Swanson, many of the same star maker discourses surrounded their interaction. Pringle's role as The Lady in the Glyn adaptation afforded her major international stardom, building upon the modest success of her previous performances in film such as the Rudolph Valentino romantic drama *Stolen Moments* (U.S., James Vincent, 1920).

Donning the same outfit and hairstyle, the pair are here positioned in replica poses, forcing as close an association as possible between the two women. The fusion between author and star draws upon the extra-textual knowledge of Glyn's original *Three Weeks* fiction. The lead character of *The Lady* had become relatively synonymous with Glyn herself (a popular fiction which Glyn reinforced by making a public display of the autobiographical aspects of the Lady persona, such as her ownership of several tiger skins featured in the infamous love scene of the book). Publicity shots of Elinor and her tiger skins, such as that in figure 5.14, were circulated throughout her career.¹⁶

Glyn's involvement with the 1923 MGM film adaptation thus facilitated a re-authoring of the character, fusing her own embodiment of 'The Lady' with that of Pringle's. The publicity shot of the pair effectively qualifies Pringle as the appropriate casting choice by showing her similarity, not to an idea of the character, but to Glyn herself. By publicising the mirroring relationship between the two women, Glyn encouraged the consumer of the film text to view the author as an echoed presence shadowing Pringle's performance.

Glyn's role as a film figure exerting this kind of influence was strongly propelled by her cultivation of extra-textual marketing opportunities. A re-issue

¹⁶ Other elements of the fiction were closely aligned to Glyn's personal tastes and experiences, such as the Venetian setting. A popular rhyme from the era directly collapsed author and character: "Would you like to sin / With Elinor Glyn / On a tiger Skin? / Or would you prefer / To err with her / On some other fur?" The fictional sins of *The Lady* are here made the titillating sins of Elinor herself. Glyn further cemented this fusion between character and author by acting the role of *The Lady* in the theatre production of the novel, as previously mentioned.

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis/dissertation for copyright reasons

Figure 5.14 Image of Glyn in her drawing room, 1 Jan. 1935 (Photo by Fox Photos/Getty Images)

of *Three Weeks* was created, for example, to support the release of the adaptation, illustrated with images from the film and with Aileen Pringle as The Lady on its cover, posed on the infamous tiger skin. Significantly, however, Pringle's name was not featured on the cover; Glyn's name alone in bold lettering sat above the image, reinforcing the alignment between author, character and star.

Glyn offered further official endorsement of Pringle through other forms of studio marketing. Archived documents from Glyn's personal business correspondence included extracts designated 'Publicity Department', offering extended discussion of her female stars. An copy of a publicity piece written on Pringle for MGM in October of 1923 underscores Glyn's approval of Pringle's casting, presenting the decision as though it were hers alone:

When I came to American to produce my "Three Weeks" I was a little anxious as to where I should find an exotic type like my "Lady". –And it was literally a gift from heaven when I met Aileen Pringle . . . Aileen Pringle is making a most lovely Queen – dignified, stately – subtle and Slavonic. She is costumed exactly as the Queen ought to be, and I think when the public see her, they will agree with me that she is the perfect type for this part.¹⁷

¹⁷ 'First Article for Publicity Department on Aileen Pringle' October 27, 1923. Elinor Glyn papers, University of Reading Special Collections, MS 4059.

While such material would have been subject to editing upon submission to the publicity department, its raw form uncovered within the archive reveals Glyn's sense of ownership over the entire production, made absolute by her use of "my" in describing the novel and the film, and her description of the casting as a personal search.

While casting was ultimately out of Glyn's hands and left to the final, financially dictated decision of the studio¹⁸, such articles could be used to generate a sense of her overarching influence upon the adaptations of her works. They further signalled her conceptualization of the importance of creating a sense of affinity with the viewing public—"they will agree"—who were able to qualify her casting decision by their familiarity with her famous book.

Glyn's fostering of this kind of authorship in creating stars and generating publicity around her act of star authoring raises important questions for the feminist researcher. In allowing us to explore the significance of the female presence within the creation of film texts and their influence within film culture, feminist historiography is valuable for assessing the historical importance of Glyn as a film figure. We need to be wary, however, as Glyn's complex career in filmmaking shows, about the claims we make as feminist historians for female film figures as film pioneers.

¹⁸ The studios did not succumb to her frequent demands that particular performers play particular roles; MGM, for example, rejected her choice of Eric Glynne Percy for the role of Paul in the adaptation of *Three Weeks*, opting for the Conrad Nagel in order to offset any financial risk by casting a pre-proven box-office star.

Rather than championing Glyn as a lost filmmaker or film writer, it is important to utilise the subtleties of feminist historiographical criticism as a way of accounting for the unique nature of her film career.¹⁹ Yvonne Tasker tackles this issue explicitly in her essay 'Vision and Visibility: women filmmakers, contemporary authorship and feminist film studies' (2010). Tasker traces the body of female scholarship seeking to decentralise the authority of the male director as a figure with "propriety over the text" (213). Despite "important attempts to write women's history" (218), Tasker argues that auteurism nevertheless resonates with feminist critics as a way of reclaiming female figures within film history.

The problematics of auteurism pose particular difficulties for the critical reclamation of early female film makers and personalities whose roles were often fluid. In centralising figures like Glyn within feminist film history, we need challenge, as Jennifer M. Bean argues, "our nostalgic desire to pinpoint the locus of authorship" (Bean, 'Towards' 15) in silent cinema. Jane Gaines asserts that asking more broadly how women contributed in a variety of ways the creation of silent film texts "opens the door to considering a range of contributors and alternative authors" ('Of Cabbages' 111).

¹⁹ She was neither a film critic, nor strictly a filmmaker; she was occasionally a producer, briefly a director, frequently a script contributor—and an author whose work, like that of many of her contemporaries, rarely made it intact to the filming process.

Analysing and accounting for Glyn's unique role within international film culture in the 1920s, therefore, requires the researcher to avoid the framework of authorship as it relates to the dominant creative figure in the production of film texts. Instead, a more specific understanding of Glyn's film career can be gleaned from an analysis of the ways in which Glyn conceived of herself as exerting her authorial influence upon the adaptation of her fictions through a close analysis of original archival sources.

Publicizing authorial stardom

Draft scripts contained within Glyn's archive reveal how, for example, in the later twenties, Glyn's interaction with the adaptations of her films entered a new form. Her authoring of stars gave way to her own appearance in film texts. Glyn's Lasky Studio synopsis for *It* (U.S., Clarence G. Badger, 1927) includes several key passages featuring the author, some of which made it into the final production. Some examples:

A. Mme. Glyn sits at her desk and writes her definition of IT.

[. . .]

8. Mme. Glyn enters, and there is planted an interest, even among the highbrows, in her articles on IT.

[. . .]

[sequence 3] Monty persists in interrupting a magazine containing Elinor Glyn's article on IT. Monty takes the article very much to heart, and endeavours to size up himself and Cyrus in the light of various paragraphs...

[. . .]

[sequence 4] Interior, store. A number of the salesgirls and other employees are reading and discussing the same article on IT.²⁰

With the opening scene depicting Glyn's physical writing of the title of the film, Glyn makes the process of adaptation itself part of the filmic narrative. While this opening sequence never made it to the final film, her cameo did, interweaving the author into the story.

In the finished film, Glyn first appears in print form as Monty (William Austin) reads a copy of *Cosmopolitan* featuring her article upon which the film is based. Later in the narrative, name and body are unified as Glyn appears on camera at a restaurant to reiterate the elusive quality of 'it' for the benefit of the characters and the audience. The viewer's cultural knowledge of Glyn merges with the filmic persona of 'Elinor Glyn' the character. Her identity as authorial film star is solidified by the intertitle which stands in for her explanation of the quality of 'it'. The intertitle reads:

²⁰ Sequence Synopsis of 'It' by Elinor Glyn, Lasky Studio, 4 Oct. 1926. Elinor Glyn Papers, University of Reading Special Collections, MS 4059.

'It' is that quality possessed by some which draws all others with its magnetic force. With 'It' you can win all men if you are a woman—and all women if you are a man. 'IT' can be a quality of the mind as well as a physical attraction.

Elinor Glyn

Stamping the image with her authorial authority is the inclusion of her signature below the intertitle text. Rather than standing in directly for the spoken words masked by the lack of soundtrack, the signing of the title makes the passage literary, marking Glyn as omnipresent authorial star looming large over the narrative.

This conflation of authorial persona in writing and author as character is further enforced in other Glyn cameos. In *Man and Maid* (U.S., Sam Wood, 1925), the opening inter-title is again directly produced by Glyn's hand. A close-up shows her arm extended penning the words that preface her novel: "What we call coincidence is nothing but the weaving of Destiny's threads for a given end which we cannot see." The scene then cuts to a wider shot showing the author at the writing desk signing her name. Functioning again as star signifier, the representational act of writing offers the constructed illusion of literary inspiration, affirming Glyn's authorial prestige whilst bolstering her star status.

Glyn's presence as a performer was further affirmed by her appearance within the extra-textual material culture surrounding these film texts. Glyn can

be found in a range of archival materials largely reserved for the promotion and discussion of stars, such as cigarette trading cards and film fan magazines.

Glyn was also a regular feature within, and contributor to, such fan magazines. Articles by the author appear in British publications such as *Film Weekly*, *The Picturegoer*, and *Picture Show*, American publications sold in Britain such as *Film Pictorial and Picture Play*, and the British trade paper *The Cinema News and Property Gazette* in the twenties and early thirties. Glyn appeared on the front cover of the fan magazine *Picture Show* in November of 1923, advertising her enclosed article on the subject of “Men Who Fascinate – On and off the screen.” Her expertise in the romantic plots and performers of Hollywood thus resonated within such writing, and accordingly Glyn was frequently commissioned to pen articles on ‘feminine’ screen subjects such as hair, clothing, romance and sex.

A letter from *The Cinema News & Property Gazette* of 1930 held within Glyn’s business papers, for example, invited Glyn to write upon the subject of “The Best Thing that Happened to the Trade This Year, and Why” with the assurance that she constituted “one of the most important women in the cinematograph trade”²¹. The letter’s faith in the influence of the author underscores the pervasiveness of her filmic persona and knowledge of her expertise, calling upon Glyn’s support for the trade at the turn of the New Year with the offering of “a

²¹ Correspondence between S. Harris of *The Cinema News & Property Gazette* and Elinor Glyn, 1 Dec. 1930. Elinor Glyn Papers, University of Reading special collections, MS 4059.

few words” to “help towards not only the solutions of problems, but the avoidance of possible pitfalls”.²²

Further, the letter qualifies Glyn by gender as one of the “most important *women*” in the cinema. This plays against the idea of the film industry as entirely male dominated in this period, since Glyn, like Anita Loos and other influential female figures, were clearly recognised as significant individuals within Hollywood. Glyn was thus representative of women’s ability to succeed within the industry beyond the role of performer.

Glyn’s presence within the print aspects of film culture was not always positive, however. An article which appeared in *Picture Show* in July 1925 entitled “Madame the Maligned”, explores in some detail the negative publicity surrounding the author, and the reality of her influence upon the films for which she claimed creative control.

The article is extensively subtitled: ‘How Elinor Glyn finally convinced motion-picture producers that it was a profitable idea to allow her to supervise the filming of her stories in something more than name only’. The ‘name only’ aspect of Glyn’s contract to Lasky was downplayed by Glyn in the promotion of her filmic persona across popular culture, yet the article underscores an awareness of the disparity between Glyn’s initial high ambitions for Hollywood

²² Ibid.

and the reality of her limited influence in the production of the adaptations of her novels:

Probably from an obligatory sense Elinor Glyn believed that a production advertised as made under her supervision should be supervised by her . . . Pursuing the course she did, it was impossible that she escape criticism, either open censure or else in the form of polite ridicule, the latter enjoying the greatest popularity. Glyn quips became the *bon mots* of the hour . . . Writers unable to get off jolly little stories at Mrs. Glyn's expense weren't worth type-writer ribbon to their respective publications (*Picture Show* July 1925).

It was certainly true that Glyn's initial exploits in film were scrutinised by press interest, which took careful and often mocking note of her actual level of creative input.²³

Yet the report that the *Picture Play* article offers nonetheless affirms the success of the author in stamping her productions with her sense of artistic vision. Where her writing was rejected, altered and tweaked, she refused to compromise on costuming, interiors etc.—“Coiffures must be *so*. Gowns *so*”

²³ *The New York Times*, for example, in reviewing *The Great Moment*, reported that: “There are rumours that Miss Glyn's scenario underwent some gentle modification in the Lasky studio in Hollywood, and . . . it was thought advisable to send the film to the cutting room after the picture's completion. At any rate, the “moment” is not particularly “great” (25 Jul. 1921).

(*Picture Show* July 1925)—and clearly was successful in ensuring that her input was acknowledged in the popular press.

Glyn used the *Picture Play* article as a way of answering the criticism it recounted, asserting her creative integrity and authority within the film industry.

The reporter quotes her as saying:

I have not lost my enthusiasm . . . I love to discover actors and find new attributes in already discovered ones . . .

The casting of Miss Harriet Hammond in this picture illustrates what I mean. I sought everywhere for a blonde with sympathy and appeal, but unsuccessfully. Then Mr. Thalberg suggested a girl whom he believed to be what I wanted. One day I came into my office and found her sitting there.

. . . I have all my girls massaged. For correct posture, you know. I will have none of *this*," hunching her shoulders and sinking the chest in imitation of the round-shouldered slouch of the flapper, 'in my pictures' (*Picture Show* July 1925).

By this point in her career, Glyn seems to have realised the benefits of cooperating with the studios' demands. She credits the finding of Hammond to Thalberg, content to relinquish a sense of dominant control over the representations of her fictions on screen. She emphasises instead her role as the developer of raw talent thus presented to her.

In choosing the fan magazine as a platform to answer her critics and to affirm her star maker status, Glyn moved to acquire the allegiance of cinema audiences. Like Iris Barry, Glyn understood that appealing to a sense of the integrity and common sense of the general public audience could create a powerful affinity between writer and reader/spectator. Although Glyn's fictions and films focused almost exclusively upon upper-class heroines and lavish settings, she professed an understanding of what the public wanted, and coveted the support of her fans, professing in her biography to have wanted to bring "the ideals and the atmosphere of romance and glamour into the humblest homes" (292-293).

In the previously mentioned article for MGM's publicity department, Glyn frames her decision to cast Aileen Pringle with reference to the endorsement of the public audience: "I think when the public see her, they will agree with me that she is the perfect type for this part". In a publicity piece about the problems facing the British film industry in 1930, Glyn again makes reference to the value of public taste:

The highbrows lament that the success of such films as *Disraeli* or *Rookery Nook*, show how lamentably poor is the public taste! For me these successes are an indication of the sound judgement of the average film goer who prefers to be amused and emotioned in a straightforward, simple way . . . It is too often

forgotten by producers here that the main function of the Cinema is to provide happy relaxation and an escape from the humdrum greyness of our mechanised civilization.²⁴

Echoing Dorothy Richardson (and Minnie Pallister from Chapter 2), Glyn pinpoints the acutely modern appeal of the cinema as escapist entertainment in working-class lives. In doing so, she offers a more positive portrait of the public pursuit of such escapism, not as a form of passive spectatorship but as a “sound judgement”. The construction of a position of sympathy and affinity with the general public audience in opposition to the “highbrows” thereby bolstered Glyn’s profile as star-maker by allowing her to act as a conduit for public taste and preference.

Glyn as “The Champion of the British Film”, 1929-1932

Glyn’s relationship with her audiences mediated through extra-textual discourses was central to the final stage of her film career. By 1928, Glyn ceased working for the American studios as adaptations of her works were increasingly taken out of her hands.²⁵

²⁴ Source: short essay on the problems of the British film industry, circa 1930, Elinor Glyn papers, University of Reading Special Collections, MS 4059.

²⁵ The adaptations of *It* (U.S., Clarence G. Badger, 1927) and *Red Hair* (U.S., Clarence G. Badger, 1928) starring Clara Bow were drastically reworked from her original stories, and her influence over Bow was minimal in comparison to her former shaping of the careers of her female stars.

In 1930, Glyn left Hollywood altogether and returned to England to establish Elinor Glyn Productions Ltd. Renting studio space from Elstree Studios, Glyn set about producing, writing and directing the financial and critical disaster that was *Knowing Men* (U.K., Elinor Glyn, 1930). As her first entirely independent film, the failure of *Knowing Men* was enough to financially cripple her brief production venture, meaning that her next project, *The Price of Things* (U.K., Elinor Glyn, 1930), never came to be released.

With the collapse of her own production company, Glyn embarked on a transformation of her image as a filmmaker and Hollywood star-maker, crafting the new persona of film consultant. Glyn sought to be seen as offering a guiding hand to, and acting as guardian of, the British film industry as it entered the sound era. Correspondence between Glyn, her agent John Wynne and a variety of trade papers and companies in 1930 and 1931 reveal the self-conscious construction of this distinct position within British film culture.

In charge of her affairs from 1925, John Wynne conducted requests for publicity ventures and organized publicity opportunities for the author upon her return to England in 1929. His correspondence with trade companies, journals and film magazines frequently asserted that Glyn was a unique presence within

film culture, constituting “one of only three people who can fill a picture theatre on her name alone”²⁶.

An anonymous document within Glyn’s personal papers dated 6th March 1930 offers a detailed outline of the publicity strategies intended for the author as she returned to the United Kingdom to establish herself in her new role:

Mrs. Glyn would desire to be regarded not merely as the authoress of one or more films which are produced merely that they may be sold and the way cleared for the next, but as some one who has definite beliefs regarding the future of the British Film, and certain ambitions and intentions concerning its development.

(‘Confidential: Mrs Elinor Glyn, Publicity’, 6 Mar. 1930)²⁷

The statement underscores the rather remarkable position that Glyn occupied at this moment as a woman whose “definite beliefs” both influenced and were coveted by the British film industry. The document asserted that Glyn had “a deep knowledge and wide experience of the American film industry”, and should be positioned as a figurehead for promoting the British film:

There would thus be at once a central idea around which could be woven a great deal of publicity material, the idea of Mrs. Glyn as the Champion of the British

²⁶ Source: Elinor Glyn papers, University of Reading Special Collections, MS 4059.

²⁷ Source: Elinor Glyn papers, University of Reading Special Collections, MS 4059.

Film. How would this idea be conveyed to the public? In a variety of ways of which we here indicate a few.

It would be done entirely by means of articles or interviews to give direct expression to any such notion but by methods implicit rather than explicit. It would be our business to keep a constant watch on the press and the movement in the film world in order to take advantage of any opportunity to convey the desired impression.²⁸

The document is an illuminating example of the ways in which film, filmmaking, film personalities and knowledge of the film industry were deeply imbedded within British media culture by the end of the silent era. The advice to keep “a constant watch on the press” testifies to the significance of both media interest in film personalities and public opinion, since the consumers of such press constitute the consumers of the films and novels Glyn championed and created.

The confidence of the publicity machine propelling Glyn into British film culture testifies to the unique nature of the position she occupied. Neither a former star nor a critically or financially successful independent filmmaker,²⁹ Glyn nevertheless crafted a new place for herself within British film culture as an authoritative, opinionated and knowledgeable consultant.

²⁸ Source: Elinor Glyn papers, University of Reading Special Collections, MS 4059.

²⁹ And a widow now in her sixties with no other source of income.

The systematic construction of this consulting role is evidenced in archival holdings of Glyn's business correspondence at the turn of the decade. A draft for a press release for meeting at London's Claridge Hotel on March 25th of 1930 to 'Discuss the Possibilities of Expanding the British Film Industry', for example, outlines the launch of Glyn's consultant persona to the British press:

In April last Mrs. Glyn returned to this country and proposes to put at the service of the British Film Industry the experience gained in these enterprises. There can be no doubt that, from one cause or another, all is not well with the industry in this country; of late there has been considerable reference to this state of things in the Press and this has led Mrs. Glyn to consult with the best known and most experienced critics of film matters in this country with regard to her future plans.

. . . It is the hope and intention of Mrs Glyn to discover and to foster talent in this country, to give opportunity, now so often denied, to the film actor and actress who are neglected because they are unknown, to train and develop from the material available here the production side of the industry. . . (It is perhaps as well to mention that the whole of Mrs Glyn's efforts in this country have been financed by herself; not one penny of the public's money has been asked for.)³⁰

The seeming crisis state of the British Film industry at this juncture was the result of a complex industrial heritage.

³⁰ Source: Elinor Glyn papers, University of Reading Special Collections, MS 4059.

Sarah Street has traced the development of British film production in her work *British National Cinema* (1997). Street explores difficulties in the consolidation of film producing companies and pioneers early in the development of the British film industry. While early exhibition practices were increasingly capitalised, the showing of domestic films in British cinemas reached only 15 per cent by 1910 (Street, *British National* 5).

A brief boom in domestic production between 1911 and 1914 saw a spate of longer play and novel adaptations appearing on British screens, but, as Street assesses, “on the whole the most startling development was the success of American film export strategies” (*British National* 5). Hollywood productions “enjoyed a highly advantageous position in the British market” (Street, *British National* 5) in this early period, impacting upon British production. In 1926, two years before Glyn was to return to the UK to offer her services as film “Champion”, the total number of British films trade shown was a mere 37 (Low 156). In the 1920s, exhibition, not production, was the “most profitable element of the British industry” (Street, *British National* 7).

Glyn entered the British industry on the back of the Cinematograph Film Act passed in 1927. The act sought to encourage domestic production by increasing the exhibition of British films within an exhibition market saturated

by American block-booked productions.³¹ Seeking to tackle this problem, the Film Act made it obligatory for exhibitors to show a quota of British films. The years between 1927 and 1930 saw this kind of increasing state protection combine with the arrival of sound cinema and formation of new companies. Street sets the scene:

State protection encouraged optimism about British production and as a consequence a plethora of companies were formed immediately after the Films Bill became law. The increased capital available to film producers enabled many to buy equipment for the conversion to sound, a process which, while not without its problems, was achieved with related success by 1933 . . . The Film Act's promise of increased production further encouraged the growth of exhibition: between 1927 and 1932 715 new cinemas were built (Street, *British National* 8-9).

While the industry was beginning to take an up-turn with these developments, the quality of British product was very much in question. The quota imposition meant that "many poor-quality films were produced in the post-quota boom and in the awkward period of adjustment to sound" (Street, 'British Film' 186). Glyn saw an opportunity to capitalise upon this "awkward" period, therefore, which her press release described as a time when "all is not well", accentuating the

³¹ Block booking bound exhibitors to renting a series of films for long periods as accompaniment to the booking of a popular feature, resulting in "scant space for British films" (Street, *British National* 7).

difficulties facing the industry by putting herself forward as a figure of reformation and improvement.

Glyn's intended intervention was one mediated through the discourses of press and popular media; her approach was to advertise her influence before she secured genuine employment within the British Industry as a figurehead for its improvement. Approaching the media in this way almost negated the need for Glyn to instigate any genuine change (especially since she entered the national industry at a point when huge changes were already very much in motion). Her profile and role as commentator allowed her to make a public display of her expertise and influence regardless of its direct impact on the industry in a manner similar to her role in Hollywood.

Glyn's plan to consult with "the best known and most experienced critics of film matters in this country" was, one suspects, very much a self serving gesture, providing an opportunity to establish her place within a circle of influential film commentators. She outlines this plan in the inclusion of a list of publications invited to be present at the Claridge Hotel meeting, as follows:

INVITATIONS to meet MRS. ELINOR GLYN on Tuesday afternoon
March 25th have been sent to the following.

The Times
The Morning post
The Daily Telegraph
The Daily Mail
The Daily Express
The Daily News
The Daily Chronicle

The Daily Herald
The Daily Mirror
The Daily Sketch
The Observer
The Sunday Times
The Sunday Dispatch
The Sunday Chronicle
The People
The Referees
The Sunday Pictorial
The Sunday Graphic
The Sunday news
The News of the World
The Evening News
The Star
The Evening Standard
The Yorkshire Post
The Manchester Guardian
The Western Mail
The Press Association
The Exchange Telegraph Co
The Central news
Allied Newspapers
“Quex” of the Daily Chronicle
“Onlooker” of the Daily Mail
“Peterborough” of the Daily Telegraph
“Lord Donegall” of the Daily Sketch
“Dragoman” of The Evening Standard
The Film Renter
The Film Weekly
The Cinematograph Times
The Cinema Weekly
The Cinema News
The Bioscope
The Bystander
The International News Service
Reynolds Newspaper
J. Agate of the Tatler
M. Orme of the Illustrated London News
Britannia and Eve
L. Collier of the Picturegoer

Glyn requests the presence en masse of major tabloid and popular press print journalism in Britain at this time, coveting the attendance not only of trade and fan magazines—*Bioscope*, *Film Weekly*, *Picturegoer* etc.—but of national

newspapers which featured professional film critics, such as *The Daily Mail* (Iris Barry), *The Manchester Guardian* (C.A. Lejeune), *The Sunday Times* (Sydney Carroll), *The Observer* (Ivor Montagu), *The Times* (Robert Nichols); *The Evening Standard* (Walter Mycroft) and *The Daily Express* (G.A. Atkinson).³²

Her appeal to these commentators, positioned outside the production hub of the industry yet intrinsic to the circulation of film culture, speaks to her strong awareness of the need to mediate between public and producer. The pointed inclusion of a reference to her lack of fee for engaging the industry specifically name-checks the “public” audience with an assurance that its money has “not been asked for”. This nod towards her appreciation of the concerns of the public as the consumers of cinema testifies to her understanding of the mutual relationship between the media forms she engages—the newspaper, the fan magazine, the trade paper—and their readers. Glyn emphasizes the importance of constructing her relationship with the British industry in close relation to her interaction with these readers/viewers/consumers.

While the press release material offers an insight into the ways in which Glyn and her agent constructed publicity events and correspondence, her letters in the archive also offer evidence of the ways in which her opinion and expertise

³² Appealing to these makers of film news within the daily news arena speaks to the prominence of cinema matters by the end of the decade within such discourses; further, Glyn’s naming of particular critics by pseudonyms—‘Onlooker’ of the *Daily Mail* etc—underlines the influence of individual voices within media discourses as influential critical commentators—a position she was crafting for herself as the Hollywood ‘Madame’ consultant for British film culture.

were recognized and coveted by the British press, film industry and commercial culture in general.

Correspondence dated 29th March 1930, for example, announces Glyn's acceptance of an invitation to judge the "Finals of Voice and Personality Contest" at London's Hotel Metropole in April of the same year.³³ Its inclusion in Glyn's array of publicity ventures is typical. Performing at such events as judge testified to the cultural legitimacy of Glyn as a high profile popular figure.

In February of the following year, correspondence shows Glyn being contacted by Ideal Films Ltd. (fig. 5.15). This film production company released a weekly general interest short entitled the 'Ideal Cinemagazine', begun in 1926. The film shorts included a programme of sports, music, travel and cartoons, and specifically attempted to appeal to women in the inclusion of illustrated household hints. The programmes were booked nation wide in 550 theatres by 1931 (*Bioscope* 15th July 1931: 6-7).

Corresponding with Glyn in February of this year, Ideal explained that it was the company's policy to "from time to time introduce short film-studies of people famous in Literature, Art, the Drama, etc." Ideal requested the opportunity to film Glyn "in this way", assuring her that "the exhibition of such a film would be of the greatest interest to your large body of admirers".

³³ The Metropole was an up-market inner-city venue which regularly featured popular musicians and entertainment) and Glyn as a voice of authority on matters of personality and performance--skills garnered from her Hollywood experiences.

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis/dissertation for copyright reasons

Figure 5.15 Correspondence between John Hill of Ideal Films Ltd. and Elinor Glyn, 3 Feb. 1931.
Image taken from the Elinor Glyn Papers, University of Reading special collections.

Appealing to Glyn's existing fan-base, Ideal presented the filming of Glyn as a mutually beneficial publicity opportunity, validating Glyn as a subject of general public interest and expert in popular entertainment art forms.

Glyn's manager responded to the request in late April affirming the appointment to film Glyn at her flat in Mayfair on Tuesday 28th April 1931, declaring that it was "understood that you will supply adequate lighting (at least four lamps including spot lights), and that Mrs. Glyn has the right to veto the exhibition of the film if she does not approve of it".³⁴ The short list of demands asserts Glyn's knowledge of the technical requirements of adequate filming conditions, garnered from her recent experience as film director, whilst retaining control of her publicity by reserving the right to deny screening of the cinemagazine.³⁵

³⁴ Source: Letter from the Manager of Elinor Glyn Ltd. To The Ideal Films Ltd., 22nd April 1931. Elinor Glyn papers, University of Reading Special Collections, MS 4059.

³⁵ Her request for "at least four lamps" speaks to a desire to be lit and filmed with the cinematography afforded to a screen star. Stars were commonly lit in this period by a combination of several lights, typically by the three-point system used for figure lighting, which combined the brightest *key* light on the actors face from the front-side with the softer *filler* light directed at the opposite side, balanced by the third *backlight* positioned behind the actor to create a halo of light around the hair, separating actor from background. Glyn's request for in excessive of these three key lighting fixtures shows a high level of attention to the physical presentation of her own 'star' persona on film.

The introduction of incandescent spotlights in the 1930s—Glyn specifically requests their use here—allowed for this kind of increasingly precise control of lighting effects and the presentation of actor's faces and profiles. In his 1949 textbook on the techniques of lighting, for example, cinematographer John Alton describes an eight-point lighting system for close-up lighting that would seem to echo Glyn's requirement of an abundance of lights. Alton describes the set-up as offering detailed "eyelight" by directing three lights at the actor's eyes, along with a "clothes light" to foreground costumes, a "kicked light" to add further definition to hair and cheekbones and a "fill light" to offer diffuse lighting for the entire set, with a "background light" to illuminate the set behind the performer (Alton 99). This elaborate system focused upon providing the most aesthetically beautiful image of the actor's face in close-up profile. Glyn's request of in excess of four film lights and spotlights arranged for her own appearance on camera thus betrays a concern with the aesthetic resonance of her image on screen and her adoption of the techniques of star lighting and cinematography.

Glyn's participation with the cinemagazine further affirmed her connection to discourses of women's cinema, linking Glyn back to the concept of the female media personality's participation within woman-made markets of desire. Cinemagazines like *Ideal* and other British produced shorts such as the *Eve's Film Review* series (a weekly series for women produced by Pathé, which ran from 1921 until 1933) made specific appeal to women's tastes and interests in their direct address to a female audience (*Ideal* with presentation of female domesticity; *Eve* with its recurrent depiction of the new hobbies, habits and work forms of modern femininity). Glyn's appearance within the *Ideal* series targeted a female audience, therefore, who were also the targeted audience of her own films and fictions.

Glyn's expertise in a specifically gendered conception of fiction and film were generally sought after by the British industry, creating opportunities for Glyn to comment upon the female address of film culture. A letter from the British film magazine *Film Weekly* in August of 1931 appealed for Glyn's view upon the contemporary "Sex Film", for example:

Dear Mrs. Glyn,

Enclosed is an advance proof of correspondence concerning Sex Films which will appear in next Saturday's "FILM WEEKLY".

With reference thereto, I should be very grateful if you would tell me (for publication):--

1. Whether, in your opinion, the screen treatment of sex subjects has been carried too far;
- and
2. Whether, in your experience, Sex Films are best sellers with the public, or whether they have a deterrent effect upon attendances.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,

Herbert Thompson.

Editor.³⁶

Her role as the barometer of appropriate “screen treatment” is linked to her role as a mediator between industry and public audience, conceptualized in gendered terms. As a fan magazine, *Film Weekly* targeted a predominantly female readership.

By seeking Glyn’s input, the magazine makes a connection between the creator of female-targeted romance film and fiction³⁷ and its female readers.

³⁶ Source: Letter from the Herbert Thompson to Mrs. Elinor Glyn, 19th August 193. Elinor Glyn papers, University of Reading Special Collections, MS 4059.

³⁷ Glyn was clearly still a figure known for her connection to sensational fictions depicting romance and sex. While *Three Weeks* was received in many circles as scandalous in 1907 for its sexual content, Glyn is here called upon in 1931 as the appropriate judge of taste on such matters, asked to comment on whether the depiction of the subject “has been carried too far”. Glyn is now deemed a key figure for defining appropriate levels of taste in the representation of sexuality and romance, marking a shift from scandal to

Glyn's views on women's cinema are sought after as the voice of "the public", conceptualized as the female public *Film Weekly* readers. The correspondence recognizes the economic influence of this audience—their attendance of "Sex Films" is able raise the status of such films to "best sellers"—whilst presenting Glyn as the figurehead of this powerful audience base.

While a copy of Glyn's response is not contained within her personal letters, this extract of correspondence nevertheless is representative of her successful transition from Hollywood filmmaker to British film industry personality by the end of the silent era.

As these varied examples show, Glyn challenges the feminist historian to remain as attentive as possible to the specificities of the female film personality. Figures like Glyn occupied roles within popular culture that were fluid and not easily categorized, and often extended far beyond, or bore little relation to their 'official' industry role or film credit. What Glyn's brand of authorial stardom demonstrates is the recognized economic significance of female media productions and their female audiences in the late silent era, and the currency of women's writing with female film culture.

The next chapter looks at a second case study of female authorship as it relates to the cinema, exploring how two very different kinds of British

respectability in her public persona cemented across her successful film career and the continuous popular success of her novels.

authors—the middlebrow writer Winifred Holtby and the modernist author Virginia Woolf—cultivated alternate forms of literary address to, and interaction with, female film culture. Where Glyn was an influential figure within the production of film culture through her writing and commentary, Holtby and Woolf were peripheral figures. Holtby used the female experience of cinemagoing as a catalyst for fiction writing, whilst Woolf approached the cinema as aesthete and critic in a manner similar to many of the female *Close Up* writers explored in Chapter 3.

Chapter 6 Modernist / middlebrow: Virginia Woolf, Winifred Holtby and cinema

This chapter looks at the critical and fictional writing of two distinct British female authors responding to cinema in the late silent era, tracing the modernist and middlebrow writing of Virginia Woolf and Winifred Holtby respectively. The chapter looks firstly at conceptualizations of Holtby and Woolf's differing readership and audience address, and how this relates to their cinema writing and contribution to female film culture.

The chapter then turns to explore Woolf's writing about film in her critical essay 'The Cinema' (1926). I offer Woolf as an example of the highbrow female creative writer engaging with cinematic discourses in the late silent era. Her interaction with cinematic concepts, cinemagoing and spectating was complex, detached from the lowbrow connotations of the medium and its audience whilst professing an optimism for the aesthetic possibilities of film.

Sharing many of the attitudes of H.D. and overlapping with the modernist approach of the *Close Up* group, Woolf represents a singular intellect whose discussion of cinema circulated within a limited field. While her work offers a fascinating intellectual critique of the experience of cinema, its dismissal of popular cinema and emphasis upon experimental film limits its value for an understanding of a broader female film culture.

The second half of the chapter moves to investigate Holtby's use of the cinema as a counterpoint to Woolf. Rather than seeking to simplistically polarize these figures, the chapter asks what was distinct about Holtby's use of fictionalized accounts of cinemagoing in her choice of creative fiction rather than criticism as a way of commenting upon and contributing to the creation of female film culture. Combining close readings of her fictionalizations of cinemagoing with detailed reference to materials from Holtby's personal correspondence and biography, I ask how her middlebrow address enabled her to narrativize cinemagoing as way of reflecting upon contemporary norms for post-war British women concerning sex and marriage. Holtby's work is thus explored for its descriptive passages detailing female cinematic encounters, offering examples of the ways in which cinema functioned both as a creative literary tool, and as a site of specifically feminine significance.

Modernist / middlebrow authorship and cinema

Winifred Holtby (1898 – 1935) worked as both a journalist and a novelist across the silent era, sustaining a substantial popular presence in British literary and journalistic spheres and publishing seven novels between 1923 and 1936¹ which met with moderate critical and popular success. Holtby frequently referenced women's cinemagoing in her fiction and journalism, writing for over twenty

¹ The last of which, *South Riding*, was published posthumously after her death in 1935.

newspapers and magazines in her lifetime², maintaining a weekly column for the trade union magazine *The Schoolmistress* in the 1920s and writing and broadcasting for the BBC and its supporting publication *The Radio Times*. Holtby was also a politically active figure; appointed a director of the feminist journal *Time and Tide* in 1926, her writing for the publication placed her “at the hub of feminist activity, political ferment, and cultural commentary” (Joannou vii) in interwar Britain.

Virginia Woolf (1882 – 1941), essayist, publisher, novelist and short story writer, worked within a literary sphere distinctly removed from Holtby’s middlebrow authorship. One of the foremost modernist literary figures in the interwar period, Woolf was prominent within London society and a member of the Bloomsbury Group³. Like Holtby, Woolf was a prolific writer, and one who moved between spheres of fiction writing and criticism, producing nine novels in her lifetime and a wealth of critical essays.

Holtby’s public image was that of successful professional spinster, whose writing was enjoyed by a diverse audience.⁴ Woolf’s public persona as an author was less overt, and less present in popular fields. The highly experimental nature

² Including *The Manchester Guardian*, *The News Chronicle*, *The New Statesman*, *The New Leader*, *Woman’s Journal*, *Good Housekeeping* and *The Yorkshire Post*.

³ The group was a collection of English intellectuals (including figures such as Mary MacCarthy, Vanessa Bell, Lytton Strachey and Clive Bell) who held informal discussions based in the Bloomsbury area of central London during the first half of the twentieth century.

⁴ As Gill Fildes (2010) has shown, testament to Holtby’s widespread popularity was witnessed in the influx of letters sent to *Time and Tide* after her untimely death in 1935, penned by self-labeled “ordinary” or “average nobody” readers, lamenting her passing and praising her work. Unpublished work presented at Winifred Holtby colloquium 2007.

Figure 6.1

Winifred Holtby Bibliography, 1911-1937

Novels

- *Anderby Wold* (1923)
- *The Crowded Street* (1924)
- *The Land of Green Ginger* (1927)
- *Poor Caroline* (1931)
- *The Astonishing Island* (1933)
- *Mandoa, Mandoa!* (1933)
- *South Riding: an English landscape* (1936)

Collections

- *My Garden: and other poems* (1911)
- *Truth is Not Sober: and other stories* (1934)
- *The Frozen Earth: and other poems* (1935)

Non-fiction

- *A New Voter's Guide to Party Programmes* (1929)
- *Virginia Woolf* (1932)
- *Women in a Changing Civilization* (1934)
- *Letters to a Friend* (1937)

Figure 6.2

Virginia Woolf Bibliography, 1915-1941

Novels

- *The Voyage Out* (1915)
- *Night and Day* (1919)
- *Jacob's Room* (1922)
- *Mrs Dalloway* (1925)
- *To the Lighthouse* (1927)
- *Orlando: A Biography* (1928)
- *The Waves* (1931)
- *The Years* (1937)
- *Between the Acts* (1941)

Short Fiction Collections

- *Two Stories* (1917)
- *Monday or Tuesday* (1921)

Biographies

(Virginia Woolf published three books which she gave the subtitle "A Biography")

- *Orlando: A Biography* (1928)
- *Flush: A Biography* (1933)
- *Roger Fry: A Biography* (1940)

Book length essays

- *A Room of One's Own* (1929)
- *On Being Ill* (1930)
- *Three Guineas* (1938)

Essay collections

- *Modern Fiction* (1919)
- *The Common Reader* (1925)
- *The London Scene* (1931)
- *The Common Reader: Second Series* (1932)

Drama

- *Freshwater: A Comedy* edited by Lucio P. Ruotolo with drawings by Edward Gorey (performed 1923, revised 1935, published 1976)

of her novel writing precluded a wide popularist audience, whilst her journalistic work, publishing essays and writing for *The Times Literary Supplement*, was distinctly highbrow. While Holtby adopted an “older, non-experimental style or writing that allowed for a transparency and accessibility of moral meaning” (Shaw vi), Woolf’s modernist writing was defined by its aesthetic experimentation.

Holtby conceived of her own audience as broad, referring to her readership as “that great intermediate class of the ‘novel reading public’” (qtd. Regan 10). Holtby was acutely aware of her own class and cultural background and its impact upon both her authorial persona and the style of literature she produced. Holtby hailed from a North Yorkshire farming community, raised by parents who, as Marion Shaw assesses, “were well off but had few aesthetic and intellectual pretensions” (v).⁵

Lacking Woolf’s aristocratic lineage, Holtby nonetheless drew considerable creative and cultural strength from the specificity of her class background. The influence of her upbringing—rural, agricultural—held sway over Holtby’s understanding of her location within the literary landscape of early twentieth century Britain. Holtby cultivated a voice which addressed the feminine

⁵ Woolf directly conceptualized the substantial class division between the two writers and their literary output in private correspondence, rather ungenerously referring to her contemporary as “poor, gaping Holtby” (qtd. in Bell and McNeillie, 117), “the daughter of a Yorkshire farmer [who] learned to read, I’m told, while minding the pigs” (qtd. in Nicolson and Trautmann, 114). Woolf explicitly criticized Holtby along class lines, referring to her as “rather uncouth” (qtd. Lee 614).

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis/dissertation for copyright reasons

Figure 6.3 Virginia Woolf, circa 1902 (Photograph by George Charles Beresford, copyright National Portrait Gallery, London)

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis/dissertation for copyright reasons

Figure 6.4 Winifred Holtby, here photographed on holiday. Image: Winifred Holtby Collection, Hull, L WH/9/9.3/01 (reproduced from Lisa Regan's edited volume, *Winifred Holtby, 'A Woman In Her Time': Critical Essays*, pp.x)

experience of being in-between—between lower and upper-class, between traditional agriculture and modern industry, and between rural and urban. This sense of the middle-ground was acutely gendered in her work, and was something she related specifically to the cinema as a female cultural practice.

Holtby for her part was very much a self-identified cinema fan, engaged both with the resonance of cinemagoing for women and with the exciting possibilities of cinema for women's fiction writing. Holtby also saw cinema as heavily influential upon Woolf. She chose to dedicate an entire chapter of her 1931 critical memoir of Woolf's writing to the subject. While Woolf's engagement with film was not overt within her fictions as a setting or activity for her characters, Holtby argues that her novel writing in the mid-twenties was nonetheless strongly coloured by a sense of cinematic style.

Describing Woolf's utilization of "new tools" (117), Holtby asserts that the writer employs the "cinematograph technique" (117) in the construction of *Jacob's Room* (1922). Holtby qualifies this concept by the screenplay style of the prose and "pictorial quality" (177) of the presentation of "thoughts and memories" (117). She argues that the book "could be transferred straight on to film" (117).

Her attention to the cinematic qualities of Woolf's prose may say more, however, about Holtby's enthusiasm for the medium than Woolf's. Failing to establish any sense of Woolf as a cinemagoer, Holtby's imposition of the

“cinematograph technique” is a relatively abstract thesis, testifying to her own strong engagement with the influence of cinema, cinematic representations and the stylistic qualities of its mode of narrative address.

Woolf and ‘The Cinema’ (1926)

Elaine Showalter, bringing Holtby’s arguments about the “cinematograph technique” into contemporary critical discussion, has similarly argued that Woolf’s fiction in the 1920s was coloured by the influence of cinema and the influx of American films within British culture in the 1920s. Showalter links the properties of Woolf’s experimental prose to the formal qualities of cinema:

Woolf makes use of such devices as montage, close-ups, flashbacks, tracking shots, and rapid cuts in constructing a three-dimensional story. Such transitional devices would have been familiar to her readers, who were flocking to the new cinema houses and seeing the latest American silent films (xxi).

Showalter’s reading of Woolf’s use of cinematic style echoes Holtby’s argument for the cinematic nature of Woolf’s literary technique. Holtby goes so far as to re-represent the opening scenes of Woolf’s novel *Jacob’s Room* (1922) in the form of a film scenario, re-structuring Woolf’s narrative flow to reflect stylistic choices that

seem to mirror those of a filmmaker; she describes the novel as beginning “as any producer might” (117).

Challenging this conceptualization, David Trotter argues that critics since Holtby “may be wrong to pursue analogies between literary and cinematic form, and to identify one as cause and the other as effect” (14). Rather, Trotter argues,

It is more likely to be the case that there was, for a period during the mid-1920s, a fund of shared preoccupation; and that Woolf drew on this fund in developing a particular emphasis in her novels. The emphasis would no doubt have been developed anyway. But it gained in definition and force because she was in the intermittent habit of going to the movies (14).

Like all the female writers explored across the thesis thus far, Woolf was a cinemagoer, and in that respect a variation upon the persona of the cinema fan. Traces of her awareness of cinema emerge in *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), for example, where a brief direct reference to cinemagoing is present. Woolf describes office-workers heading off to the pictures:

. . . the young people went by . . . awfully glad to be free . . . joy of a kind, cheap, tinselly, if you like, but all the same rapture flushed their faces. They dressed well too; pink stockings; pretty shoes. They would now have two hours at the pictures (177).

The singular passage implies an awareness of the leisure time luxury that the picture palace offered working-class female patrons, here enthused with a “cheap” joy in their smart clothing.

This focus, touched upon briefly by Woolf, was expanded upon greatly in Holtby’s fiction, which grasped the working-class female cinemagoing act as a rich source of creative reflection upon contemporary women’s lives. Woolf chose, however, to offer her own extended discussion of cinema within a different format, allowing her to occupy a distinct position of critical authority and intellectual objectivity.

Woolf’s 1926 critical essay on film was entitled simply ‘The Cinema’, appearing in the June edition of the New York journal *Arts*. The essay described her interpretive response to cinema as documentary, mainstream film, and the possibilities of avant-garde cinema, concluding that cinema had the potential of great art if it was to be taken up by great artists and the peculiarities of its representational discourse embraced to the full.

Seeking to explain her interest in the medium, Trotter has traced through archival sources evidence of Woolf’s attendance of a Film Society screening in 1926 that he believed exposed her to the possibilities of experimental film, as addressed in her essay. Woolf’s patronage of the Film Society was in keeping with its highbrow membership described in Chapter 3, and certainly would

explain her familiarity with the avant-garde European cinema mentioned in her essay—Woolf offhandedly makes reference to being “at a screening of *Dr Caligari* the other day” (1). Tracing evidence of Leonard Woolf’s attendance of Film Society screenings in his diaries and noting the rarity of being able to see a screening of *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* by 1926, seven years after its release, Trotter concludes that Woolf would most likely have viewed the film at the Society’s special screening.

Yet while the evidence of Woolf’s involvement with the Film Society provides interesting links between her highbrow criticism and the highbrow aspirations of the Film Society group, Trotter does not examine in detail the subject of Woolf’s discussion of cinema’s audience(s) within her essay. My aim is to foreground Woolf’s views on the gendered experience of cinemagoing in order to better locate her within a sense of British female film culture at this time.

Woolf begins and closes her essay with a gesture towards the mass audience, which she describes as “the savages of the twentieth century watching the pictures” (1). Located within the contemporary journal *Arts*, the piece was published as a display of Woolf’s exemplary critical writing and distinctive stylistic literary persona, addressed a limited readership. The journal targeted not the average cinema fan but instead the intellectual consumer of ‘the arts’ in general. Woolf’s depiction of the “savage” audiences is therefore not particularly surprising. Like many of the *Close Up* writers—H.D. in particular—Woolf was

not under commercial pressure to address this audience, distancing the modernist intellect and experimental film project from the mass public.

Woolf's interest in the cinema consumed by these "savages" is related to the language of the medium. She discusses the mainstream "picture-makers" (1) and the manner in which they compensate for the lack of a spoken language on film by adopting a simplistic representational dialect to communicate narrative, characterization and emotion. In mainstream cinema, "A kiss is love. A broken cup is jealousy. A grin is happiness. Death is a hearse" (1). This basic system of symbols constitutes a linguistic codex with which the "savage" mass audience is familiar and competent.

Woolf privileges a more representational discourse over this simplified system of mime, calling upon filmmakers to embrace what is unique about the cinema—its "innumerable symbols for emotions" (1-2). Offering insight into the possibilities of such a discourse, Woolf describes a moment in which she experiences, as a spectator, the intrusion of a shadow "shaped like a tadpole" (1) on the cinema screen as she watches the screening of *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari*. The unintentional effect absorbs Woolf's attention, overwhelming her engagement with the narrative of the film.

Woolf explains that "for a moment it seemed as if thought could be conveyed by shape more effectively than by words" (1). The unexpected intrusion supersedes the film's attempts to convey the physical demonstration of

fear. Rather, Woolf explains, “the monstrous quivery tadpole seemed to be fear itself, and not the statement ‘I am afraid’” (1). Woolf draws from this experience the suggestion that the experimental use of symbols unique to the cinema as a visual medium could be able to “suggest so much more than the actual gestures and words of men and women” (1).

She effectively rejects, therefore, both mainstream and existing avant garde cinema. *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* was representative of German Expressionism’s aesthetic approach to the representation of emotional states; a “highly stylized” text (Marcus 348), the film featured “painted backdrops, reminiscent of Expressionist theatre” and had a “significant role as the film that ‘converted’ many intellectuals to the cinema, elevating it from a mass or popular form to the status of high culture” (Marcus 348-9). Woolf’s disregard for the content of the film itself underlines her interest in the as yet unexplored possibilities of the symbolic mode of cinema, distinct from even the critically acclaimed expressionist experiment film.

Concluding her essay, Woolf brings these observations to bear on her opening thesis concerning the ill-suited nature of the existing mass audience and existing filmmakers to an appreciation of such a system of symbols. Cinema:

. . . can say everything before it has anything to say. It is as if the savage tribe, instead of finding two bars of iron to play with, had found scattering the seashore

fiddles, flutes, saxophones, trumpets, grand pianos by Erard and Bechstein, and had begun with incredible energy, but without knowing a note of music, to hammer and thump upon them all at the same time (2).

Woolf's link between "savage" audience and "savage" cinema echoes the criticism of H.D. and C.A. Lejeune. Choosing to analyze one particular film as representative of mainstream cinema's "disastrous" (1) attempts to adequately depict great works from alternate art forms in its own representational discourse, Woolf comments upon *Anna Karenina*. The novel had been filmed seven times since 1910, in Germany, Russia, American, France and Hungary. Woolf's essay demonstrates a knowledge of this kind of mainstream film culture. Her frustration with the "picture-makers'" disregard for the artistic possibilities of the seemingly mundane details of reality—"the flight of gulls, ships on the Thames . . . Mile End Road, Piccadilly Circus" (2)—implies the alternate desires that the cinema serves as an entertainment form in offering unreal representations to the spectator.

The savage mass audience lingers on the borders of the essay, gendered discreetly in Woolf's association between mainstream film and the representation of melodramatic and romantic themes associated with women's cinema in her description of the depiction of screen kisses and emotions and romantic women's film like *Anna Karenina*.

A conceptualization of cinemagoing rather than the formal aspects of cinema production would potentially have given Woolf greater scope for the consideration of gender issues, where she conceives of herself as a watching member of an audience “at a performance . . . the other day” (1). Yet Woolf chooses not to dwell on those seated around her.⁶ Her discussion of the feminized “savage” would seem to chime with Georgina Taylor’s assertion that “the fear of ‘mass’ films” (132) expressed by many modernist female writers was “yet another manifestation of the general attitude of superiority . . . towards the ‘masses’, a manifestation of the desire to create or preserve an ‘intellectual aristocracy’ by keeping the cinema as a pure and uncontaminated space” (132). Greater attention to this kind of audience can be traced within Winifred Holtby’s work.

Holtby: cinemagoing female characters

Winifred Holtby’s fiction writing engages the concept of the feminine middlebrow, explored in detail by Nicola Humble in her 2004 study of feminist literature between the wars. Humble describes the middlebrow as the literature of the middle-classes, crossing genre boundaries and “established through a complex interplay between texts and the desires and self images of their readers”

⁶ Her audience would most likely have been, as Trotter’s research has shown, members of the Film Society, and thereby fellow upper-middle to upper-class spectators drawn from the spectrum of arts and social sciences in contemporary Britain—very much distinct from the ‘everyday’ audience of the picture palace or local theatre.

(5). Middlebrow literature essentially concerns class and the home, with an emphasis upon a community of readers who, Humble argues, constituted the “majority of people” (2) in the interwar period, disrupting notions of a synonymous relationship between the popular and the working classes. Humble sees the feminine middlebrow novel as:

. . . one that straddles the divide between the trashy romance or thriller on the one hand, and the philosophically or formally challenging novel on the other: offering narrative excitement without guilt, and intellectual stimulation without undue effort (11).

The middlebrow novel bridged the gap between Woolf’s low-circulation, high literary modern publication and the romantic excesses of the writing of authors like Elinor Glyn, retaining a core commercial ethic yet still able to tap into provocative debate around contemporary issues of modern living, gender and class. Humble conceives of middlebrow fiction as adapting and responding to changes in tastes and culture, sensitive to the “changing demands of the market” (28) and flexible enough to ensure its commercial status.

Alison Light’s 2004 study of interwar femininity and literature offers further insight into the relationship between class and the classification of fiction along an intellectual hierarchy in the twenties. Light traces a post-war shift from

heroically masculine imperialist nationality to an inward-looking, feminized private rationality played out in fiction writing.

Light is interested in the ways in which “the modern” is diffused in postwar middlebrow fiction in relation to class and gender, and the way in which women’s writing in this sphere created “modern sensibilities in their most commonplace and common-sense forms” (217).

As a middlebrow writer, Holtby’s writing was strongly engaged with modern culture, blending an older world of rural traditionalism with contemporary urban experiences, demonstrating a strong interest in cinema. Holtby’s popular appeal, and appeal to popular forms like the cinema within her works, enabled her to critique traditionalist middle-class norms. Lisa Regan argues that Holtby consistently pressed her readers “towards a more questioning and critical view of their world” (10). I argue that Holtby does this predominantly through her focus upon lower and lower-middle class female characters and their interaction with cinema, emphasizing their status as in-between figures in relation to class and gender norms by bringing these issues into sharp relief within representations of cinema space.

Holtby’s fictional depiction of cinemagoing was informed by her own fandom, as evidenced in her personal correspondence. As an enthusiast of popular cinema, Holtby was sensitive to the variety of needs it served as a daily, cheap and easily accessible entertainment form. Her letter writing in the 1920s

makes frequent reference to her enjoyment of popular entertainment forms in general—she was a frequenter of the theatre, the music hall, and occasionally the pantomime—and of cinema visits in particular. She documents her use of the cinema as a place of escape, amusement and diversion. Unlike Woolf, Holtby's frequent discussion of her own cinemagoing within such sources enables us to position Holtby quite specifically as a cinemagoer.

In an extended passage from a letter to Jeanie MacWilliam in 1926, for example, Holtby describes her response to the Charlie Chaplin film *The Gold Rush* (U.S., Charlie Chaplin, 1925):

It is a masterful film, and Charlie's performance had the thoroughness and exquisite finish of genius. In the whole long film—I have seen it twice and intend to do so many times more—I cannot detect a flashing second in which he wastes an opportunity for effect. There is pure joy in the contemplation of anything so admirably done, and simple and sentimental as the story may be, there is a pathos, a humanity, and a true aesthetic beauty of significance about it . . . Like all great art, it reveals more even than the intention of the artist—and yet it is based upon a slap-stick farce, with a few good snow scenic effects. But see if for yourself, and I hope you laugh as much as I did⁷.

⁷ Winifred Holtby to Jean McWilliam, 24 Aug. 1926. Source: *Letters to a Friend* (see works cited).

Her admiration for the artistry of Chaplin's film is combined with a strong sense of her own fandom—"I have seen it twice and intend to do so many times more". She demonstrates a fluid critique shifting between the simple pleasures of good quality mainstream cinema—"pure joy . . . simple and sentimental story"—and the ways in which such cinema can nevertheless achieve something more powerful and more meaningful, gesturing towards "pathos" and a "true aesthetic of beauty and significance". She seizes here upon a symbol of popular film culture in Chaplin, and embraces the performer as a creator of "great art", not in spite of his popularist medium but rather because of it.

In other letters, Holtby talks favorably of similar comedy stars, particularly Harold Lloyd. She recounts taking her father to see Lloyd in *For Heaven's Sake* (U.S., Sam Taylor, 1926) to "cheer him after his sister's funeral", recalling that she and her sister "laughed till we were heartily sick"⁸. She declares Lloyd "good, though not such a creative artists as Charlie Chaplin"⁹. Another letter to McWilliam recounts her enjoyment of the cinema as a regular aspect of an evening leisure excursion; "I have spent the rest of the week recovering my mental and digestive equilibrium and yesterday went to the movies by way of a gin and bitters after a night out"¹⁰.

⁸ Winifred Holtby to Jean McWilliam, March 1927. Source: *Letters to a Friend* (see works cited).

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Winifred Holtby to Jean McWilliam, March 1922. Source: *Letters to a Friend* (see works cited).

Such letters enable us to trace Holtby's interpretation of her own cinemagoing experiences within her fiction writing from this perspective of enthusiasm and reflection. Holtby's female cinemagoer was represented not as a threatening or intellectually void figure in her writing, but rather as a figure in whom she observed a sophisticated interaction with the new representational practices of modern media, seeing cinema as overlapping with other sites of popular entertainment like the women's magazine and the radio.

She describes a maid character in *South Riding*, for example, as:

. . . like most of her generation . . . trilingual. She talked BBC English to her employer, cinema American to her companions, and Yorkshire dialect to old milkmen like Eli Dickson (18).

The maid Elsie is clearly a fan, but is able to mediate her familiarity with popular leisure discourses by incorporating them into multiple versions of self-image, retaining an awareness of their appropriate usage. She skillfully negotiates the in-between qualities of her everyday experiences as a working-class woman and leisure consumer. Holtby portrays the character as a representative of a new

'trilingual' generation of women assimilating the influx of cinematic representations into the texture of their daily lives.¹¹

South Riding offers further passages recreating women's cinemagoing experience in the late twenties and early thirties. The novel is deeply rooted in the experience of rural English life at the turn of the decade¹², situating itself very much in the daily experiences of a cross-section of female characters. Cinema features several times throughout the novel as a spatial and representational arena in which subtle negotiations take place between personal 'everyday' female experiences, gendered filmic representations and broader cultural norms surrounding courtship and domesticity.

Super cinema escapism

The experiences of two female cinema-going characters are described in detail in *South Riding*; those of Lily Sawdon and Mrs. Brimsley. Terminally ill Lily, the wife of the new landlord of the local pub, is drawn to the city super-cinema as a city centre excursion directed by her husband to "Buy a new hat; go to the pictures. Have a good tea" (210).

¹¹ A *Picturegoer* article from 1912, for example, offers a detailed explanation of 'American Words and Phrases', asserting that "Readers are continually asking us the meaning of various words of American extraction which they have seen on the picture screen" (17 Aug. 1912: 28). The glossary includes a list of American phrases and their "British equivalents" (ibid), with words such as "DEAD BEAT—A tramp" and "CHORES—small jobs around a farm or house" (ibid). The proposal of the glossary as "a regular feature" (ibid) speaks to the willingness of the magazines' largely female readership to assimilate American terminology.

¹² Mirroring in its structure the division of local government with section headings such as 'Education', 'Highways and Bridges' and 'Agriculture and Small-Holdings', etc.

As a public female space, the cinema is here an intermediary site for Lily between an isolated rural world of “bare fields” and “cottage gardens” (293) and busy city life. Cinema enables the character to make a temporary transition from the domestic sphere into an alternate form of privacy in the public arena as an anonymous member of the city crowd and of the cinema audience.

By placing Lily within a luxurious super cinema, Holtby works to dispel the lingering negative connotations of the flea pit theatres of an earlier period. Her working-class female character is able to afford entry to this reputable, richly adorned, clean urban space, and once inside interacts with cinematic images as an engaged, critical spectator.

Holtby describes the gaudy exterior of her fictional cinema within which women can be seen displayed to the street “in green arm-chairs eating muffins behind great sheets of plate glass” (214). The sight of these women tempts Lily inside: the character is enticed not by the thought of watching any specific film, but by the promise of mirroring the activities of the women on show, drawn towards the rest and comfort the theatre offers with “the thought of tea and toast” (214).

Within the super-cinema Holtby describes a feminized environment in which women visit the theatre restaurant. A dream-like quality dominates the semi-erotic descriptive prose of the passage. The vast tea-room is supported by pillars that “swelled into branching archways” (214) towards a ceiling painted

with images of cupid, whilst a “fountain of music throbbed and quivered” (214) and toast is served “dripping with butter” (214). Lily “lays back” in her “richly padded” (214) velvet seat, preempting the padded seats of the auditorium.¹³

Holtby’s description reinforces Nicholas Hiley’s assertion that spectators in this era bought time in the theatre rather than particular films. The character here purchases access to an environment of escapist luxury in which time loses its hold on her experience; the ethereal description of the tea room draws the character towards nostalgic retreat as she recalls her courtship, dancing with her husband as “their bodies melted together” (214).

Lily’s interaction with actual films in the picture palace is thus described as a secondary experience, one aspect of the cinema trip not privileged above other opportunities for rest and consumption. What stands out most for the character is the contrast between the fictional experiences of the female star performance on screen and her own real-life difficulties in coping with her terminal illness. Holtby describes the character viewing the 1931 film *Mata Hari* (U.S., George Fitzmaurice, 1931), the semi-fictionalized story of an exotic dancer accused of spying for Germany in the First World War:

Mata too was condemned to death, thought Lily. And what a lot of fuss they made about it.

¹³ A feature of the theatre space often referred to in this era as distinctly feminine, described by C. A. Lejeune as “women’s seats” that had “no masculine build” (*Manchester Guardian*. 16 Jan. 1926: 9).

Her pride rose and enfolded her. It wrapped her away from contact with other watchers of the screen, the shoppers in the street.

She sat through the film and left the cinema (215).

An early sound film, *Mata Hari* starred Greta Garbo as the doomed spy. Betsy Erkkila has explored the cultural connotations of Garbo's screen and extra-textual star image at the turn of the decade, arguing that:

What stands out in Garbo's performance in film after film is not her passivity but her active presence as a tension, a resistance, an opposition within the film text . . . Embodying both fleshly and otherworldly powers, Garbo's screen characters often seem to exist both within and outside the film frame (Erkkila 597).

This conceptualization of dual existences offers parallels for Holtby's depiction of Lily as a female character living dual lives through the keeping secret of her illness¹⁴. Her interaction with her husband increasingly becomes a performance as she contains the knowledge of her failing health.

Her detachment and her want for "only the freedom to retire to that dim no-man's-land where she and her pain lived . . . in isolation" (209) would seem to mirror Garbo's performative style within the screen fiction she observes. The

¹⁴ Lily's condition echoes Holtby's own failing health at the writing of *South Riding*. Holtby died before its publication.

connection between Garbo and the character is echoed the repetition of variations upon the line “I want to be alone” in Garbo’s early talking films, which indelibly linked her star persona to the image and utterance of isolation and detachment (as Ardent Suart in *The Single Standard* (U.S., John S. Robertson, 1929): “I am walking alone because I want to be alone”; as Grusinskaya in *Grand Hotel* (France, Edmund Goulding, 1932): “I want to be alone”).

An open letter to the 1937 edition of *Theatre Arts Monthly* speaks of Garbo’s emotional detachment in *Mata Hari* as representative of her screen performances at the turn of the decade, describing it as “a highly finished piece of somnambulism. You were clever and sophisticated; but emotionally you were walking in your sleep” (952). This kind of emotional removal from all the “fuss” surrounding Garbo’s character in *Mata Hari* mirrors Lily’s own withdrawal.

Knowledge of Garbo’s off-screen persona at the turn of the decade further bolsters Holtby’s connection between her character and the star. In the late twenties, Garbo went on strike in protest against the poor scripts offered her by MGM. The strike became public knowledge, and Erkkila describes Garbo’s early thirties screen character’s “cool removal” (602) as reflecting her resistance to her casting in plots of “silly love-making” (602). Garbo as *Mata Hari*, therefore, provides an apt counterpart for Lily; the character shares her fate, ultimately bound for death, whilst the simultaneous presence of Garbo the star is an inflection of irritation with the constraints of assigned role. In Lily’s case, this is

the role of the dutiful wife, and her own “somnambulistic” performance of the daily rituals of this role in an effort to hide her illness and suffering from those around her.

As a regular cinemagoer,¹⁵ it was more than likely that Holtby would have been familiar with the connotations of Garbo’s star image and have witnessed her performances. Her use of this particular film and female star as a mirroring device for Lily assumes a similar knowledge on behalf of her readership.

Cinemagoing spinsters and widows

Holtby’s choice of creative fiction as the vehicle for her views upon cinemagoing and its fundamental connection to female norms surrounding marriage and partnership, as opposed to Woolf’s choice of the critical essay, allows the author to offer up such contrasts by constructing a detailed internal monologue running parallel with the screen narrative. Rather than speculating on the appeal of screen romance, she mediates the narrative through characters to which the reader is given complete access.

Bringing cinema into a further character thread in *South Riding*—that of Mrs. Brimsley, Holtby thus encourages the reader to view the screen through Brimsley’s eyes, rather than to conceive of the character objectively as an anonymous figure within the cinema space. Offering a secondary cinematic

¹⁵ Holtby’s editor for her work on *The Schoolmistress*, Evelyne White, noted that “there were few pictures of note she did not see” (120).

encounter from the point of view of an alternate lower-middle class female character—one distinctly different in lifestyle and personality to Lily—Holtby avoids a reductive conceptualization of the female spectator.

Mrs. Brimsley, a regional small holder, is introduced to the narrative as an embattled character, fighting with her family over dinner. In her first utterance, the character references cinemagoing as a byword for independent female leisure, justifying her frustration as an under-appreciated domestic laborer with reference to her lack of access to the movies. Upset that her son wishes to marry a girl that she does not approve of, Mrs. Brimsley watches him storm out of the family home in anger:

. . . she awoke to the enormity of her son's behavior.

'How dared he? How dared he? After all I've done for him. No one can say a better cook lives in the South Riding. I work my fingers to the bone. Stay in night after night. Never been so much as to the pictures for three years. And he throws it back into my face.' (330)

Cinema is here seized upon as the emblem of reward for female domestic labour and duty. Accordingly, the character flees her home in the wake of the argument, deciding upon a trip to the cinema as an act of defiance and refusal of her maternal chores:

'You can wash you own pots,' she announced.

'Where i'you going, Ma?' gasped George.

'The pictures!'

. . . And to the pictures she went, catching the afternoon bus to Kiplington (330).

Her defiance is carried through into her critical encounter with the film she sits and watches at the local cinema. Describing Mrs. Brimsley's spectatorial encounter as one tempered by her assessing, analytical internal monologue, Holtby empowers the character as an unofficial critic.

Holtby places Brimsley before a mainstream feature. Although she does not name a specific film, she suggests a familiar impression of a romantic narrative, referencing the film as a "screen drama" and "big romance" amidst "the news reel, all sport and soldiers, the comic, all American slang that she did not understand" (331). Dismissing the supplementary material surrounding the main feature, Holtby has Brimsley dismiss its influence. Unlike the young maid Elsie, the American slang fails to penetrate Brimsley's sense of self, remaining beyond her comprehension. Noting her rejection, Holtby sanctions the character as a discerning spectator, selecting those aspects of the multifaceted cinemagoing experience which appeal to her.

As she settles down for the “big romance”, the character’s praise is equally scattered with critical challenges and commentary. While at first she declares the film “lovely” (331), the emotions it arouses in her—“it filled her with vague longings” (332)—are swiftly interrogated. The sight of the heroine “languishing on the screen” (331) prompts her to recall the image of “her square, uncompromising reflection in the polished mirror above her chest of drawers” (331). The co-existence of the screen representation of romantic femininity and the frozen portrait of herself retained upon her own, internal screen of memory forces a comparison between the filmic incarnation femininity as youth and sexual desire and her experiences as a middle-aged woman.

As touched upon in the opening chapters, the status of women after the First World War was closely tied to conceptions of their usefulness in society. Single working women came under attack as “useless members of society” (Bruley 62), but so too did the figure of the aged spinster and widow. Holtby describes Mrs. Brimsley as deeply troubled by her family’s conceptualization of her usefulness; she is terrified that her son will replace her by marrying, ousting her from her position as matriarch. Brimsley conceives of her son as wanting to “rob her of her vocation, to bring another housekeeper into her domain” (330). Holtby explains that Brimsley “felt too young for that” (330). As a widower, Brimsley’s status is threatened by the presence of a daughter in law, who would legitimately occupy the position of domestic control as a young wife. The

sudden lack of clarity around her position within the family alerts Brimsley to the danger of her relegation to role of pseudo-spinster or 'old maid'—a figure frequently ridiculed in interwar media.

Janet Roebuck and Jane Slaughter have shown that from the turn of the century there existed widespread “popular expressions of concern for the ‘surplus of women’ in English society” (107). In particular, these anxieties were directed towards “the growing numbers of ‘old maids’ and widows” (Roebuck and Slaughter 107). With the onset of war, divisions between the female and male popular were exacerbated with the loss of huge numbers of men. The figure of the aged spinster was thus more prominent in this landscape of gender imbalance, with 65% of pensioners being female by 1919 (Roebuck and Slaughter 107).

Women like the Brimsley character, who had “never earned wages for their work in housekeeping and childraising” were “generally unable to make any financial provisions on their own account” (Roebuck and Slaughter 107) as they got older. Holtby’s description of Brimsley’s anxiety about her age and her usefulness to the family, therefore, echoed an acute problem for many widowed and single middle to older-aged women at this time.

Katherine Holden has argued that spinsters and widows were closely associated post-war in a society that privileged “marriage and nuclear families with male breadwinners and dependent wives over all other family formations”

(388). Spinsters were thus frequently conceptualized as “imaginary widows” (388). Alison Oram further traces the influence of sexology and psychology in the period, which “lent new weight to popular representations of the spinster as unfulfilled and sexually repressed” (413).

Holtby’s conflation of widow with spinster in the figure of Mrs. Brimsley, therefore—reinforced by popular stereotypes and wider knowledge of the pathologising of spinster’s sexuality in the emerged of ‘new’ sciences of sexology and psychology¹⁶--meant that the character and her specific anxieties would have been a familiar figure to a post-war generation of women.

Holtby’s choice of the cinema as a place of retreat for the widow/spinster character whose familial and cultural usefulness is under threat addresses this conflation. The caricature of the cinemagoing spinster was a prominent source of mockery in popular culture at this time. Cinema-themed postcard humour in particular ridiculed the aged or spinster female cinemagoer as a pathetic figure, whose lack of adjustment to sexual and familial norms lead her to the cinema space where fictions of love and romance could be consumed. Figures 6.5 and 6.6 show two British postcards from the 1920s ridiculing the aged spinster cinemagoer, depicting singular figures drawn to screen romances to indulge in the fantasy of what they have “missed”.

¹⁶ Marriage manuals were a significant form of the popular channelling of psychological beliefs about women’s enjoyment of sexuality and the normalisation of female sexual desire. Marie Stope’s *Married Love*, published in 1918, is an example of the substantial cultural currency of the concept of sexual happiness and marriage, reflecting negatively upon the figure of the unmarried, unsexed spinster.

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis/dissertation for copyright reasons

Figure 6.5 Comic postcard from 1925. Note the poster for Elinor Glyn's 'Three Weeks', here mockingly employed as the embodiment of romantic excess and physical passion. (Source: Bill Douglas Centre. Item no. EXEBDC 87610)

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis/dissertation for copyright reasons

Figure 6.6 Comic postcard from 1930 (Source: Bill Douglas Centre. Item no. EXEBDC 87631)

Holtby's description of the widow/spinster cinema encounter refutes this belittling stereotype, testifying to the overarching concern within her fictions with destabilizing a middle-class ideology concerning the place of unmarried women. As a life-long spinster herself, Holtby was keen to defend the unmarried woman against the frustrated spinster moniker.

Holtby chooses to focus upon the alternate uses that the lower-class widow/spinster makes of the cinema space directly in relation to issues of sexuality and marriage, challenging the simplistic equation between a feminine preference for romantic and sensational screen fictions and thwarted desire for normalized heterosexual partnership.

Holtby allows Mrs. Brimsley to use her consumption of screen romance as a way of reasserting her sense of self-identity. Brimsley watches as the woman on the screen leans back to "receive her lover's passionate embrace" (331). Her response is scolding: "If I caught one of my girls carrying on like that, I know what I'd do to her" (331). The scene helps the widow to affirm her threatened sense of maternal authority and usefulness. Brimsley recalls her own courtship in much more pragmatic terms:

She remembered the day when she threw the basket of gooseberries right into Nathaniel's face because she was so sick of its solemnity. The sequel to her

rebellion had been far from solemn. When 'Thaniel (she had never called her husband Nat) was roused, he was a One (331).

The image of her playful aggression and the physicality of this 'romantic' memory contrasts strongly with the passive reception of the male advance from her cinematic counterpart, offering a contrast between the ideal of the screen narrative and the practicalities of everyday romance.

The meditative insights of the character enable Holtby to offer a challenge, therefore, to the idea that the spinster/widow's enjoyment of cinema was uncritical, and led by a desire to immerse oneself within fantasy wish-fulfillment.

The Crowded Cinema: martial pressure and cinematic lessons

Holtby's fictionalization of cinematic encounters thus enabled a playful theorization of cinema experiences, anchored by particular female characters that offered subtle challenges to the reductive conceptualization of their gender and class. Attentive to the female use of cinema both in middle-age and youth, Holtby offered an earlier meditation on the cinema and middle-class female coming of age in *The Crowded Street* (1924).

The novel centers around Muriel, a young girl living in small town Yorkshire. A relatively passive character at the opening of the novel, Muriel is

subject to the pressures of securing a husband in order to conform to the snobbish values of her socially ambitious mother, who insists that marriage is the defining focus of her daughter's life. The threat of spinsterdom hovers on the boundaries of the character's experiences, enabling Holtby to explore and critique the ways in which such pressures were mediated through and/or potentially challenged by women's engagement with cinemagoing.

Nicola Humble has read *The Crowded Street* as generally seeking to trouble middle-class norms and values surrounding marriage and social-climbing. Lisa Regan further asserts that the novel "reveals how damaging these middle-class values can be" (10). Holtby herself was keenly aware that her own class of middlebrow fiction addressed a wide popular audience, upon whose "social and ethical values [were] constructed the social and ethical values of the middle-class" (Holtby, 'What We Read' 112). Holtby specifically constructs the cinema encounters of her heroine to both reflect and challenge these values, particularly focusing on the "damage" that their imposition can inflict upon of a generation of post-war young women.

Midway through the novel, Holtby places Muriel within a super cinema on a night out with her sister, Connie. Holtby presents the scene as a mediation between Muriel's changing viewpoint, alternating between her view of the screen and her voyeuristic observation of the film audience around her. The

alternation apes the effect of a camera lens shifting focus from background to foreground.

This fluid focus allows Muriel's engagement with the narrative and the character's awareness of herself as an individual within a communal space to share the present moment, enabling Holtby to move fluidly between the specific and personal. She describes in detail the impact of the character's dual spectatorship:

She turned from the triumph of the 'Mating Instinct' on the screen to its manifestation among the audience. She could watch the couple on her right, while they groped for each other's hands before the warm darkness shut them in together. She watched the couple on the screen, grimacing through a thousand flickering emotions . . . Why did everything always conspire to mock and hurt her? To show her how she sat alone, shut out from the complete and happy world?
(136-137)

Holtby envisages in the dual act of spectating a sense of how sexual, romantic and marital expectations are maintained by popular representations. Holtby describes the frustration that arises in witnessing the mimicry of the "competent heroine" in the real-life courtship Muriel observes in the theatre space; Muriel

professes to hate the film heroine and dislike the couple “so much that she wanted to hurt them” (137).

The violence of her reaction speaks to the sense the fictional romantic ideal as constricting, intensifying the societal and familial pressure placed upon the character to conform to marital norms. Holtby earlier depicts Muriel’s despair, for example, at finding in all her social and leisure outings that “everywhere life was regulated upon the partner system” (67).

Muriel’s frustration resides with her inability to glean a satisfactory sense of self-fulfillment, identity and purpose from her pursuit of a husband. Susan Kinsley Kent argues that in post-war Britain women were strongly encouraged “to think that they could find complete fulfillment in looking after home and family” (72). The middle-class incarnation of this ideal presented modern women as competent consumers of the technologically enhanced domestic space (with the advent and marketing of new household good and products) yet traditional in their acceptance of the role of wife and mother. The expanse in suburban estates enforced these gender norms for middle-class women, centralizing domesticity within rising standards of living.

Sue Bruley further argues that middle-class women were increasingly able to attain “a home of their own” (72) within these suburban sites, and therefore attained greater privacy. The flipside of this development, however, was a weakening of “community bonds” (72). This weakening suggests a reason for the

boom in circulation of popular forms like the women's magazine, which "gave women recipes, handy tips for sewing and housework and ways to keep their man content" (72). Such forms constituted a generalized ideal of modern femininity to which women could aspire in the wake of the lessening of the communal domestic experience.¹⁷

The cinema's part in this presentation of ideals was, as Holtby shows through the description of Muriel's cinematic encounter, threefold. It allowed for the simultaneous representation of gender ideals on screen, the bringing of the cinema fan's extra-textual knowledge of the gender ideal presented in fan discourses (as will be looked at in detail in the next chapter) to their observance of the screen performances of female stars, and the chance to observe a communal display of other women's gender performance within the theatre space.

Holtby thus describes the veneration of the female star on screen by Muriel's sister Connie, who praises her as "ripping" (137), reinforcing the sense of pressure upon Muriel to share the enjoyment of the romantic heroine. This pressure prompts an attempt by the character to graft a fiction of romantic success onto the memory of her singular encounter with the opposite sex:

¹⁷ Bruley describes the distinct division between the enclosed suburban home and the former domestic experience of women "living in over-crowded rooms, collecting water from an outside tap and waiting their turn for use of the cooker on the landing" (72).

The thought that she too had known romance came to her from the scented darkness of the cinema. For the first time she felt pride in the episode at Scarborough. She began to hug the thought that if they all know what had happened to her then, they would feel greater interest in her (137-138).

The character refers to an earlier incident in the novel in which her mother attempts to pair her off with the eligible bachelor Godfrey Neale. Holtby's detailed description of Muriel's revisiting and reconfiguring of this experience within the cinema space emphasizes the influence of gender norms presented in film culture, but also the ways in which female spectators were able to deconstruct and reconstruct such representations in small yet significant ways.

Muriel attempts to find a way to cope with the idea of Clare, for example—her rival in love for Godfrey's affections—by transposing a cinematic persona and conventions upon her, imagining Clare as a vamp-like “strange wild beauty” (138) tempting Godfrey away “through perils and dark places” (138). The fantasy leads Muriel to impose a cinematic extravagance upon her self-constructed narrative. In this filmic rendering of her life, Muriel recasts herself as an epic romantic heroine “like Mariana in the Moated Grange . . . like Elaine the Lily Maid of Astolot” (138)¹⁸. Embracing these mythical literary figures as

¹⁸ Holtby here refers to Tennyson's poem *Mariana* (1830), which told the story of a woman who laments her lack of connection with society, her existence defined by her isolation. Tennyson drew the premise from Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*; his version was later adapted by John Everett Millard and

romanticized women sick with love, she pushes back the threatening modern curse of spinsterdom in her failed romantic life thus far.

Central to this fantasy, however, is its fleeting nature. Although Muriel leaves the cinema temporarily uplifted by the daydream, she rapidly begins “to remember that all this was nonsense” (138). Muriel’s ability to break the spell of the fantasy ideal offered by the screen is ultimately a source of power.

Holtby effectively reverses the cinematic convention of a ‘happy ending’ with the conclusion of her novel in which Muriel actively chooses a single life, offering a powerful counterpart to the screen encounter she describes by refuting the conventions of the romantic screen drama. Discussing in a personal letter a debate with one of her publishers as she was writing *The Crowded Street*, Holtby outlines her position on the “happy endings” of fictions, arguing that:

. . . my idea of a happy ending is where circumstances go right and wrong higgledy-piggledy, as they do in life, and at the end the hero or heroine is still undaunted, with plenty of hope and enjoyment of such fine things are left . . . not very gay, but more cheering really to people needing cheer.¹⁹

Elizabeth Gaskell. Elaine of Astolate was a figure for Arthurian legend, who died of her unrequited love for Lancelot. Tennyson adapted her story in *Idylls of the King* (1856) and the poem *The Lady of Shalott* (1833).

¹⁹ Winifred Holtby to Jean McWilliam, 20th Jun. 1922. Source: *Letters to a Friend* (see works cited).

This attitude is strongly related to the refutation of cinematic happy endings through Muriel, who eventually rejects an offer of marriage from Godfrey with an explanation that speaks to the development of her independent sense of self across the novel, no longer constrained by the crippling effect of marital pressure.

Escaping this fate, Holtby describes a profound change in Muriel as she explains her refusal to Godfrey, making particular reference to the strength she draws from female relationships. She credits her friendship with the educated and self-willed character Delia as a source of companionate self-definition, thereby diminishing the negative influence of the sense of comparison she felt in the cinema space with “competent” women courting and coupling:

If it hadn't been for Delia, I should have died – not with my body but with my mind . . . She let me see, not that the thing I had sought was not worth seeking, but simply that there were other things in life . . . I've actually got tastes and inclinations and a personality . . . Some day, perhaps, I may marry, but it won't be to you . . . I think I've always had in my head somewhere [an] idea of service – not just vague and sentimental, but translated into quite practical things. Maybe I'll do nothing with it, but I do know this, that if I married you I'd have to give up every new thing that has made me a person (269-270).

The passage embodies much of Holtby's personal philosophy regarding the status of the unmarried woman. Muriel's desire towards an active life, "translated into quite practical things", offers an echo of Holtby's identity as a jobbing witer, social activist and advocate of an array of "new things"—cinema, radio, work etc.—which offered opportunities for women to construct their own identities, "tastes and inclinations".

Read in relation to the cinemagoing description earlier in the novel, the passage reinforces the importance of this seemingly trivial leisure encounter. It is within Muriel's interaction with cinematic representation and the cinemagoing audience that Holtby locates many of the key threads that combine towards Muriel's assertion of self and independent identity beyond limiting definitions of gender and marital status. Her ability to connect with a female community and forge positive relationships with women comes through her unraveling of the urge to react with jealousy towards those women around her who achieve "sex success", as Holtby coins it. Rather, she learns to engage with female examples of independence, identifying with the dynamic figure of the University educated Delia with whom she moves to live in London.

By equating the romantic and sexual ideals with the fantasy of the screen, Holtby is able to diminish its power. Coding marital ideals as fantasies, Holtby demonstrates that their attainment is, while not impossible, not the singular defining factor in the lives of contemporary women.

Holtby thus found a valuable place for cinema and the female practices of cinemagoing within the middlebrow feminine novel. The fictionalization of the female experience facilitated an indirect, yet subtly powerful critique of contemporary norms surrounding gender, marriage and sexuality to which women across the social spectrum as cinemagoers and novel consumers were exposed.

Where Woolf's high literary modernist critique aspired towards cinema as art, Holtby's broader middlebrow address expressed a greater faith in the use of cinema as a female cultural practice directly engaging pressing modern concerns about the status of post-war British femininity across the life cycle. Her fictionalization of female cinemagoing experiences spoke to her broader political work and writing which attempted to challenge the marital pressures that Holtby described in her work for *Time and Tide* as causing girls to "rot away [sic] their youth, hag-ridden by the fear of middle age, of futility, of frustration"²⁰.

Holtby thus applauded cinema for the entertainment that it was able to offer female consumers, equally recognizing the ways in which film as a powerful medium could "extend knowledge and inform people in ways that would reach out further into the wider community, if given the chance" (Fildes 109). Her fictionalizations give cinema that chance, as it were, from within a literary medium, teasing out the cultural impact of cinematic representation and

²⁰ Holtby, Winifred. 'For Services Rendered' *Time and Tide* 19 Nov. 1935: 88.

the act of cinemagoing—both positive and negative—in relation to contemporary female experience.

The next two chapters move to explore more directly examples of the writing of the audience that Holtby fictionalized. Turning to women's writing within the fan magazine, the thesis now refocuses upon the female audience's conceptualization of itself and the popular practice of cinemagoing.

Chapter 7 British Fan Magazines and Female Readers

The female writers explored thus far across the thesis have presented, to different degrees, variations on the concept of the cinema 'fan', defined in varying relations to different types of film culture—some popular such as Iris Barry's embrace of mainstream film; some distinctly highbrow, as with H.D. and Virginia Woolf's attendance of avant garde screenings, and some, like Winifred Holtby occupying a middle ground between the two. I turn now to explore the writing of women who directly identified themselves as fans in their interaction with British fan magazines. My aim is to explore how the fan magazine constructed a specific female address, and to analyze this address in relation to the letter and poetry writing of female fans contributing these magazines.

Film fandom offers a vital insight for the feminist researcher into the ways in which women related cinemagoing and cinema culture to their everyday experiences. Fandom can be understood as a site upon which film consumers negotiate processes of identification and desire in the extended act of consumption beyond the exhibition site. From within a dominant system of representation of which they are not the primary authors, silent era British female fans formed communities of readers, creatively interpreting cinema

culture frequently in relation to their everyday experiences, strongly shaped by their class, working and marital status.

Henry Jenkins has conceptualized the relationship between a fan's everyday life and the object of fandom, arguing that:

The text is drawn close not so that the fan can be possessed by it but rather so that the fan may more fully possess it. Only by integrating media content back into their everyday lives, only by close engagement with its meanings and materials, can fans fully consume the fiction and make it an active resource (62).

Fan communities are by their nature sites of reinterpretation and reworking, transforming individual texts and star images into "active resources" (Jenkins 62) in the creation of fan fictions, fan clubs and fan debate. Texts and representations are embraced, rejected, championed and contested with intensity. In doing so, fans treat popular texts "as if they merited the same degree of attention and appreciation as canonical texts" (Jenkins 1992, 17), subjecting them to detailed readings and interpretations.

Breaking with approaches to fandom that have sought to "construct a sustainable opposition between the 'fan' and the 'consumer'" (29), Matt Hills argues that fans are capable of "simultaneously 'resisting' norms of capitalist society" whilst also being "implicated in these very economic and cultural

processes" (29). Hills suggests that the status of fans as "ideal consumers" who at the same time "express anti-commercial beliefs" (29) constitutes a necessarily irresolvable contradiction that needs to be "tolerated" (29) by the researcher, rather than subsumed under a banner of totalizing resistance to commercial discourses.

Hills' attention to this contradictory positioning of fandom is valuable for exploring the ways in which female silent film fans created alternative readings from within commercial forms. By discussing and debating film, female fans articulated a knowledgeable authority upon the subject of cinema culture, entrenched within a national fan community linked by the shared consumption of fan magazines.

Adrian Bingham's work on gender and the popular press in interwar Britain has been significant in acknowledging that popular products like magazines have more to offer than patriarchal dictations on the appropriate role of contemporary models of femininity. Daily journalism of the late teen and twenties did not:

. . . unthinkingly champion housewifery and motherhood; its pages debated and explored what these roles meant for women and society, offered a range of perspectives, and explicitly and implicitly contrasted them with other possible roles (17).

Fan magazines shared these qualities, aligned with the turn in British print journalism towards “the private sphere of home and family” (LeMaheiu 1998, 33) in an attempt to solicit a broader female audience. The creation of the successful women’s journal *Forget-Me-Not* in 1891, followed by the popular weekly magazine *Home Chat* in 1894, assisted in pushing magazine journalism towards a realization of the mass market of working and lower-middle class women. Into the early twentieth century, the British press began to make “intense efforts . . . to attract female readers” (LeMahieu 26)¹.

It made economic sense, therefore, for the creators of fan magazines to similarly cultivate a female readership, targeting a working to lower-middle class female audience as the figures of financial control over leisure and consumption within the family unit. As LeMahieu assesses, “it was women who shopped for food, bought clothes, paid the rent, and made the daily financial decisions” (33). Fan magazines thus attempted to strike a balance between original content and advertising space.

British fan magazines appeared on the UK market from the 1910s. Publications such as *Pictureshow* (1919—1960), *The Picturegoer* (1913 to 1960) and *Girls Cinema* (1920—1932) were among the most popular national periodicals (see

¹ When *Forget-Me-Not* and *Home Chat*’s founder Alfred Harmsworth founded the hugely successful *Daily Mail* in 1896, for example, he insisted upon the inclusion of women’s columns and held that the magazine page of the paper “ought to be almost entirely feminine” (qtd. LeMahieu 1998, 33).

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis/dissertation for copyright reasons

Figure 7.1 *Cinema Chat* (Issue 1. 26 May 1919) **Figure 7.2** *Girls' Cinema* (Vol.7 No.164. 1 Dec. 1923)

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis/dissertation for copyright reasons

Figure 7.3 *The Kinematograph Weekly*
(16 Sept. 1920)

Figure 7.4 *The Bioscope*
(Vol.73 No.1101. 10 Nov. 1927)

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis/dissertation for copyright reasons

Figure 7.5 *The Kinematograph Weekly* (16 Sept. 1920) **Figure 7.6** *The Bioscope* (Vol. 73, Issue 1101, 10 Nov. 1927)

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis/dissertation for copyright reasons

Figure 7.7 *The Picturegoer* (Vol. 5, No. 57 Mar. 1923) **Figure 7. 8** *Picture Show* (24 Jun. 1922)

figures 7.1 –7.8). Publications like *Girls Cinema* were extremely close in tone and content to the cheapest women’s magazines of the era, such as *Peg’s Paper*, which explicitly targeted working-class young women. *Picturegoer* (figure 7.9) combined elements of these working-girl magazine formats² with higher quality production values, featuring illustrated cover images (regularly in colour by 1924), fashion spreads and an array of advertising addressing female domestic labour.

The Picturegoer has been selected as the main focus of this chapter for several reasons. Archival holdings of the magazine constitute one of the most complete and accessible collections from the silent era³, offering greater scope for the recognition of trends and changes within the publication across larger periods of time. In terms of its status as a popular artifact, *Picturegoer* was also one of the longest running magazines of its kind, founded in 1913 and remaining in circulation for nearly fifty years. In a survey of British film periodicals in late 1947, Peter Noble remarks that the magazine was still “undoubtedly Britain’s leading popular film journal” with a “very wide circulation” (149). It was in the late teens and twenties that the magazine laid its long-lasting foundations as Britain’s leading cinema periodical, becoming a staple aspect of many British women’s cinema-going experience, and marketing itself as “the screen’s most popular magazine” (*The Picturegoer* 19 Mar. 1938: 3).

² Particularly in its inclusion of numerous short stories and dress making patterns, which characterised many working-girl story papers and magazines.

³ A near complete run of *Picturegoer* is held on microfiche at Southampton University Hartley Library.

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis/dissertation for copyright reasons

Figure 7.9 This screen shot from the 1928 satirical comedy *Shooting Stars* shows the familiar place of *The Picturegoer* as a primary British fan magazine both within the industry itself and as a broader cultural reference, positing the magazine as a byword for fandom and a female product.

Published weekly initially and later monthly at a price of 2d,⁴ the magazine was cheap enough to make it accessible to most women, ensuring a steady readership across a wide female community.⁵ Although *Picturegoer* was not exclusively a women's magazine, the tone of the publication is overridingly geared towards female readers.

As Marsha Orgeron notes, a "significant critical literature exists" ('You are invited' 3) that has established the gendering of the fan magazine reader and

⁴ Of equal cost to other working-class women's magazines such as *Home Chat* and *Women's Weekly*.

⁵ The average working-class girl could earn around a pound a week in clerical work, for example (Langhamer 100). In the pre-decimal system a pound divided into twenty shillings, and a shilling in turn divided into 240 pennies.

“the degree to which these magazines increasingly spoke to women who were confronted with a range of entertainment options and related forms of consumerism” (‘You are invited’ 3) in the 1910s and 1920s. Gaylyn Studlar in particular has argued that fan magazines constitute a “neglected source for assessing how women were positioned as viewers/readers/consumers within discourse specifically aimed at influencing women’s reception of Hollywood film” (‘Out-Salomeing’ 264).

Picturegoer certainly reflects the conflation of femininity with consumerism in its structure and content. The periodical falls into a generally standardized format by the late teens and changes little till the end of the silent era, following a basic layout that included news of present and forthcoming features, reviews, star gossip, fashion spreads, interviews, star portraits, short story adaptations, and a wealth of advertising increasingly geared towards female readers across the decade, promoting cosmetics, dress, and domestic products. The magazine’s back pages also included a letters page, a poetry segment, and the ‘Let George Do It!’ section in which reader queries concerning “casts of films, release dates or stars’ addresses” which proved “of general interest to all fans” (*Picturegoer* March, 1928: 38) could be answered.

The paper would have been sold at local newsagents or at cinemas themselves, and for many female readers formed an essential accompaniment to the cinema-going experience. Fan writing often speaks of the release dates for the

magazine as important events in a similar manner to the release of new films, as the following extract from a fan poem entitled 'Sweet Content' demonstrates:

'Tis PICTUREGOER day;
I'm off to the newsagent's
To get it right away.
My favourite book beside me,
Enthralling films to see'—
If, Reader, you'd be happy.
Be guided, then, by me.
(Ibid. May 1923: 48)

This reader in particular implies that the manual was used as a literal accompaniment to the viewing experience, taken into the cinema. Another fan further emphasizes the release of the publication as anticipated event in a poem titled 'Red Letter Day':

Why all this jubilation?
Why is everyone so gay?
The cause of our elation?—
PICTUREGOER'S out to-day!
...Once a month comes this sensation—
Would that it were every day!
(Ibid. Nov. 1924: 50)

The Picturegoer here holds a central place in female fan's experience of the cinema as a public leisure form and a discourse which could be accessed on an individual level beyond the confines of the cinema itself, whilst providing a source of collective anticipation and enjoyment.

As a complementary tool to the viewing experience, the first poem highlights much of the fundamental appeal of the fan magazine as a source of reference. The nature of the silent cinema experience created a void of extra-textual knowledge which the fan magazine readily filled, providing primary access to such coveted information as the eye and hair colour of stars, insights into their speaking voices and how "they appear in real life" (Dec. 1924: 102). A *Picturegoer* fan letter by 'Hilary' from 1924 underscores this desire for greater familiarity with screen performers:

It would be a boon and a blessing to many if the cast were shown at the end as well as the beginning of films, because no one but an expert Pelmanist can memorize an entire cast in the short time during which it is shown, especially if some of the names are new (Dec. 1924: 102).

Another fan writing in the same issues of *Picturegoer* goes further:

I should like to mention one little point with regard to the film which, I have no doubt, would be a great improvement in the eyes of the audiences in our picture houses . . . My suggestion is this. That after each film of any importance, a few feet of film be used to show the chief actors and actresses as they appear in real life. I have mentioned this point to several of my friends and they approve of it (Ibid).

Picturegoer's ability to portray, however fabricated, some sense of how stars "appear in real life" was a key reason for the pull that silent era fan magazines held over women's imaginations in their ability to offer greater intimacy with screen stars. Although aesthetic details concerning physical appearance were important for fans to ascertain, so too were star personalities, and therefore female stars as examples of modern women, evidenced in their personal tastes, hobbies and lifestyles. *Picturegoer* created a primary position for itself at the heart of cinema culture in this way, in turn recasting the film text as a more open object, subject to the insertion of extra-textual information that the magazine alone could provide.

As such, although many fan questions sought largely to discover basic physical information such as "how tall is Norma Talmadge?" (Jan. 1923: 60) or whether "Nazimova has eyes of blue or deepest violet?", (Ibid) equal space was given to fan queries keen to understand the more complex aspects of the lives of female stars. Fans used letters and poetry to pose questions about the marital

status of screen women, or whether “Violet Hopson [can] drive a car”; (Jan. 1923: 60) “Her dressmaker’s name, and her income in Dollars” (19 Jun. 1920: 662) and “What furniture Mary [Pickford] has bought for her home” (Ibid).

The information fans seek is personal, but strongly engaged with public sphere conceptualizations of the practices of modern femininity—driving, dress, earnings etc. Fan queries in such letters suggest a sense of the fan magazine as an interactive discourse, and a mediator of changing norms and ideas surrounding female dress, decorum, employment and appearance.

Fan magazine femininity

In its mediation of these kinds of female representations, the official content of *Picturegoer* attempted something of a balancing act, allowing space for the exploration of female self-expression whilst ultimately leveling female autonomy against an affirmation of more conservative values.

Stories of stars’ exciting experiences were almost always counter-balanced with a reassuring insight into the inherent domesticity of their home lives. In this sense the fan magazine aligns itself with much of the women’s press of the period, which, as critics such as Penny Tinkler (1995) and Cynthia White (1970) have shown, highlighted the temporary, transitory nature of women’s domestic freedom and economic opportunity by upholding norms such as heterosexual union in marriage, able to:

. . . address their readers' desire for power, independence and excitement, without challenging patriarchal interests in male dominance and a girl's acceptance of her future role as subordinate wife, mother and home-maker (Tinkler 5).

The average fan reader was similarly encouraged to view the more liberated aspects of contemporary femininity within the fan magazine as elements that they might incorporate into their own lives, whilst simultaneously observing traditional norms that dictated their role as wives and mothers.

Such attempts to create a greater equilibrium between old and new models of femininity extended to the aesthetic form of the magazine as a whole. While *Picturegoer* featured interviews detailing the daring, wealthy, and independent lives of female stars, it did so alongside advertisements for domestic products targeting the wife and mother. Since this was a period in which married working women were rarely tolerated, the contradiction inherent between the appealing portrayal of economically independent stars and the insistence upon women's inherent domesticity in advertising material would have been a familiar dichotomy for working women in particular. Such women were targeted as consumers within commercial leisure whilst finding themselves criticized and vilified in the post-war press for their move into the workforce where disposable income could be generated.

Picturegoer advertisements focused on a sense of women's leisure as a temporary escape, therefore, from their central location within the home and domestic sphere. *Picturegoer* advertisements for Persil washing powder across the 1920s, for example, promised to have "abolished wash-day" (Dec. 1923: 17) and given "the freedom to a million women . . . to call your day your own," (Apr. 1927: 68). Perservene similarly boasted that washing could be finished in "record time . . . to dress and off to the pictures in the afternoon" (Dec. 1923: 17). Khansana lipstick promotions, echoing dozens of cosmetic advertisements in the magazine, guaranteed "a new thrill for every women—in her mirror" (Jan.1928: 55). These narratives of "thrill" and free time were safely contained within domestic structures, which ultimately led the consuming female gaze from products designed to create leisure opportunities and personal allure back to the home, family and female domesticity (improving the routine of "wash day" etc.).

Jackie Stacey has analyzed in detail the ways in which British female spectators "related to Hollywood stars through consumption" (*Star Gazing* 176). While Stacey's work focuses upon the 1940s and 1950s, her observations nonetheless are extremely valuable for understanding the cultural and ideological frameworks through which women interacted with stars as commodified images in the 1910s and 1920s.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the emergence of new forms of urban shopping and its address to female consumers combined with advances in domestic and

household technologies to court a female consumer. Middle-class women were in particular increasingly encouraged to engage in the “beautifying of their homes and themselves with ‘luxury’ products” (Stacey, *Star Gazing* 178), firmly linking femininity and consumption. The transformation of the urban environment into a feminized shopping arena—where shops and department stores drew upon new lighting technologies and new techniques of window display—transformed urban female mobility into the perusal of commercial spectacles. Such spectacles offered the female shopper “pleasure in looking, contemplation and the fantasy transformations of the self and her surroundings through consumption” in a manner which, Stacey argues, “prefigures similar pleasures to be offered to the female spectator in the cinematic context” (*Star Gazing* 179).

Charles Eckert’s research upon Hollywood’s connection with commercial enterprises has focused on the ways in which Hollywood acted as a showcase for fashions and cosmetic products. The specific display of the female star as commodity on screen linked to the use of the female star as a selling point for fan magazine advertising. Female stars “served as mannequins in publicity for new fashions” (Stacey, *Star Gazing* 182), with the fan magazine serving as an ideal platform for displaying the star as advertisement. Stacey argues that “the female readers of these magazines were thus address simultaneously as consumers and spectators” (*Star Gazing* 182).

Many *Picturegoer* advertisements featured female stars in this way. A few typical examples include an advert for Grossmith's Oriental Face Powder features British star Betty Balfour. A headshot of the star accompanies her signature and her assurance that "Shem-el-Nessim Perfume, Face Cream and Powder should figure in every woman's toilet" (Jan 1928: 53). Hudson's lipstick was promoted by Evelyn Laye, quoted as finding the product "extremely handy" (Jan 1928: 63). Patty Du Pont featured in full page promotions for La-Rola cosmetics. A photograph of the star applying the makeup surrounded by admiring men was accompanied by her endorsement of the "Universal Beautifier", promising "what it does for her it will do for you if you would be beautiful and admired" (Dec. 1923: 7). British stars Betty Doyle and Kathleen Vaughan both advertised Eastern Foam Vanishing cream, photographed for advertisements that promised the stars were "never without" the product "at home or at the studios" (Jan 1923: 50).

Mary Anne Doane has theorized the relationship between women and consumption, and the complex relationships of power between this desiring, identifying female gaze and consumer practices within a U.S. context. Doane posits a problematic relationship between female independence and consumption, whereby subjectivity is created via purchasing power. She writes:

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis/dissertation for copyright reasons

Figure 7.10 An Eastern Foam advertisement featuring in *The Pictureogger* in April of 1924, exploiting discourses of female gaze and consumption.

The woman's ability to purchase, her subjectivity as a consumer, is qualified by a relation to commodities that also ultimately subordinated to that intensification of the affective value of sexual relations that underpins a patriarchal society ('Economy' 120)

Women's seeming autonomy and power to make purchase decisions and spend disposable income is ultimately contained within, and undercut by, an overarching system of authority constructing women as passive consumers "invited to buy the idealized, male-generated image of the female body as a commodity" (Dolan 62).

Doane specifically addresses the act of female looking in the visual consumption of purchase commodities, linking the cinema screen to commercial practices by viewing shop windows as cinema screens in miniature. Doane describes the "mirror/window" as a trap, whereby woman's "subjectivity becomes synonymous with her objectification" (*Desire* 33). Jill Dolan describes the process thus:

. . . buying the idealized image of herself, she turns herself into a commodity to then be sold, as the performer already has. The positions of the female performer and the female spectator are collapsed into one—they become prostitutes who buy and sell their own image in a male-generated visual economy. They are goods in a

representational marketplace, commodities in an exchange by means of which they are both objectified (62).

While the advertising materials of *Picturegoer* would seem to support this view, conceptualizing women's relationship to these kinds of commercialization as resulting in the objectification of the female viewer/consumer, Stacey has argued that the inseparability of subjectivity and objectification needs to be challenged in addressing women's interaction with cinema tie-ins and marketing.

Stacey focuses upon women's sense of agency as consumers, highlighting, as I aim to do here, the contradictions inherent in their consumption. By understanding women's consumption as a site of "negotiated meanings, of resistance and of appropriation as well as of subjection and exploitation" (Stacey, *Star Gazing* 187), the advertising within *Picturegoer* offers a fuller picture of the contradictions inherent within its address to its female consumers. These advertisements can be read less negatively in their emphasis upon the consumer power of the female spectator.

Advertising strategies played upon a sense of the importance of women's desire and needs, constructing narratives of temporary liberation for women. The written content of the magazine fed into the construction of these narratives by excessively foregrounding the 'voice' and self-expression of female stars. One of the most prominent aspects of the magazine is the dominance of the pronoun

and the possessive in interview and article headings—"What I should like to Be" (Jan. 1920: 40); "Mainly About Me" (Oct. 1921: 22); "Why I Like Work" (Oct. 1918: 343); "How I got a Start" (Feb. 1918: 173); "When My Chance Came" (Apr. 1921: 22); "How I felt in pictures" (Mar. 1918: 227)—along with direct questions to the reader—"Why should women propose?" (May 1920: 533); "Have we no It Girls?" (Dec. 1928: 39); "Who is the most popular film star?" (Feb. 1925: 4).

A strong sense of the importance of female opinion can be gleaned from these articles. Yet female film star independence was always presented in moderation, however—evidenced particularly in the magazine's attention to the domesticity and femininity of female stars. Interviews with the stunt star Ruth Roland, for example, whilst acknowledging her abilities in boxing, riding, shooting and fencing, stressed that the title "homebody Ruth" (Jan. 1921: 34) was much closer to her real personality. Such articles offset her troubling physical agency against the more feminized image of a "pretty, dainty and winsome" (Feb. 1918: 173) star who professed to "love cooking" (Jun. 1921: 43) and represented "as much of a home-girl as the most old-fashioned of our grandparents could desire" (Jun. 1921: 43).

Such articles recurrently took the form of warnings to the reader, reaffirming constantly that movie stardom was hard work for women, and that it rarely connoted sustained freedom from traditional domestic duties. In an article entitled 'It's a Hard Life' from March of 1921, actress Dorothy Phillips gives her

own account of her continuing domestic labour despite her stardom. The article is prefaced by the editor with the tag:

Perhaps you think that the life of a Movie Star is a perpetual giggle? Perhaps you imagine that the word WORK has no place in Studio Directories? Let Dorothy Phillips undeceive you (Mar. 1921: 16)

Although the article details Phillip's daring exploits riding "bare-back in my last picture; bareback and at top speed through dancing rows of fight-enraged soldiery", the photographs that accompany the piece show the actresses posed smiling in her kitchen sieving flour, and decked out in gardening clothes. The caption reads:

Dorothy Phillips is happiest when she can change her gorgeous movie-gowns for workaday clothes and devote her energies to home-life in general and cooking and gardening in particular (ibid).

Articles with headings such as "The Modern Girl", "What Women Want" (Jun. 1925: 1) and "The Happy Ending: is it really wanted?" (Apr. 1920: 490) could therefore sit alongside more traditional topics concerning clothing, cooking,

child-rearing and homemaking, emphasizing domesticity and familial responsibility in the off-screen lives of female stars.

Through written interaction with the magazine, female audiences were able to demonstrate their awareness of the compromise implicit in such contradictory constructions of modern femininity. Letter writers demonstrated, as has been emphasized throughout the thesis, an “‘I-know-but-nevertheless’” (Studlar, ‘Perils’ 269) attitude towards such representations and the discourses of emulation they promoted. The fan magazine’s ability to offer a platform for the female fan’s own voice ensured that there was at least a possibility for women to demonstrate an understanding of the ideological trade-off inherent within the consumption of popular female culture.

One of the key methodological considerations involved with using fan magazine fan letters is their authenticity as a basis for claiming the voice of actual female spectators in silent era Britain. Direct evidence that such letters were written by actual audience members is hard to come by. Since film magazines had strong ties to the financial film industry, it would seem likely that editors may have been inclined to invent letters singing the praises of particular stars, studios or recent releases. Details of editorial practices for specific magazines at this time have proved very difficult to unearth, so transitory were the origins of many magazines amidst a burgeoning new industry. Yet the sheer variety of fan

debate and opinion on display within silent era fan magazines would seem to suggest otherwise.

My own inclination has been to approach the material quantitatively, analyzing the subject matter of fan writing and reading this against the types of female stars in particular that the magazine officially promoted. As I will discuss in detail in the next chapter, this approach reveals a volume of letter writing about particular stars who appear nowhere in the 'official' content of the magazine. Such quantitative data might suggest, therefore, that these letters are authentic, since a precedent does not exist for the championing of these individual performers within the magazine as a whole.

Further, the 1910s and 1920s was a period in British film culture where the cinema was extremely popular. The sheer numbers of female cinemagoers in this period would seem to suggest that the fan magazine editors would have no need to create imaginary contributors eager to write about and discuss their cinemagoing practices. The wealth of film fan scrapbooks, materials from fan clubs, and cinema postcards from the era suggest an extremely lively silent film female fan culture, which was inherently creative and communicative.

Moving forwards with these factors in mind, I turn to fan letters with awareness that what they offer is an indicator of women's feelings about the cinema and their cinemagoing practices in this time, always with the understanding that as historical sources such examples are not concrete. I

maintain overall, nonetheless, that an understanding of the ways in which cinema was framed for female debate and discussion in the era is greatly enriched by a detailed study of fan magazine letters, particular in their ability to foreground a sense of women's knowing participation within film culture as self-aware consumers.

Fan letters were able to playfully turn what they perceived to be the industry's view of the fan back on itself, shrewdly demonstrating the fans' understanding of their position within film culture. The following poem is an apt example of the female film fan refuting the obliviousness of cinemagoers to the contradictory fantasy of screen glamour:

So oft to the movies they've been, so many successes they've seen, fans wouldn't be real if they never should feel ambitious to shine on the screen, whose diet of glamour and fame seems such a delectable dish . . . They're warned about Hollywood town, but some things will not be kept down . . . they've about as much hope as of being the Pope, but still—it costs nothing to wish! . . . All life is denial attendant on trial, so what is one more, anyway? You long for the light of a star? A Doro, a Pickford, A Gish? Then hitch up your wagon, and drink up your flagon, and, well—it costs nothing to wish! (Ibid. Aug. 1924: 66).

The poet is at pains to explain that the contradictory pull between being warned of the negative excesses of Hollywood and encouraged to buy into its glamour did not escape the comprehension of cinema's female spectators, echoing the 'Irene' letter example in Chapter 1. This awareness is a crucial factor in understanding the fan magazine as a conceptual space for women to deconstruct and respond to the contradictions inherent within the magazine and within film culture as a whole.

The subject of fan discourse

Examples of such fan participation speak to the little explored subject of the consumer's account of the processes of consumption. Beginning as the 'Bouquets and Brickbats' (occasionally the 'Our Letter Bag'/'The Letter Box Editors') section in the early teens, *The Picturegoer* letter's page which allowed for the written response of its consumer became a more established section by around 1921. The page adopted the 'What Do You Think?' heading in this year (fig. 7.12) and received a fixed page number and personality editor under the title 'The Thinker,' who called upon readers to keep the page "filled with letters that reflect credit on the high intelligence of all film fans." (Jan. 1928: 60) The poetry page, too, which began as a rare addition in the early teens, was given a more fixed position within the magazine by around 1922 under the heading 'Kinema Carols' (fig. 7.13).

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis/dissertation for copyright reasons

Figure 7.12 An example of the letters page, encouraging readers to offer their personal insights and opinions.
(*The Picturegoer* Oct. 1921: 62)

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis/dissertation for copyright reasons

Figure 7.13. An example of the 'Kinema Carols' page (*The Picturegoer* May 1927: 60)

Fan discussion within these pages touched upon everything from those subjects more generally in keeping with the tone of the magazine as a whole—such as fashion and the physical appearance of stars—to more expansive debates concerning women on screen, in the exhibition site and in British culture more generally. The examples of fan writing already touched upon suggest that women saw the letters page as something more than an opportunity merely to list favorite stars. One reader describes it as a “delightful debating society, open to all readers” (Aug. 1928: 56), highlighting the significance of the page as a site for female community not merely in the shared consumption of films, but as a place for more rigorous discussion and analysis. Many contributing *Picturegoer* fans seem keen to establish their interest in cinema as distinguished from a stereotypical image of the obsessive film fanatic.

Fan writer Greta Gray, for example, in an issue from late 1925, begins her letter by asserting that:

It has always been my opinion that continual raving in print over a favourite star is injurious to his or her interests rather than otherwise, and for that reason I have refrained from writing to you before . . . I am not a ‘hysterical flapper’ (Dec. 1925: 98).

Another reader asserts that she is “NOT a ‘fan’, but keenly critical” (Jul. 1926: 66); another on discussing Rudolph Valentino that “I am no silly flapper” (Feb. 1923: 66). Fan poetry similarly mocks the image of the fan as one whose “critical sense / comes lagging behind!” (Mar. 1925: 64).

Rather than simply writing “carols and mush / To the stars that they worship” (Oct. 1924: 50), therefore, many women used the letters page to discuss their understanding of the cinema as an industry as well as a leisure time experience. Fans debated the problems facing British film production, particularly in relation to its seeming inability to create successful internationally appealing female stars (as will be explored further in the next chapter). Others railed against the lack of sophistication of films for women in general, reacting directly against objectified feminine images in favor of more plot-heavy pictures. As a fan complaint typical of many explains, “in nine out of ten pictures the story is absolutely nothing” (Jun. 1924: 66).

A recurrent theme of fan letters is the expression of irritation with the trade’s misunderstanding of female viewers and their preferences. Such complaints fell equally on both sides of the argument, with some fans requesting greater realism from the cinema, and others demanding greater escapism. A female letter writer in September of 1923, for example, complains about films focusing upon “domestic troubles which most of us can see for ourselves outside

the movies" (Sept. 1923: 66). An earlier female reader in 1918 expresses a similar attitude:

One goes to the picture shows to be amused, not to be dragged through reels of someone's troubles, and I think when our producers realize this, and give us something lighter and brighter, they will have all the successes they, and we, desire (Aug.—Sept. 1918: 234).

Another female reader similarly protests that:

The type of film foisted on the long-suffering public is in need of a very drastic reform, and such reform will not be put into operation until the kinemagoer wakes up to the fact that they alone can operate the machinery which will bring us 'Better Pictures' (May 1920: 568).

Other fans complained of precisely the opposite problem, yearning for films "which deal frankly and truthfully with life" (Mar. 1918: 282) rather than those which carried the viewer "away from this workaday world and its troubles" (Sept. 1923: 66). The attempts of the industry to appeal to working-class and lower-middle class values was not always a point of irritation. Some female fans applauded the filmic representation of the modern female experiences of

labouring women. One fan identifying herself as a working girl, for example, praises the presentation of female experience in a Pauline Frederick film amidst an audience of “women, experienced in the drama of life, who closely follow the great actress as she works out a problem or question of to-day” (Mar. 1918: 283).

While their views were varied, women were united nonetheless in the general assertion that the industry’s conception of the ways in which women identified with cinematic female representations was out of step with actual female audiences. Fan letters often called upon the collective influence of fans in an attempt to reconcile their preferences with the types of films produced and exhibited by the industry, and the quality of the cinemagoing experience.

The ability to threaten the industry with the public power to make or break a movie (a fan letter typical of many urges the ‘kinemagoer’ to ‘wake up to the fact that they alone can operate the machinery which will bring us ‘Better Pictures’ (May, 1920: 568)), or insist upon the production of particular types of films—may of course have less to do with the true desire for reform and more to do with the pleasurable act of voicing such assertions. However inconsequential such fan writing may ultimately have appeared to be, the powerful sensation of threatening the movie producer by setting pen to paper may have been an appealing notion to female viewer.

One female fan complaining about the state of exhibition sites, for example, remarks that “Perhaps if you publish this letter in your powerful columns it will

have its effect" (14—21 Sept. 1918: 281). The fan underlines the significance of fan writing as capable of exerting some degree of influence. An awareness of women's primary place within leisure industries and mass consumer culture could therefore be recognized not as a passive position but as one pivotal to the 'machinery' of the cinema industry.

The virtual community of the fan magazine letters pages further offered an alternative access point to the enjoyment of film, far less fraught with the potential physical hazards of the cinema space. Numerous British postcards of the era drawing upon the experience of cinemagoing for their humorous captions and illustrations emphasize the cinema-space as an arena of courtship (figures 7.13 and 7.14).

Such examples often tended towards the depiction of male coercion, showing male characters enticing 'innocent' female companions into the cinema-space with the hope of engineering a romantic or sexual encounter. A sense of autonomous female community within the cinema venue itself may have been difficult to disentangle from such heterosexual romantic encounters. Equally, women may have found a sense of female community hard to establish in the cinema space when exposed to a male audience "just above the breadline" (Dewes 18) who used film theatres as an escape from the cold and a cheap refuge from the street.

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis/dissertation for copyright reasons

Figure 7.13. “What could be nicer?” Comic postcard circa 1910s (source: Bill Douglas Centre item no. 87654).

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis/dissertation for copyright reasons

Figure 7.14 “They that go in darkness.” Comic postcard circa 1913 (source: Bill Douglas Centre item no. 87541)

Attempts by exhibitors to appeal to working-class audiences by welcoming the family into the cinema-space may be a further reason for women investing in the female-centered virtual community of the fan magazine. The rise of purpose-built cinemas attracted “whole families of industrial classes” (Calvert 4), and as such may have often denied women independent escapism from familial and domestic interaction.

Passages from the writing of Winifred Holtby and Dorothy Richardson explored earlier in the thesis attend to this issue. Richardson makes reference to the chatter of the loud cinema fan; Holtby, too, while conceiving of the cinema space as a place of refuge, also refers to its unpleasant aspects, describing the anger and sadness that the view of courting couples in the auditorium rouses in a romantically unsuccessful young cinemagoer. Enabling cinemagoers to engage with film culture on an individual basis away from these potentially distracting or uncomfortable experiences empowered the consumption of fan magazines as an individual, self-contained leisure practice, able to be read in the home and in privacy.

Fan writing facilitated the creation of new communal spheres distanced from the cinemagoing act itself. Letter writing encouraged women to identify themselves as part of a virtual fan community, creating and sustaining social networks. The following extract highlights the way in which women felt that the

cinema magazine brought them together in its ability to unite women across broad class and geographical origins:

I have read PICTURES every week for nearly two years, and I find that in nearly every issue there are letters from folks from different parts of the country giving their ideas—admiring and criticizing every part of the film industry. It is only through PICTURES that we are able to express our opinions, and I think that we should be brought even closer together . . . Let's have more public opinion (May—June, 1918: 518).

Many such comments by contributing fans seem to indicate that written fan interaction offered something unique and valuable, bringing women from different cultural and geographical backgrounds “closer together”. This sense of camaraderie may have been extremely valuable to women in the immediate post-war era in particular, with the backlash against the female workforce and the decrease in suffrage activism.

Fan poetry and female stars

The community that the fan magazine facilitated was also distinct in that it gave women the chance not simply to consume images but to create imagery of their own. Fan poetry enabled women to reconstruct female representations within

their own language, denying them finitude by placing them within personal frameworks. As a 1927 poem written by *Picturegoer* fan 'Elsie' explains, the movie-going encounter was by no means exclusively bound to consumer imitation, but an experience of escape and pleasure, in many ways liberated from social expectations and prescribed feminine desire:

They say I've got no sweetheart
I'm plain—and forty-nine
And yet no famous Queen of Love
Had ever court like mine.

Each night I watch the silver sheet
Where actors play their parts
Of dashing deed and fearless feats
And breaking ladies hearts.

I can at will share every thrill
That comes to movie flappers
And still remain quite dull and plain,
In hand-knit shawls and wrappers!
(Dec. 1927: 81)

Contrast, for example, the poem with the “old maid” postcards discussed in the previous chapter in relation to Holtby’s address of spinsters and widows. The fan/poet/spinster here refutes the mockery of such material, asserting her own enjoyment of the romantic narratives she consumes, neither love-sick nor frustrated. A woman’s perceived failure in remaining unmarried in her middle-age is here temporarily displaced within her expression of an appreciation for the cinema experience as an imaginary yet personally rewarding interaction.

Such poetry is significant in its direct challenge to norms surrounding female sexuality. A further distinct element of fan poetry was the way in which women used this creative writing to express an understanding of fandom as a more gynosocial community. In such poetry, the female gaze is less bound to a desire to be like or become female screen stars, and more concerned with an intense adoration for particular female performers.

The following female-written fan poem is a strong example of this:

I fear I’m not content with one
I love a lady fair
With sweet grey eyes, a tender mouth
And softly waving hair.

The other lady I adore

Has eyes of deepest brown,
And dark curls clustered o'er her head
And gaily tumbling down.

I'm loving Norma Talmadge and

I'm loving Agnes Ayres.

(Ibid. Jan. 1925: 64)

The poem's slightly eroticized language is common to much female fan poetry in this period, in which women openly named stars their "true love" (Sept. 1927: 64); spoke of how they would "thirst" (Jan. 1925: 64) to see them and how they had "gazed with rapt, admiring eyes" (Aug. 1923: 48) at their screen favourites.

Jackie Stacey devotes a three-part section to exploring fan 'devotion', 'adoration' and 'worship' of star images in *Star Gazing*, noting of 1940s and 1950s fans that the "passion for female stars expressed by spectators" is often "striking in its intensity" (1994; 138). Much the same can be said for the homoerotic tone of silent cinema fan poetry, which intensely professes both adoration and worship of star images without making reference to a desire for emulation. While Stacey traces overlapping references to heterosexual devotion as a way of defusing the adoring memories of female fans for particular female star images, the female

written devotion poems in *Picturegoer* are presented to the reader clean, as it were, freely expressing the language of desire.

By writing creatively about stars within “the discourse of romance” (Stacey, *Star Gazing* 140), female fans interacted with female star images through a form of identification that was “not a question of similarity with the star” since “the identity of the spectator remains absent from the equation” (Stacey, *Star Gazing* 143). Noting the potential inapplicability of such examples to concepts of identification, Stacey argues that such traces of fan adoration seem “to be representing something rarely considered within theories of identification, yet not entirely separable from it” (*Star Gazing* 143). Speaking of examples drawn from her own work on female cinemagoing memories, Stacey explains:

These memories of Hollywood idols are not straightforward articulations of desire for, or desire to be, the love object. Rather they express something else, somewhere in between: an intense, often homoerotic bond between idol and worshipper (*Star Gazing* 144-145)

Fan poetry thus potentially returns us to the notion of ‘in between’ raised in the previous chapter; the adoration of the female poetry writers finds a middle ground between identification and consumption. Women’s response to female images in this way would seem to break the chain of commodification

conceptualized by Mary Anne Doane, in which the commodified female image in film invites the female spectator to “recognize herself in that commodified image which she may be able to recreate through the consumption of particular goods”, thus preparing “for her own consumption” (Stace, *Star Gazing* 183).

Doane’s conception of the screen as “shop window and mirror” (‘Economy’ 132) seems inapplicable to the adoring fan poem, which refuses to situate a sense of the female spectator as an emulating presence within its conceptualization of female images, and does not relate these images to any sense of the commercialized quality of star images in advertising and tie-in promotional materials.

While these poems are infrequent, they are nevertheless compelling as examples of the ways in which female spectatorship evades a reductive conceptualization of women’s identification with star images. Fan poetry in general suggests an autonomous expression of female desire not exhaustively channeled into paying for a seat in the cinema, buying star endorsed products or purchasing the fan magazine itself.

Female spectatorship as it emerges from fan magazine discourse, therefore, is made distinctive by the magazine’s ability to offer a platform for the expression of female desire, adoration, complex forms of identification and a sense of a female fan community. Fan writing speaks to the ways in which cinema

functioned in women's lives not simply as passive involvement with mass consumer culture, but as a practice which served emotional and intellectual needs.

The next chapter moves to look in greater detail at female fan writing in relation to specific star images. British women's interaction with national and international models of female stardom was coloured by their specific experience of leisure forms within British culture. While they consumed many of the same star images and films as their American counterparts, British female audiences did so through a cultural framework that requires detailed critical attention, distinguishing an account of their spectatorship and generative film writing from existing accounts of American audiences in this period.

Chapter 8 Fan Writing and Female Stardom

For women and because of women the star system has come into being. It is only a commercial way of providing the kinema's biggest audience with the thing it wants most, personality.

(‘What Women Want.’ *The Picturegoer* Jun. 1926: 12)

The female star emerges as a cornerstone upon which female fan communities were built, motivating the vast majority of fan contributions to *Picturegoer* in the teens and twenties.

The star's film performance has often been at the heart of critical interpretation of star discourse, which cites the film text as the primary site for the production of star 'images. Richard Dyer's influential *Stars* (1979) sought to understand the star as a "finite multitude of meanings and affects" (3) with a star's wider socio-cultural significance constituting a compound of intertextual imagery and discourse. Yet Dyer retains a focus upon the screen performance as the primary site in which stars make meaning.

There are distinct limitations for the researcher upon direct access to a range of star performances within British and international silent film culture. Accessing silent cinema texts is difficult, due to damaged and degraded film stock and a huge number of lost films. Such difficulties may seem to render a genuinely comprehensive understanding of the significance of star images in early twentieth century Britain tenuous.

Although film-going and the consumption of screen images is indeed the foundation which shapes and perpetuates film magazines like *Picturegoer*, however, an understanding of stars as textual elements did not form the backbone of the magazine so much as a view of stars as independent entities. Films served as a starting point for accessing or discussing screen favourites, but did not retain a binding central focus for either the magazine or contributing fans.

Patrice Petro's 2010 collection *Idols of Modernity* offers an amalgamation of contemporary scholarship on prominent silent stars that have often been examined in film studies, including Douglas Fairbanks, Buster Keaton, the Talmage sisters, Rudolph Valentino, Greta Garbo, Pola Negri, Clara Bow and Colleen Moore. These stars have frequently been the subject of critical analysis—particularly those seen to represent stereotypical twenties types, such as the flappers Clara Bow (see Orgeron 2003) and Colleen Moore (see Landay 2002; Hastie 2007) and the vamp Pola Negri (see Negra 2002; Butler 2002). Yet critical use of these particular personalities has been based upon their popularity with American audiences.

My own work attempts to select stars for analysis based on the prominence of their discussion within British fan letters. An initial step has been to therefore record the appearance of individual female actresses in *Picturegoer* across the period 1918 to 1928. I have sought to mark where female stars feature in both pictorial forms (posters, photographs, covers, adverts)

and written forms (interviews, articles, features written by the stars themselves, competitions, and fan letters and poetry). The aim here is to establish more relevant groundwork upon which to explore the range of feminine types circulating in fan discourse to which British women would have been most exposed, and who they discussed most regularly. From this I have drawn, in Table 2, twenty stars out of some 223 tallied as those most prominently featured in the magazine.¹

Mapping those stars most featured and discussed in *Picturegoer* tells us several things about the way British fan magazines operated financially in relation to the commodification of female stars. Fan magazines relied heavily upon financing from both the film industry (publicists offered money in exchange for coverage of the stars whose movies they were promoting) and from external companies, whose non-cinema related advertising littered the pages of fan publications.

Such advertising compelled publishers like Odhams, which produced *Picturegoer*, to balance what they perceived as the demands of their readership with their need for funding. *Picturegoer* featured a large amount of advertising, as already touched upon, promoting a range of female-targeted domestic and cosmetic products—yet was also dotted with star promotions. The 2d cover price of the magazine placed it in the mid range of film

¹ The statistics drawn from this process are intended to give a very general indication, as factors have to be taken into account concerning the availability of the magazine across the period. One or two individual issues and pages are missing from the collection upon which I chose to focus; the results drawn therefore reflect the most detailed compilation of the magazine available for research held at Southampton University Hartley Library.

Table 2. Twenty most regularly featured stars in *The Picturegoer*, 1918-1928.

Star	Nationality	Articles	Interviews	HomeLife	Posters	Adverts	Covers	Poems	Letters	Features Written by stars	Totals
Mary Pickford	American	9	5	1	18	3	5	23	48	2	114
Norma Talmadge	American	7	2	1	16	9	5	11	27		78
Betty Balfour	British	3	2		10	4		12	15	2	48
Constance Talmadge	American	4	3		15	4	2	5	5		38
Pauline Frederick	American	1	1		6		1	6	23		38
Lillian Gish	American	2			8		2	9	14		35
Gloria Swanson	American	3	4	2	5		2	6	11		33
Alla Nazimova	Russian	4	1		5		2	6	13		31
Pearl White	American	4		1	6		3	7	7	1	29
Ruth Roland	American	1	5	3	5	2	2	4	2	1	25
Pola Negri	Polish							9	14		23
Alma Taylor	British	1			3	2	2	4	9		21
Clara Bow	American	1			4			8	6		19
Colleen Moore	American	2	1		5		1	7	1	1	18
Greta Garbo	Swedish	2			4			5	6		17
Marie Doro	American						1	10	4		15
Violet Hopson	British	3	2		4		1	2	2	1	15
Clara Kimball Young	American	1			8	1		1	3		14
Ethel Clayton	American		1	1	3	1	2	3	2	1	14
Mary Miles Minter	American	2			3		1	1	6		13

magazines on the market at the time—not cheap enough to force an overwhelming reliance on advertising finance, but enough to make these factors prevalent in the presentation of female images and the commodification of actresses as product promoters.

These factors obviously cast doubt on direct relationships between how often stars appear in the magazine and their popularity with British audiences. Yet looking at fan letters, and their comments upon stars as commercialized images, allows us to gather a sense of fan's view of star representation in film and within fan magazines. Exploring the relationship between star appearances in advertising and fans' discussion of particular female images (see appendix B) enables us to explore the significance of results which show how certain stars received next to no formal magazine coverage, yet scored highly based purely upon fan writing. Stars like Pola Negri, for example, and Marie Doro rarely featured in the official pages of *Picturegoer*, and yet remain inside the higher bracket of popular stars based entirely upon their continued debate and discussion by contributing fans (see appendix C).

Fans spoke of Negri as “the finest emotional star on the screen to-day; an altogether different type, and as such doubly welcome” (Dec. 1924: 102); “a flaming and fascinating personality. The Bernhardt of the screen” (Sept. 1925: 66). Women repeatedly wrote to lament her lack of good film roles: “her American films have all been washouts” (Oct. 1925: 66); ‘I think that Pola

Negri should be given better screen material—she is a great actress and worthy of it” (Mar. 1926: 66); “Pola deserves better screen material” (Mar. 1926: 66).

Marie Doro was revered for her “originality and quaint humour in her acting” (8—10 Aug. 1918: 194) and described as “the spirit of a faery, an angel, an idol” (Feb. 1925: 82). Letter and poetry writers spoke of the “strange, elusive spell” (Jul. 1923: 48) of her performance, describing “her art” as an “unfailing spell” (Jan. 1924: 50). A fan poem entitled ‘A Tribute’ attempts to summarize Doro as a screen favourite:

T is her triumphs, so lengthy a list;

O is her masterpiece—*Oliver Twist*.

M is her Magic of beauty and art;

A is her Acting, unmatched and apart;

R is her Rival, who’s not made a start;

I am a hopefully Inventor of rhyme;

E is the Editor, there every time!

D is for Dreams of my favourite star;

O is her Orbit extending so far;

R is her Reign over movieland’s skies;

O is an Optimist expecting a prize!

(Jul. 1922: 52)

These actresses, rarely championed in the official content of the magazine, thus provided a strong catalyst for a plethora of fan writing in a variety of forms—some critical, some creative; some tempered by fantasy and adoration, some appealing to the structures of stardom as a concept and some to the practices of the industry, reading the star image through her film performances. Understanding the popularity of certain personalities, therefore, cannot be a process drawn alone from available film texts, nor ‘official’ magazine discourses.

As a basic chart for understanding the popularity of female stars amongst female fans, the results prove interesting in several further ways. Firstly, the magazine is dominated by American actresses (see appendix D for a comparison). Of all the stars tallied, 69% were American to just 20% British. Of the twenty most featured stars, the ratio of American to British was 14:3, whilst the remaining three actresses—Greta Garbo (Swedish), Pola Negri (Polish) and Alla Nazimova (Russian)—were American-based stars by the late teens and twenties, in contrast to the featured British actresses who remained almost exclusively on the British screen.²

American actresses, therefore, dominated British female fan experience. Industrially, there are well documented factors that justify this conclusion

² With the exception of Balfour, who was one of Britain’s few successful international actresses, appearing in various European productions. Nonetheless, Balfour was consistently upheld as the English equivalent of Mary Pickford and carried strong national connotations, referred to in both trade and fan press as the ‘Queen of Britain’s Screen.’

that will be explored in greater detail later in the chapter, such as the perceived failure of the British industry to emulate American production values; the temporary shutdown of all British production in 1924, and American block-booking tactics forcing domestic production from the cinemas (as outlined in Chapter 3 in relation to Elinor Glyn's attempts to champion an ailing British industry).

A more in depth look at the fan discussion and treatment of the nationality of stars, however, reveals that the British female appreciation for and interaction with American star images was complex. Fan responses were not simply a matter of embracing the imported personalities of an American-saturated industry, but a relationship which engendered cultural tensions regarding contemporary ideals about female behavior, independence and visibility.

The problem of female stars

Stardom and the circulation of star images fed into the disruption of a traditional concept of a gendered public/private divide under threat in this period, as explored in the opening chapters of the thesis. The cinema as a new public leisure form encouraged the consumption of public female images and the reciprocating display of the female body. The extra-textual industries of film culture relied heavily upon marketing the possibility of imitating star personas through forms of public consumption in star endorsed fashions and cosmetics. The British woman as public spectacle and public consumer was a

figure whose precarious transition from private to public was also acutely played out in the cinematic environment, in which women encountered “idealized images of femininity on screen” (Doane ‘Economy’ 183).

The increasing grandeur of the public cinema-going experience with the rise of the larger Picture Palaces in the teens meant that cinema-going itself was more than ever an opportunity for women’s fashion and film star emulation in dress and appearance, as explored in Chapter 2. The fashion-dominated pages of the fan magazine supported female-targeted consumer discourses by encouraging fans to publicly flaunt “Mary Pickford curls” (July. 1927: 60) and wear star-endorsed cosmetics, promising of lipsticks, powders and soaps that “what it does for her it will do for you if you would be beautiful and admired” (Jul. 1927: 60).

Film stardom was a concept founded upon aspects of material consumer affluence and bodily display that women were struggling to reconcile in the changing public arena. The female star represented female economic power divorced from inheritance, class privilege or marital status. This powerful status was frequently represented as a troubling symptom of post-war femininity in general by the British press, who were prone to attack what they saw as a new breed of working women free to “revel in unaccustomed luxury and squander their fabulous wage with extravagant recklessness” (Bremont, *Weekly Dispatch* 1917: 4).

One male *Picturegoer* columnist muses on the seemingly overwhelming dominance of female stars as heightened representations of such women, who “are coming along in their thousands. Unless something drastic is done about it . . . we will have the doubtful honour of seeing all women casts . . . There may even be feminine directors, in which case Heaven help the film industry!” (Oct. 1926: 33)

The “thousands” strong army of invading female stars represented an uncertain phenomenon. The anti-star attitude of the writer—seemingly at odds with the fan magazine as a product built fundamentally around emphasising the importance of star discourses—is fairly typical of the contradictions inherent in the British film industry in relation to female star images. The article betrays fears about the masculine control of female images and the threat of female star personas as leading women towards socially unacceptable forms of behaviour. Female stars, the article decries, often rose to stardom “on account of their skill in inveighing helpless men” (Jan. 1928: 49) and embraced the liberation afforded them in the new social arena “in a most unladylike and forward manner” (Jan. 1928: 49).

Foreign female stars in particular were often discussed with an undertone of anxiety or discomfort in regards to what exactly the female image on screen connoted. One columnist described European screen Vamps as “slinking, snakish exotic women . . . [who] rely largely upon their boosted foreign nationality to cover up and condone their moody methods” (Jan. 1928:

49). The writer compares these “White Devil” characters unfavourably against stars with less sexually or socially aggressive personas, since “though Madame Vampire may be a star, and very much in the public eye, she can never hope to be where every star wants to be—in the public’s heart” (Ibid 48). The generalisation of the essay (it does not reference any particular films or stars) speaks to the presumed familiarity of *Picturegoer* readers with coded and clearly distinguished female star types, identifying the vamp as a particularly offensive screen persona precisely for her sexual aggression and independence.

Another *Picturegoer* article discussing the popular comedienne Constance Talmadge, claiming that her “irresponsible ‘glad eye’ has shattered a hundred screen homes,” (May 1923: 16-17) serves as a good example of the perceived threat to British femininity that sexually dominant screen types embodied. The reviewer claims that the actress “has brought to the screen lessons in flirtation which are models of feminine strategy” (Ibid). The assertion that screen women are educators in the art of female impropriety—offering “screen lessons in flirtation”—assumes an imitative mode of engagement by watching female fans. Commercial film culture’s focus upon the possibility of imitating star images is seen here to extend to the emulation of their more wayward screen behaviour. The suspicious tone implies that “feminine strategy” disrupts stability of gender roles in the “shattering” of the “screen home”.

Such female stars seemed to problematically exemplify and exacerbate debates about the transformation of modern femininity. Because of this, stardom was a concept which British fan magazines writers seemed to struggle with, reflected in the slowness of the production side of the British industry in general to firmly establish an independent star system. Sarah Street has noted the tension in British culture hindering the production of successful domestic stars, spanning from a tendency to view “Hollywood invention, film stardom and all its trappings of gossip, fandom and scandal” as “somehow unseemly, *unBritish*” (*British National* 119).

British star systems and actresses

The problem of female stars spanned from this reluctance to entirely embrace Hollywood models of “gossip, fandom and scandal” right through the British industry, from the production of domestic cinema to the discussion of female stars in fan magazines.

Bruce Babbington argues that British culture in the silent era—“more tradition-oriented, more class-bound and less materially wealthy” (219)—was reflected in British models of stardom. Babbington asserts that:

. . . the education, the middle class status of British stars, an intellectual society in which the cinema ranked low beside the theatre . . . all inclined British star towards an anti-star inflection of stardom . . . close to dominant social ideologies (20).

Babbington argues for the unique nature of British stardom in its relationship to Hollywood star discourses, assessing that from the earlier stages of cinema there existed a process of the “secondarisation” (9) of British stars in relation to Hollywood stars. Babbington particularly notes the tendency in fan magazines to refer to British female stars as reflections of American stars, such as ‘The English Mary Pickford, ‘the British Lilian Gish’ etc. Babbington recounts, for example, that when British performers Chrissie White and Violet Hopson adorned the cover of *Picturegoer* in 1917 and 1918 respectively, the cover image “also advertised ‘Mary Pickford’s Life Story’, accidentally underlining Hollywood’s dominance” (9). The same is true of Alma Taylor, whose cover shot for *Picturegoer* in Dec. 1918/Jan. 1919 also featured Pickford’s life story (see fig. 8.1). Major British stars were frequently presented as lesser inflections of Hollywood luminaries in this way.

Tracing the origins of this secondarisation, Babbington explores “phenomena persisting through British film history” (6) which “lead not to an absence of stardom but certainly to a more muted version of it” (7). Such phenomena includes “a lesser specularisation . . . tendencies for films to be built less as star vehicles than as ensemble pieces, more restrained publicity, and more emphasis on the ‘acting’ and ‘picture personality’ than on the ‘star’ . . . as well as persistent remnants of the suspicion of stardom documented circa 1910-12” (7).

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis/dissertation for copyright reasons

Figure 8.1 Alma Taylor on the cover of *Picturegoer* (Dec. 1918 – Jan 1919)

Of particular relevance to my own discussion is the “restrained publicity” that Babbington notes. A greater emphasis on “acting” in publicity material rather than glamour, wealth and personal life links to the British industry’s tendency to draw cinema performers from the theatre, specifically implicated female performers in issues of class in a very different manner to Hollywood.

While most of the top British stars in the mid-thirties and early forties came from music-hall backgrounds (Street, *British National* 118), in the silent era music hall theatres were more readily exploited than their stars. The exploitation of more prestigious theatre stars—who were trained actors of a higher social standing—was a fundamental aspect of the nationalist approach of the British industry in attempts not to create an original star system for films, but to exploit “film’s theatrical origins” as an “essential element in fostering British cinema which could be identified by its specific cultural heritage” (Street, *British National* 114). A *Picturegoer* fan letter, for example, speaks of the “shining lights of Filmland” who are “grateful for the experience they gained from the legitimate stage” (22 Dec. 1917). This notion of legitimacy stands at odds with the fairytale of the ordinary girl becoming an overnight screen star sensation.

As discussed in Chapter 6 in relation to Street’s work on the development of the British industry in the silent era, an unstable production

base contributed significantly to the British inflection of stardom. As Babbington argues, this instability underscored a failure:

. . . ever to arrive at the American pattern of economically powerful, stable studios able to contract performers for long periods to their own productions. The number of British organizations that significantly developed and exploited stars in the systematic Hollywood way is rather small . . . few film-making concerns regarded stars as their own investments rather than commodities to be picked up for occasional use (11-14).

Geoffrey MacNab explains that the industry was “under-capitalised” from the outset, meaning that “most producers, operating in straitened circumstances, could not afford star salaries” (5). He expounds:

Most producers, indeed, would not have known how to tailor vehicles around such stars: they were manufacturers, not artists. And most of the stars were loath to demean themselves in front of the camera, especially as there was no guarantee that moving pictures would last. It is a measure of the uncertainty about its future that when a brief rollerskating craze hit London in late 1909, film pundits were seriously worried that cinema would be forgotten (MacNab 5).

The British trade papers early on seemed equally uncertain about the future of stardom. The *Bioscope's* New York correspondent noted in 1909 that:

. . . in London, the actor or actress is pretty much in the position of a spoilt darling of the public. They are made too much of. Their photographs are printed, broadcast, and their sayings and doings are given a prominence they do not deserve (22 Jul. 1909).

Such a resistance to the fundamental exploitative discourses of stardom from within the industry itself seems remarkable just two years before fan magazines boomed on the UK print market, sold almost entirely on the principles of stardom.

Fan magazine letter writers saw this seeming disinterest in creating successful domestic film stars as resulting in a distinct lack of opportunity for aspiring film actresses. Because the industry drew many of its early performers from the theatre, the possibility of the cinema fan ascending to film stardom was much less convincing in the British context. The salaries of those women that did make it onto British screens were drastically less than those of American stars. British actresses were paid just £5 a week in the teens when even minor American stars could earn at least £20,000 in a year (MacNab 15).

As a pair of female fans complain in 1919, “girls in America have more chances of becoming cinema actresses than we English girls” (Nov. 1919: III). Another fan laments that “anyone with talent and grist has a far better chance

of being recognized in America than is the case in England" (Aug. 1918: 178). Stardom for aspiring British girls was seemingly unattainable.

Kenton Bamford has argued that silent British films and their British stars were less successful because of their inability to adequately reflect the aspirations and modern lifestyles of such female audiences. Bamford suggests that the popularity of American films has as much to do with the types of narrative (and therefore the models of femininity) that they offered as their industrial domination. American films in particular embraced a stronger attitude of class levelling in contrast to the more restrictive class ideologies portrayed by many British productions, which tended to focus upon class-defined characters rarely able to transcend their social boundaries. In contrast, British female audiences were presented with images of successful modern women in American narratives, and stars who were often 'Picture Girl' competition winners and former everyday cinema fans themselves.

The working class American girl of films such as the Elinor Glyn adaptation of *It* (U.S., Clarence G. Badger, 1927), for example, seemed to achieve an ideal fantasy balance between traditional gender norms surrounding the pursuit of marriage and heterosexual partnership and the active, liberated life of a young working woman. Telling the story of a department store girl aggressively seeking the affections of her wealthy boss, *It* starred Clara Bow as the quintessential modern girl; employed, with a vibrant social life, female and male friends, independence, a small disposable

income, and a vivacious pursuit of all things 'new'—fashions, dancing, etc. Bow's character Betty Lou could be at the forefront of style and sex appeal and achieve wealth through the aggressive pursuit of marriage as a more equal partnership. Such personal successes are initiated through very public forms of courtship throughout the film, and consolidated a romantic partnership based upon the shared experience of new leisure forms such as the funfair.

The working English girl, however, often experienced working-class life very differently on screen. Betty Balfour's flower-girl character in the British *Squibs* films (U.K., George Pearson, 1921-1935) offers a telling counterpart to Bow's Betty Lou. Balfour's unfashionable tomboy charm contrasts markedly with Bow's glamour and sex appeal (see figures 8.2 and 8.3). Although Balfour's character Squibs gains a degree of wealth in the second film of the series, she does so not by marriage or inheritance but by gambling on the Calcutta Sweep. A character like Betty Lou could marry into higher class privilege and wealth, but Squibs ultimately could not transcend her class roots in spite of her new found riches.

The American film star as a form of working girl represented female economic power and emancipation divorced from inheritance, class privilege or marital status. The difficulty of establishing a sense of the 'official' class of female screen stars, who in America achieved vast commercial success despite their lower-class roots, was a fact often commented upon in British fan

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis/dissertation for copyright reasons

Figure 8.2 Clara Bow as department store worker Betty Lou in *It* (1927), engaging in physical play as courtship with boss Mr. Waltham (Antonio Moreno) on the 'social mixer' funfair ride (Image taken from silentfilm.org website)

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis/dissertation for copyright reasons

Figure 8.3 Betty Balfour as the distinctly unglamorous flower girl Squibs in *Squibs Wins the Calcutta Sweep* (1922) (Image taken from *Silent Cinema* documentary, see works cited)

magazine discourse, echoing complaints in the British press mentioned earlier.

British fan magazines documented the ways in which American working-class performers could achieve “material rewards which come to stage players only after a lifetime of achievement, and then not frequently” (*Picturegoer* March, 1918: 301), ascending rapidly from lower-class origins to excessive material wealth.

The ease of class ascendance evidenced the rags-to-riches fairytale narratives of many American that films depicted women who, “even when they have been brought up in the slums” could easily enter society by “putting [sic] on an evening dress” (Aug. 1918: 211). Coupled with the vast salaries of stars with working-class roots, such representations painted a fantasy portrait of modern femininity that was a far cry from British women’s everyday experiences of strong class divisions.

Seemingly trying to downplay the troubling dominance of the excesses of glamorous American stars, *Picturegoer* presented a wide range of feminine types—serial stars, flappers, tragediennes, exotic vamps, ‘child-like’ innocents, tomboys and the quintessential ‘British girlhood’ found in actresses such as Alma Taylor and Violet Hopson. The magazine’s presentation of these types tended to focus upon undercutting the more aggressive and radically new female personas.

Stars like Mary Pickford, who embodied many aspects signifying traditional feminine norms (de-sexualized, innocent, unglamorous on-screen) was described as “representative of any girl in her world-wide audience” (May 1928: 15), and consistently praised by *Picturegoer* columnists. The emphasis tended to be upon the Pickford persona of her film roles, downplaying her vast economic standing and independent influence within the American industry.

Gaylyn Studlar’s work on Pickford has described the way in which her on screen characters were “ambiguously inscribed with characterized of both child and adult woman, as a ‘child woman’” (‘Oh Doll’ 350). As essentially a “child impersonator” (Studlar, ‘Oh Doll’ 350) on screen, Pickford was devoid of the threatening sexuality of the exotic vamp screen personas, such as Pola Negri or Greta Garbo. Studlar argues that fan magazine discourses in particular “disavowed her status as an adult woman” (‘Oh Doll’ 354). This disavowal rendered “her erotic potential innocent and safe” (Studlar, ‘Oh Doll’ 356). Thus we find Pickford referred to in British fan magazine discourses as “always sweet and ladylike” (Mar. 1918: 282), capable only of making “pretty, simple pictures” (May 1920: 534).

With the more aggressively sexualized and glamorous female personas, *Picturegoer* articles tended to undercut their screen characters with insights into their domestic personalities off-screen, as touched upon in previous chapters. The private lives of actresses such as Gloria Swanson, who seemed

to personify the glamour of American stardom, were often presented as cautionary tales. *Picturegoer* articles about Swanson covered topics such as “Why Gloria is Always Broke” (12 Jul. 1919: 46). This particular article featured an interview in which Swanson lamented her inability to resist spending lavishly on fashion and décor, inspired by roles which allowed her to wear excessively expensive costuming. The interview stressed the negative consequences of female economic independence embodied in such extravagant self-display.

The article ultimately attempted to represent Swanson as something of a reformed sinner, carefully noting the “subdued, almost severe” (May 1921: 22) décor of her dressing room and “very reserved” (Ibid) manner of the repentant star. Swanson’s excesses could be challenged directly as a way of disavowing her troublingly sexualised and extravagant persona—a different process of disavowal to the handling of the Pickford persona, where the star’s almost unbelievable wealth and industry power within the silent era was rarely mentioned³, as her screen child-woman persona took precedence.

Fan responses to female stars

Fans responded to such complex processes of representation in a variety of ways. Female viewers often express contrasting and strongly held views on female stardom ranging from protesting against changing star personas and

³ Studlar notes Pickford’s huge film salaries and influence over her silent era film projects, at “the forefront of film artists who exercised absolute creative mastery over their vehicles” (‘Oh Doll’ 353).

appearances to the suitability of actresses to particular roles. Several fans write in protest, for example, against Mary Pickford's adolescent characters,⁴ despite the magazine's endorsement, demanding a break from repetitious "ridiculous child roles" (Apr. 1923: 66). Another reader similarly remarks of the characteristically waif-like Lillian Gish that she ought to "vamp and show her temper occasionally" (Oct. 1925: 66).

Comments such as these are recurrent in fan debate, suggesting that models of feminine behavior, appearance and personality were not straightforwardly accepted, from either film texts or magazine articles as modes of consumption. Reflections on female stardom were more complex. Fans rarely listed a singular favorite star, for example, instead tending to offer a handful of preferred female personas, suggesting that the cinema offered women consumer choice enabling them to build a composite of their own preferred form of female stardom.

Collecting and accumulating a range of 'types' and personas was an acknowledged commercialized practice within fan magazines in their advertisement of collectible star postcards, star cigarette cards, and inclusion of star posters that could be removed from the magazine. These practices spoke to the notion of composite representations, with aspects of female stardom offering varied points of identification.

⁴ Pickford herself was acutely aware of her typecasting as a child-imitator, and attempted to break with her stereotypical screen image on several occasions with a handful of more dramatic adult roles handpicked by the actress herself.

Evidence of such fan practice can be found within the film ephemera archive. The University of Exeter's Bill Douglas Centre for the History of Cinema and Popular Culture in particular holds several illuminating fan scrapbooks from the silent era, dedicated to stars such as the Talmadge sisters (Norma, Natalie and Constance), Pola Negri, Colleen Moore, Marie Prevost, Vilma Banky and Bebe Daniels. These scrapbooks contain a plethora of star images and cuttings taken from a variety of media—newspapers, fan magazines, trade papers, postcards, photographs, cigarette cards, personal drawings etc.

Female fans were thus able to use the film magazine and other forms of film ephemera as tangible objects, able to be deconstructed and reconstructed both literally and ideologically in the physical dismantling of materials, removing articles and images from their original context to “paste them into albums” (Feb. 1925: 82) or “cut them out and save them” (14—21 Sept. 1918: 281).

Privileging particular performers and discarding others, female fans frequently framed such choices in relation to issues of the nationality of stars, with their success as performers measured against a sense of their intrinsic ‘Britishness’ or American sensibilities. American stars were often chastised in fan writing for popularity founded on glamour, wealth and self-display alone, seemingly echoing the chastisement of the official magazine content. A female fan writes in 1928 that:

Many of the genuine stars seem to me to be so superficial and lacking in real emotional power: they are wrapped in lip-stick, Marcel Waves, and complexes! (Jan. 1928: 60).

Echoing the lengthy 'Irene' letter explored in Chapter 1, the writer is aware of the commercial imperative behind star representation in industry and advertising-supported discourses (here making specific reference to the popular Marcel Wave⁵ hair fashion). The blatant commercialization of American star images on and off the screen often provoked this kind of frustration.

What emerges from these comments is a sense that there was a considerable divide between the ways in which performance and nationality were conceptualized as quintessentially British or American, generally revolving around issues of British "reserve" and American "enthusiasm".

British actresses like Alma Taylor and Violet Hopson were praised for their reserve, with Taylor commended by one fan as "the embodiment of charming, unspoilt, British girlhood" (Sept. 1918: 301). The same fan writes of how impressed she was upon a recent sighting of Taylor that the star "preferred not to attract notice" (Sept. 1918: 301).

⁵ Across the 1920s imported Marcel curling irons (created by Frenchman Francois Rene Marcel) were on sale in the UK, enabling women to create this fashionable hairstyle. The wave look, created by applying heated curling irons to mould hair into 's'-shaped curved undulations, became synonymous with the Marcel brand and was hugely popular across the 1920s, often sported by movie stars.

By privileging acting ability over aesthetic appearance, such letter writers posited performative skill as the essential nationally specific element of an appealing female star. This value placed upon restraint as a key characteristic of performance—both in terms of acting style and costume style—was a concept which resonated within the British industry itself, particularly with one of Britain’s few genuinely successful filmmakers, Cecil Hepworth.

Hepworth was the first British producer to establish his own stock company, creating a studio in Walton-on-Thames in the 1910s and contracting a number of performers. Hepworth’s approach to his performers in the teens showed little interest in creating star personas, however. Rather, Hepworth “seems to have regarded his actors as functionaries. They deserved, he believed, roughly the same salary as the electricians, who worked just as hard on set” (MacNab 11).

Drawing upon Rachael Low, MacNab argues that Hepworth “discovered most of his important stars by mistake” (11) as the result of his repeated use of the same performers in early films. This meant that as film stardom became a major factor in the selling of films, producers like Hepworth suddenly and unexpectedly found that they had a monopoly on familiar British performers. MacNab notes Hepworth’s resistance to the development of a star system around this monopoly, seeing the recognition of actors as “destroying the family business-style harmony of the Walton

enterprise” (11). Quoting from Hepworth’s autobiography at length, MacNab offers evidence of the filmmaker’s grudging acceptance that stars needed to be advertised into the teens:

I foresaw that what was happening to other firms would certainly happen to us. An actor had the value which was due to his own good work. He also had a fortuitous value, not contributed by him, and due to the money spent in advertising him. That accumulated value was free – unless, and only for so long as, he was under contract – to sell to any rival firm for as much as he could get. His new firm would, of necessity, add to that increased value and the process would go on, higher and higher, until the producers were impoverished and the actors near millionaires. That, indeed, has come to pass, and it is one of the reasons why the film production is nearly always in difficulty (Hepworth 51).

Female screen performers contracted to Hepworth were acutely aware of this resistance to star profile and publicity. Chrissie White, one of Hepworth’s few significant female stars, recalled that the director “didn’t like publicity—we [Hepworth’s contract players] weren’t allowed publicity at all”⁶. Although Hepworth used studio magazines to promote his actresses and their films, none of them were allowed to give interviews or appearances early on in their

⁶ Quotation taken from interview footage included in Matthew Sweet’s ‘Silent Britain’ documentary—see works cited.

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis/dissertation for copyright reasons

Figure 8.4 A Hepworth advertisement for Chrissie White and the film *Broken Threads* (U.K., Hepworth, 1918) featured in the bottom corner of a page of *Picturegoer* (Aug. 3–10 1918:185).

careers, going against the grain of the American model of stardom more closely aligned with discourses of excessive star promotion.

An example of an advertisement for White's film *Broken Threads* in a 1918 *Picturegoer* is typical of Hepworth's approach (figure 8.4). The insert features no images, instead displaying only a small replica of the Hepworth company logo beside a brief block of text on an empty white background, humorlessly explaining: "Chrissie White is one of the Hepworth picture players. She has acted for Hepworth since she was ten years old. Her years of experience help to make her pictures what they are today" (2—10 Aug. 1918: 185).

The restraint and reserve evidenced in Hepworth's approach to advertising and the value of acting style (the advertisement describes White's performance as "first rate") was a quality deeply embedded in both the British dramatic tradition, which still held substantial cultural influence at the turn of the century as a site for "playing out the tensions in British culture between . . . private emotion and public presentation" (Gledhill, *Reframing* 16).

What the cinema called for in acting style was in many ways fundamentally incompatible with the theatrical tradition. Cinema required a mode of performance which broke with the dramatic craft of theatre acting in demanding a less mediated representational discourse. This was tied to the fundamental notion that film stars "did not really act but passively offered authentic ontological being to the recording apparatus" (Burrows 33).

Feeding into debates about highbrow art forms and lowbrow populist media, the cinema seemingly stood in opposition to the prestige of a nationalized British theatrical heritage, yet, as Street argues, British filmmakers attempted to graft theatrical norms onto filmmaking as a way of distinguishing a nationalized film culture as intertwined with the prestige of theatrical ideals. Theatrical norms did not translate readily to screen fictions, however, and the resistance of many reputable stage stars to appear in cinema only underscored the lowbrow connotations of the medium.

Reserve, restraint, and representation were praised and revered on the stage as the embodiment of prestigious national theatrical heritage. On the screen, however, a less mediated performance (as one fan puts it, screen stars needed to *'live, and not act it'* (May 1928: 55))—seemed preferable. The awkward fit of national performative norms with the demands of screen acting is often evidenced in the contrast between British and American female star performances as perceived in fan letter writing.

On the one hand, British actresses were applauded for their “dainty unassuming manner” (Sept.1918: 301) and “British reserve” (Sept.1918: 301), whilst on the other they were criticized for being “too restrained” (May 1928: 54), their acting “heavy and labored” (Oct. 1921: 62). The following extract from a *Picturegoer* article late in 1928 entitled “Have we no ‘It’ Girls?” sides with the latter attitude:

The two—personality and reserve—cannot possibly go together for a girl who wants to succeed on the screen. On the stage reserve is an asset. It lends dignity and stateliness. But dignity on the screen does not register as it does on the speaking stage. It makes a beautiful woman appear cold, haughty, unemotional. That is why most of our English screen actresses are often called “dumb.” There is proof of this in the fact that Hollywood producers do not favour English girls in their productions . . . She looks hard and cold on the screen and, of course, that typical English reserve predominates (Dec. 1928: 39).

The British star was, in the view of many fans, too often unable to navigate this incompatibility between modest British womanhood and the culture of personality that stardom embodied. The negotiation that American stars seemed to achieve between traditional forms of femininity and public personality appeared to hold greater appeal to British fans, and may be one of the reasons for Mary Pickford being the most regularly discussed star within *Picturegoer* letters and poetry, along with the clear dominance of American stars featured in the fan-written content of the magazine.

Although the feisty, child-woman charm of the Pickford screen persona in hit films such as *Rebecca of Sunnybrooke Farm* (U.S., Marshall Neilan, 1917), *Little Annie Rooney* (U.S., William Beaudine, 1925) played to more typically English norms, seemingly devoid of the aggressive and sexualized femininity of the more glamorous female stars (figure 8.5 shows a publicity image of

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis/dissertation for copyright reasons

Figure 8.5 Signed star portrait of Mary Pickford (source: Bill Douglas Centre, item no. BDCEXE60201).

Pickford dressed as her child persona), her star image within extra-textual discourses embraced the self-promotion and commodification of her persona. The ratio of images to written material within *Picturegoer*, for example, shows a substantial dominance of pictorial material—portraits, posters, covers—over articles and interviews with Pickford. In terms of film performances, the number of Pickford films produced in the silent era greatly outweighs those of British stars. Pickford appeared in some 244 films between 1913 and 1928, compared, for example, to Betty Balfour's 23.⁷

The following is a fan magazine article which claims to outline Pickford's own 'ten commandments' to aspiring female screen stars addressing the fan magazine reader with a conceptualization of the essential qualities of the screen's most successful women:

Here are what Mary thinks the essentials for screen-aspirants. (1) Have some other vocation to fall back upon in case of need. (2) Have money enough to last at least a year. (3) Be quite sure you have the necessary talent. (4) Get at least a little stage experience. (5) Also movie experience. (6) Carry plenty of photographs. (7) And a large and varied amount of costumes. (8) Be sure to have a screen test made. (9) Always be sincere and ambitious. (10) Always remember that film success must be worked for, just like success in business, it doesn't drop from above. This should certainly fright off some of you would-be's (Apr. 1924: 66).

⁷ Figures taken from the Internet Movie Database filmography listings.

Within a domestic industry whose attempts to transpose theatrical norms to cinema entangled screen performers within theatrical discourses connecting acting credibility to class, British stars struggled to fulfill many of Pickford's "commandments". Commandments (4), (5), (6), and (7) would all appear inherently problematic for British girls, situated within a culture whose media and reformist concern frequently targeted public femininity as a subject of troublesome transgression.

For the American star, the negotiation of old and new femininity across such sites seemed to be a more fluid process, with traditional feminine attributes built into their marketable image. A star like Pickford could effectively enjoy the best of both worlds, with a glamorous off-screen lifestyle and a sweet, child-like persona on film. The scope of both performance and publicity for British actresses like Betty Balfour or Alma Taylor was far more limited, circulating within a domestic industry less eager to embrace the ethics of marketable, consumable star image.

These issues were mediated through other aspects of female stardom besides performance. Screen costuming and fashion were a frequent focus for fan debates about the differing constructions of British and American stardom. British trade papers were quick to acknowledge that "dress nowadays has a powerful attraction for most women" (*The Bioscope* Oct. 1921: 45), with cheaper and more physically liberating 1920s clothing trends facilitating universally popular and achievable fashions across different

classes of women. Accordingly, fashion was a key element of the film fan magazine's mediation of female star images.

As Billie Melman has argued, female apparel emphasizing the liberation of the body and "boyish" (5) femininity were regarded in the early twentieth century "as the symbol of the new morality, a sign of the transition from a sexually and socially heterogeneous society to one that was unisex, uniform and classless" (5). The British woman in modern dress was therefore as much a statement of social revolution as personal liberation, and British fans saw the tendency to steer towards reserved, outmoded or absurdist fashions in British productions and stars as contrasting heavily with outlandish and extravagant American styles.

Returning to the personal archive of Elinor Glyn, I offer an example of film industry insider's view of the ways in which dress was conceptualized along national lines in the 1920s and mediated through film culture with a direct address to female audiences. An undated, unpublished piece from Glyn's papers entitled 'The Effect of Clothes on Women's Morals' outlines in detail the complexities surrounding the costuming of British female performers:

The clothes they have to wear in the pictures . . . have a sadly last year's look – or as though they were the creation of someone with fantastic taste, quite indifferent to the law of Paris – You know what I mean, lots of people had this air during the war, when they furnished up old styles because they could not

afford to get the up-to-date new models. There are two types to be seen on the screen – unbelievably funny long dresses, with sheath like palettes and weird trains and every kind of trimmings in strings of beads etc. etc., stuck on to them in meaningless places – a travesty of what was worn in 1915 – and then paradise plumes, and ridiculous headdresses piled up on highly dressed elaborate hair – And the other type is the short frock with fluffs and bits of flowers adorning the wrong outline.⁸

Glyn expresses a frustration with the inability of producers to make a connection between up-to-date female fashions and the costuming of their female performers. Her irritation here is with the British industry's tendency towards styles that appear either outmoded or so fantastical as to be entirely out of step with current trends, meaning that screen performers playing "society ladies" do not "look like the real ones in New York, or London or Paris".

Glyn emphasizes the effect that such representations have upon audiences, insisting that costuming choices resonate with "the public". She argues that inappropriate screen fashions cause the "public taste" to be "misled", and that the screen must work to "educate the public to appreciate style". She takes seriously the responsibility of filmic representations to speak to women in relation to their experiences of real life, mediated through 'real' fashion trends and styles'.

⁸ Article taken from Elinor Glyn papers, University of Reading special collections (no date given).

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis/dissertation for copyright reasons

Figure 8.6 Alma Taylor on the cover of *Picturegoer* (Nov. 1914)

Despite the radical changes in women's dress, many British stars were depicted as avoiding fashion altogether. Alma Taylor in particular (see figure 8.6) was often portrayed as the antithesis of the glamorous American film personality in her choice of simple dress, homemade clothes and refusal to wear make-up off the screen.

Taylor was a London actress who, unusually for a British star, began her career in films rather than pre-establishing herself in theatre. Taylor appeared in over 150 film roles in the silent era and was voted most popular British actress by *Picturegoer* readers in 1915. Contracted to Hepworth, Taylor was reported to have made her debut on screen as early as twelve years old, and starred in relatively successful British silent era films such as *David Copperfield* (U.K., Thomas Bentley, 1913), *Tansy* (U.K., Cecil Hepworth, 1921) and *The Narrow Valley* (U.K., Cecil Hepworth, 1921).

Jonathan Burrows has shown how the Taylor star persona, under the tight control of Hepworth, represented an attempt to remain "faithful to certain privileged icons and ideals of British womanhood and local cultural traditions" which "led to a great many discursive contradictions and ambivalences in the content of . . . [her] star image" (31).

Taylor was frequently represented as a star who professed a "complete distaste for the emergent culture of consumerism" (Burrows 36). Burrows cites a report on Taylor's fashion habits in *Nash's* magazine which portrayed the star in this guise, reporting that "When Miss Taylor goes to London,

which she does very infrequently, it is to do some simple shopping, for her wants are few" (May 1915: 328). A similar story in *P&P* magazine printed two years later echoed this sense of Taylor as a modest female star, reporting her view on fashion: "I'm not frightfully fond of clothes . . . At home, I enjoy myself in the oldest thing I can find." (Sept. 1917: 329).

This stood in direct contrast to the representation of American stars like Gloria Swanson, who were characterized almost entirely by their indulgence in fashion and consumer goods. A female fan letter from 1918 responds directly to the specific nature of Taylor's persona as a point of national contrast to such extravagant American stars, reporting a recent sighting of the actress:

To-day I had a special treat. I attended the Trade Show of a Hepworth film, and at the end of this particular film . . . I came across the slim figure that I love to see on these occasions. Looking altogether charming in a simple cotton costume came Alma Taylor, passing on her way with a word of greeting here and there to friends and acquaintances. As I watched the figure of the girl who is beloved by thousands of British picturegoers, the account I had read a few days previously occurred to my mind—American enthusiasm and British reserve. Here and there, I caught words of admiration and affections—but for the most part very few appeared to recognize the girl with the dainty, unassuming manner, who obviously preferred not to attract notice . . . the embodiment of charming, unspoilt British girlhood (Sept. 1918: 301).

Taylor's dismissal of fashion and glamour, opting for a "simple cotton costume" and appearing "dainty" and "unassuming" here garners the respect and admiration of the female film fan. Another *Picturegoer* fan letter similarly praises the actress for her naturalness, exclaiming that: "Alma Taylor was simply Alma Taylor. How artificial and unreal many of the transatlantic luminaries are beside her!" (Apr. 1920: 402). National 'reserve' is here an asset rather than a hindrance; the quality of Taylor's star persona is measured by an avoidance of self-display.

As Burrows notes, however, the coded reserve and restraint of British female costuming was definitely not universally popular with British female fans. As ever, fan's used the letters page to spur debate, and accordingly a large number of fan letters condemned the failure of British stars like Taylor to mimic their American counterparts in sophisticated modern dress and style.

A letter from 1920, for example, observed that:

English films are handicapped by the very ordinary faces, clothes, style and acting of the English film stars. I witnessed a British play the other evening—a really good film—with plenty of plot and go in it—but oh, dear! The heroine! She was plain to an extent of positive ugliness at times and atrociously dressed and shod, and she was ridiculous at times as to draw forth very

uncomplimentary remarks from the young bloods in the cheap seats (Mar. 1920: 268).

For this fan, narrative sophistication is a wasted effort when British films remain unable to cast actresses of appropriate aesthetic star quality to carry such stories. A similar letter later in the decade rehashes these arguments:

Our actresses are the biggest handicap. They may be talented, but they certainly are neither beautiful nor chic. Put an American actress beside an English one, and you can tell at a glance the American, by her clothes and the smart way she has of wearing them (May 1928: 54).

Appearance, performance and nationality are here inescapably linked, underscoring the inability of British screen stars to fully embrace the aesthetic modernity of both appearance and performance necessary to create successful filmic incarnations.

Of the most regularly featured *Picturegoer* stars, few adhere strongly to this conception of the more austere British image. The prominent names—Mary Pickford, Norma Talmadge, Constance Talmadge, Pauline Frederick, Lillian Gish, Clara Kimball Young, Mary Miles Minter etc.—present an appropriate blend of a more modern off-screen image with a less radical on-screen persona, with stars such as Gish and Norma Talmadge praised as “sweet”, “pretty” or “dainty” in appearance.

The flapper image personified by actresses like Clara Bow and Colleen Moore is present among the most popular *Picturegoer* stars, but is ultimately outweighed by Talmadge, Pickford and Gish's less radical but no less modern image of femininity. A balance, therefore, seems to have been appreciated by an audience of female fans, perhaps echoing their own struggle to reconcile ideas of feminine progress and traditional norms in their own lives.

By positing acting style and apparel as essential indicators of feminine type, fan discourses interpreted star images as sites for debate and self-expression rather than simplistic emulation. Female star images enabled women to explore and experiment with their own experience of modern femininity, weighing trends, attitudes and behavior against their own preferences.

The popular culture that female fans navigated through their letter writing was not dominated inescapably by a set of determining spectatorial positions of resistance or passivity, but was a sphere, as John Storey surmises, "of ideological contestation and variability, to be filled and emptied, to be articulated and disarticulated, in a range of different and competing ways" (155).

Analyzing fan letters is thus a way of offering greater sensitivity to British women's participation within the "contestation and variability" of popular culture. The variety of fan debate and opinion on display within the *Picturegoer* demonstrates that female engagement with film silent culture

refused to fall easily upon either side of an active/passive reception binary. The vitality of much fan writing insists upon itself, exceeding its status as an ephemeral by-product of commercialized consumer leisure culture.

Bringing fan letters to the forefront of archival silent film research, therefore, assists in the writing of women “back into film history” (Hastie ‘Miscellany’ 229) in a manner which gives voice to the diversity of female film culture in this period. Fan debate about costuming, performance, styling and nationality in star images highlights women’s awareness of their primary role within popular culture more broadly as engaged consumers capable of debating, contesting and embracing the female representations they consumed.

The thesis now moves, in the final chapter, to a detailed case study bringing together the various strands of women’s film culture explored thus far. The chapter looks at a particular genre—crime—at points of overlap between film and literary culture in early twentieth century British culture. It asks what this generic form tells us about the generative aspects of female film culture, and the popularity of crime within a variety of silent era female writing forms.

Chapter 9 Female Film Culture and Popular Genre: Crime writing, serials and stars

This final chapter offers a case study of women's interaction with a particular popular genre in silent era Britain. The chapter focuses upon examples of crime as a female-targetted genre as a way of drawing together various interlinked elements of women's cinema writing explored throughout the thesis. Focusing upon women as the consumers and producers of crime narratives, the chapter explores the ways in which incarnations of the genre in novelizations, fan magazines and screen serializations were connected by the presence of female writers, stars and readers.

My aim is thus to look at the ways in which female presence within the genre is illustrative of the interconnected nature of many of the generative aspects of women's engagement with silent era film and popular culture. I ask what the prominence of crime in these interrelated sites tells us about the gendered currency of specific popular genres in female film culture at this time.

The chapter firstly looks at the genre's presence across popular British culture during the silent era, focusing upon novelizations of female-led crime films and filmic re-issues of adapted female crime novels. The chapter then moves to examine British and American serial films, examining their differing modes of female address and their focus upon transgressive female characters. I look at examples of both fan and female film star writing in the

fan magazine and the star autobiography that kept these transgressive representations in play. Finally, I examine what these materials therefore suggest about the status of narrative resolution in crime as a popular generic form, and its implications for British female film culture.

Crime as a popular genre

Steve Neale describes genre as “a multi-dimensional phenomenon, a phenomenon that encompasses systems of expectation, categories, labels and names, discourses, texts and groups or corpuses of texts” (*Genre* 20). Neale draws specific attention to the role of the audience in the construction and reception of genre, examining the term as one which:

. . . emerges with industrialization, mass production, new technologies, new capital, new means of distribution (notably postal systems and the railways), the formation of a relatively large literate (or semi-literate) population—and hence a political market—at the point of profound transformation in the conditions governing cultural production and the discourses and debates with which it was accompanied (*Genre* 22-23).

Generically codifying, categorizing and interpreting texts, therefore, was a practice fundamentally intertwined with turn-of-the-century cultural developments and emerging discourses that deeply impacted, as has been

explored in earlier chapters, upon contemporary femininity and the female experience of popular culture.

Women's encounters with generic labeling extended beyond the individual film or literary text, enabling the consumer to make connections between a range of media forms in contemporary culture. Crime as a generically marked type of fictional cinema was characterized by its interaction with plots, stories, characters and conventions exchanged back and forth between the cinema screen and a variety of media forms.⁹ These included the penny or yellowback crime novel, cheap 'tec' (detective) fictions, crime in story magazines, crime reports in newsreel footage, and 'real life' crime in tabloid discourses.

Newspaper and popular journal crime reporting was often founded often upon embellished 'true story' crime articles, "making the largest possible appeal to readers who wanted to be excited and amused" (Williams 223). British newspapers such as *The Times*, *The Daily News*, *The Manchester Guardian* and *The Daily Mail* commonly reported on thefts, murders and criminal events, profiling perpetrators, publishing court proceedings and police activity. Magazines like *The Penny Illustrated Paper* and *Lloyd's Weekly*

⁹ Female written crime novels in this era often explicitly referenced other crime fictions and characters in their texts. This was a practice particularly employed by bestselling British female crime authors Dorothy L. Sayers, Margery Allingham and Agatha Christie. The 1920s novels of these authors tend towards self-conscious discussion of the genre within the narrative itself, with particular reference to its popular status and familiarity with its formal conventions. The characters that such writers created refer frequently to the familiarity of their engagement with criminal events as reminiscent of existing popular crime narratives, crime writers, or famous crime characters.

offered sensationalist reports and grisly details regarding criminal news stories.

Crime thus clearly had popular currency as a generic form in British culture, particularly in sites that targeted women. Female reading audiences for woman-made fiction markets were substantial, with popular writers such as Margery Allingham, Dorothy L. Sayers and Agatha Christie dominating crime fiction bestseller lists, while crime in the cinema was pervasive as subject matter for adaptation, story and characters.¹⁰

Attentive to Neale's focus upon the variety of ways in which genres are conceptualized at different historical moments, a dispersal of feminine association emerges from exploring the categorizing terminology applied to crime in silent era fan magazines. Below I offer a list of generic labels given to films from 1911-1930 drawn from British fan magazine reviews which feature crime as a central theme are.¹¹ The range of terminology shows the diversity of genre labeling used to describe crime narratives in such female targeted magazines:

Adventure; mystery drama; comedy drama; crook comedy romance; crook drama; crook melodrama; crime story; detective story; drama; melodrama; murder melodrama; murder mystery story; mystery story; problem feature; romantic melodrama; sensational feature; serial; spy drama; stunt melodrama; thriller; underworld story.

¹⁰ Silent film adaptations of Christie's fictions included *The Passing of Mr. Quin* (U.K., Leslie S. Hiscot & Julius Hagen, 1928) and *Die Abenteuer G.m.b.H (The Secret Adversary)* (Germany, Fred Saur, 1929).

¹¹ Using *Picturegoer*, *Girls Cinema* and *Picture Show*.

Crime was wide-spread across fan magazine generic classification, therefore. The coding of crime as feminine in the hybridity of descriptive generic terms—‘crook melodrama’, ‘murder melodrama’—can be viewed as an attempt to make the crime film appealing to female audiences. Crime-themed serial queen melodrama in particular (“sensational feature”, “stunt melodrama”), as Ben Singer has argued, attempted “to construct a textual arena for fantasies appealing particularly to female spectators” (222), coding the genre as woman-oriented, as will be explored in detail later in the chapter.

Popular writers explored across the thesis thus far, such as Ethel M. Dell, had particular currency in this genre in its movement between screen and page. Several British adaptations of Dell’s crime themed novels in the teens were produced by Stoll, such as *The Safety Curtain* (U.K., Maurice Elvey, 1918), *The Swindler* (U.K., Maurice Elvey, 1919) and *Rocks of the Valpre* (U.K., Maurice Elvey, 1919). These crime dramas featured female heroines and were successful on British screens.

The production of promotional re-issues of these types of woman-made crime fictions to support the release of their filmic adaptations links back to the processes of novelizations discussed in Chapter 4. The Reader’s Library Publishing group was one of the most prominent producers of such crime film novelizations and re-issues in early twentieth century Britain.

The publisher issued a series of crime and mystery film books in the mid-to-late twenties under the 'Readers Library Film Edition' heading. The covers of some of these editions are shown in figures 9.1 to 9.3. The aesthetic connotations of existing woman-made markets of romantic fiction could be coupled with crime themes in the cover art of these editions, echoing the generic marking of sex novel and sensational fiction such as that of Elinor Glyn. The female heroines of all three films shown here—*Manslaughter* (U.S., Cecil B. DeMille, 1922), *Picadilly* (U.K., Ewald Andre Dupont, 1929) and *The Lodger* (U.K., Alfred Hitchcock, 1927) are depicted on their covers, two entangled with the male romantic leads. The novelization of *The Lodger* is a particularly apt example. The Readers Library edition is in fact a re-issue of Mary Belloc Lowndes' 1913 novel. The pairing of the couple on its cover reflects the way in which the film adaptation recast the eponymous Lodger as a romantic hero, deviating strongly from Lowndes' original narrative and recoding the film and the re-issue as a story centered upon melodramatic romantic themes.

Women were thus targeted as the potential dual consumers of both crime fictions and films, and female writers like Lowndes and *Manslaughter* author Alice Duer Miller were a prevalent aspect of such marketing.

Crime in the fan magazine

The currency of women's writing within the genre further extended to fan magazines. Crime featured in a multitude of forms in British fan

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis/dissertation for copyright reasons

Figure 9.1 *Manslaughter* (1922)

Figure 9.2 *Picadilly* (1929)

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis/dissertation for copyright reasons

Figure 9.3 *The Lodger* (1927)

(Images source: Bill Douglas Centre, item no.s: EXEBDC 20907; EXEBDC 36538; EXEBDC 33750)

publications—in reviews, interviews, star profiles and short story prose adaptations, and as a topic of discussion in the writing of female fans.

The fan magazine conceptualization of the feminine qualities of the genre frequently focused upon criminal female characters. The following extract from a *Picturegoer* article of 1920 lists some of the varied types of criminal women on screen by the beginning of the decade:

We have a lot of different she-villains. There's the adventuress, the 'woman of the city', the 'Scarlet Woman' . . . a beautiful tigress who kills, murders, steals, spies, commits bigamy, intrigues the husbands of every other woman of her acquaintance (10 Apr. 1920).

Reviews offer a plethora of such "she-villain" representations. The *Picturegoer* review of *The Grell Mystery* (U.S., Paul Scardon, 1917) describes the murder of the protagonist by "Lola, dancer and ex-sweetheart" (1—8 Jun. 1918: 540-541). The review for *Bond of Fear* (U.S., Jack Conway, 1917) focuses on the star Belle Bennett as "Mary Jackson, the girl who pretended to be guilty of murder so as to share a criminal's burden" (10 Apr. 1920: 220). *Going Crooked* (U.S., George Melford, 1916) star Bessie Love was described as "a girl crook who didn't want to be" (Aug. 1927: 39). *The Thief* (U.S., Charles Giblyn, 1920) review detailed serial star Pearl White playing "a girl crook . . . thoroughly at home in a succession of fast-moving incidents" (19 Nov. 1921: 5). *The Profiteers* (U.S.,

George Fitzmaurice, 1919) was described as a crime story starring “Fannie Ward in the role of a daughter of the underworld” (14 Jan. 1922: 12).

These characters were often youthful (“girl” / “girl crook” / “daughter”) and modern, performing within contemporary settings (stunting on railroads, balloons, ships, trains, cars etc.) and adapting readily to the adventure and danger around them (“thoroughly at home” etc.).

As a specific narrative form which overlapped with crime themes, the serial in particular presented the female performer as an active physical body. Serials “played a key role in the British film-going experience in the silent era” (Marlow-Mann 147), with both international and British made serials screened in British cinemas. The serial heroine—sometimes crime stopper, sometimes criminal—functioned as plot progressor precisely by her physical action, as imperiled female lead or daring heroine.¹² Prominent American serial *The Perils of Pauline* (U.S., Louis J. Gadnier and Donald MacKenzie, 1914), for example, told the story of the imperiled eponymous heroine seeking adventure prior to her marriage, perused by a villain coveting her riches. Pauline’s (Pearl White) adventure seeking exploits included flying in

¹² Examples of crime-themed female-led serials that were reviewed and featured in *Picturegoer* through the teens and 1920s include titles such as: *The Adventures of Kathlyn* (U.S., Francis J. Grandon, 1913), starring Kathlyn Williams; *Dollies of the Dailies* (U.S., Walter Edwin, 1914) starring Mary Fuller; *The Million Dollar Mystery* (U.S., Howell Hansel, 1914), starring Florence La Badie; *Lucille Love: Girl of Mystery* (U.S., Francis Ford, 1914), starring Grace Cunard; *The Iron Claw* (U.S., Edward José and George B. Seitz, 1916), starring Pearl White; *The Fatal Ring* (U.S., George B. Seitz, 1917), again starring Pearl White; *The Mystery Ship* (U.S., Harry Harvey and Henry MacRae, 1918), starring Elsie Van Name; *The Silent Mystery* (U.S., Francis Ford, 1918), starring Mae Gaston; *The Voice on the Wire* (U.S., Stuart Paton, 1918), starring Neva Gerber; *The Mystery of 13* (U.S., Francis Ford, 1919), starring Rosemary Theby; *The Green Archer* (U.S., Spencer Gordon Bennet, 1926), starring Allene Ray; *The Tiger’s Trail* (U.S., Robert Ellis et al., 1920), starring Ruth Roland; *The Third Eye* (U.S., James W. Horne, 1921), starring Eileen Percy; *The White Moll* (U.S., Harry F. Millarde, 1921), starring Pearl White; and *The Diamond Queen* (U.S., Edward A. Kull, 1922), starring Eileen Sedgwick. Significantly these were all American serials.

balloons, escaping a burning house, scaling cliff edges and fighting pirates, Indians, gypsies and sharks.

Ben Singer (2001) has explored female-led serials extensively, arguing that they:

. . . gave narrative preeminence to an intrepid young heroine who exhibited a variety of traditionally 'masculine' qualities: physical strength and endurance, self-reliance, courage, social authority, and freedom to explore novel experiences outside the domestic sphere (Singer 221).

Singer draws attention to the gender politics of the serial queen films, noting that the genre is "paradoxical in that its portrayal of female power is often accompanied by the sadistic spectacle of the woman's victimization" (222). *The Perils of Pauline* is a strong example of this victimization, focusing as it does upon the continued imperilment of the heroine and her male rescue by the conclusion of each episode. Singer expounds:

The genre as a whole is thus animated by an oscillation between contradictory extremes of female prowess and distress, empowerment and imperilment . . . the genre functioned [sic] not only as an index of female emancipation, and as a wish-fulfillment fantasy of power betraying how tentative and incomplete that social emancipation actually was, but also as an index of the anxieties that such

social transformations and aspirations created in a society experiencing the sociological and ideological upheavals of modernity (222).

While Singer's focus is on the production and reception of serial films within American culture, his attention to the flux and instability embodied in the gender representations is extremely relevant to the appeal of these serials and stars to British female fans.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the contradictory depiction of modern female heroines and screen stars was a prominent feature of British fan magazine representation. Since crime serial characters were distinctly transgressive, described in *Picturegoer* as "out for trouble" (Dec.—Jan. 1918: 8), they necessarily engaged the magazine's attempts to deradicalize feminine representation.

Picturegoer's handling of serial stars such Pearl White and Ruth Roland, (shown in figures 9.4, 9.5 and 9.6)—two of the most prominent stars in the magazine in the teens and twenties¹³—speaks to this instability of female representation. Articles about these stars frequently sought to balance their radical screen performances with a notion of essential femininity. In 'Pearl White—Past and Present' *Picturegoer* asserted that "Dainty, pretty and feminine, with all a woman's charm, Pearl White is as fearless as a man and more so than many of the sterner sex . . . her title as 'the peerless, fearless girl'

¹³ *Picturegoer* asserted that Pearl White in particular had a fame which was "universal", *Picturegoer* claimed that "to the British Isles she is the heroine of countless numbers" (28 Jun. 1919: 666).

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis/dissertation for copyright reasons

Figure 9.4 Pearl White featured on the cover of *Pictures* in August of 1922, in a scene from the film *Know Your Men* (U.S., Charles Giblyn, 1921).

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis/dissertation for copyright reasons

Figure 9.5 Promotional poster for *The Perils of Pauline* featuring White.

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis/dissertation for copyright reasons

Figure 9.6 Ruth Roland in a promotional still for the serial *The Timber Queen* (U.S., Fred Jackson, 1922).

is well justified” (28 Jun. 1919: 666). Ruth Roland in turn was described as being able to handle a .44 rifle . . . with comparative ease” regardless of the fact that such skills were “really a man’s job” (17 Jul. 1920: 78).

The fan conceptualization of these female crime characters enabled a working-through of the specific appeal of representations of feminine daring, criminal exploits and crime-stopping adventures in the light of these feminizing processes. Fan responses to White and Roland often reacted to the thrill of their female-centered serials as essential elements of their appealing star personas.

A fan from 1918, for example, is impressed by stunting crime melodrama serials *The Fatal Ring* (U.S., George B. Seitze, 1917) and *The White Moll* (U.S., Harry F. Millarde, 1920), applauding the ability of White (who played the lead in both these serials) to “make us hold our breath over hair-raising escapes and still be all a woman” (31 Aug-7 Sept. 1918: 101). The letter writer clearly admires her ability to conform to fan magazine’s demand for daring femal stars to retain a strong sense of their femininity inspite of their masculine profession.

Below is an example of a fan poem from 1922 dedicated to Ruth Roland, addressing her repeated performances in numerous successful crime-themed serials.¹⁴ The poem describes Roland’s various adventures:

Ruth Roland is always a favourite of mine
Though perils beset her, her courage is fine.
Though many the villains who seek for her life
Her spirit ne’er wavers through trouble and strife!
Keeping away from her enemies ever,
Only to find they have proven too clever
Like a ‘rat in a trap’ she is caught once again,
Attempts to escape all seem hopelessly vain.

¹⁴ Such as *The Red Circle* (U.S., Sherwood MacDonald, 1915), in which her character is influenced by a mysterious birth mark that forces her to steal; *The Adventures of Ruth* (U.S., George Marshall, 1919), where her character is entangled in bank robberies, forgeries and gangster activities; *Ruth of the Rockies* (U.S., George Mashall, 1920), in which her character flees with a trunk of stolen diamonds pursued by a thief; and *The Tiger’s Trail* (1920), in which Roland’s character Belle Boyd battles a gang of outlaws trying to cheat her out of her mines.

But no! once again she escapes from her fate,
'Dauntless Ruth Roland' I think is just great.

(Jul. 1922: 66)

The poem here revels in the repeated display of her “courage” and “spirit”, admiring the actress rather than any distinct characters that she played. A poem two years later again discussing Roland describes her “daring escapades” (Jan. 1928: 64), “following eagerly” her serial exploits and underscoring the appeal of the implied recklessness of the crime/adventure heroine within such narratives. “The fearless” (Mar. 1922: 54) was accordingly a moniker that fans regularly applied serial heroines, echoing the industry promotion of these stars as such.

A 1922 fan poem describes White in these terms: “She’s a diamond, a Pearl—there you are! / Always a peerless and fearless in fight” (Mar. 1922: 54). Another fan writer, Jeanette from Chichester, declares that “That dashing, daring lovely Pearl I’ve travelled miles to see” (Aug. 1923: 48). A poem by a fan labeling herself a ‘Lover of Pearl (Sussex)’ in October of the same year details the reason for her affection for White:

This brave little lady, you all must agree,
Owns courage and grit of the highest degree.
This Pearl of great price, I’m delighted to say,
Has come back to the serial kingdom of to-day;

But whate'er she may do, and where'er she may be,
She'll still be the same precious jewel to me.

(Oct. 1922: 58)

The repeated display of physical daring and female action—"courage and grit", "fearless in a fight", "dashing, daring"—is cited as the core appeal for these female fans, yet still framed within feminine terms—"little lady" / "lovely" / "precious". While a balanced portrayal of such radical personas as retaining an essential femininity reflects the feminizing processes of the magazine as a whole, clear investment is apparent in the daring and transgressive elements of these personas.

Exploring these stunting star personas, Jennifer M. Bean has argued that, while the serial star was in many ways consistent with "the emergent star system" (40), the figure also implied a persona "in excess of that system, one whose drawing power refuted market demographics and leveled the niceties of gender, age, class, and national appeal" ("Technologies" 11). In their ability to function as "transitional icon[s]", popular serial stars like Roland and White "embodied a heroic new personhood" ("Technologies" 14). Crucially, Bean argues, such stars speak to the "technologies of early stardom" which "flaunt catastrophe, disorder, and disaster rather than continuity and regulation" ("Technologies" 12).

The recreation and creative interaction with such stars in fan magazine writing speaks to the female fan embrace of this sense of disorder as a

particularly striking aspect of silent film stardom within British female fan culture. While I return to this in reference to narrative resolution later in the chapter, I turn now to look at the incarnation of the narratives of these crime-serials in fan magazine serializations and their attempts to appeal to female fans.

Screen-to-magazine prose tie-in serializations

Screen-to-magazine serializations often heavily underscored the physical heroism of crime serials in the later teens discussed and praised by female fans.

Serialization had an established audience across British popular culture prior to cinema. An article from the *Edinburgh Review* in the late 19th century, for example, reported that sensational novels sold in serial form were exceeding 2,000,000 copies a week, with adventure and melodrama serials having the strongest sale. Short story adaptation and serialization of crime films in fan magazines spoke to the existing audience of these forms, tapping into woman-made fiction markets within contemporary culture.

Ben Singer has argued that prose-version tie-ins were “perhaps the most important mode of publicity” (269) for early film serials in America, specifically designed to appeal to female audiences. The same would seem to apply for the British fan magazine prose-version adaptations of crime serials and film shorts. While the British film industry was less adept than the American industry in harnessing “cross-media alliances” (Singer 269), the

appearance of prose-version serials in fan magazines were nevertheless prominent.

On a basic level, these serializations were tools for the film fan, allowing readers to better comprehend the details of narration, story and character in the serials they consumed at the cinema. The focus of serializations upon female agency, however, particularly where it strayed into female criminality and involvement with crime themes, retained a focus upon female transgression that superseded individual episodic narrative resolution. With the recurrent portrayal of an interchangeable array of serial crime drama, female characters constituted a wealth of transgressive female representation. Their daring, activity and mobility were clearly appealing to British female readers, as evidenced in their poetry writing.

Story versions of several installments of the British series *Three Fingered Kate* that appeared in *Pictures and the Picturegoer* in 1912 provide an illuminating case study example. Alex Marlow-Mann has explored four distinct trends in the silent era serial formula, identifying productions like *Three Fingered Kate* as deviating from the “true serial” format insofar as the series constituted a collection of individual installments with self-contained individual narratives, rather than focusing upon cliff-hanger endings to each individual episode, resolved at the beginning of the next. Marlow-Mann describes the character-based series serial form as one which:

. . . features recurring character(s) in a number of short films with self-contained stories but no over-arching sense of narrative progression, made by the same production company and/or director and/or screenwriter (148).

Marlow-Mann observes that the British film industry “produced few true serials during the silent era,” (148) but did however “produce a number of sequential series, several of which had a significant commercial impact at the time of their release” (148), identifying *Three Fingered Kate* as one such series.

The *Kate* stories were centered on the eponymous heroine (played by French actress Ivy Martinek). Kate plans and executes a new theft each episode with great flair, recurrently thwarting her police detective nemesis Sheerluck Finch (Charles Calvert). Each filmed episode ends with a defiant straight-to-camera gesture of triumph from Kate as she offers the audience her three-fingered trademark salute. This salute was recreated in every *Pictures* edition of the stories (see fig 9.7 and 9.8).

With her sister Mary (Alice Moseley), the Kate character runs a criminal gang which executes elaborate acts of theft designed to taunt and infuriate both the victims and Finch, as Kate leaves messages of triumph and orchestrates intricate escapes to baffle the detective.

The fan magazine serialization of the *Kate* films played up the audacity of the female heroine. The short, three-page stories of current *Kate* episodes depicted the heroine in firm control of events and boastful of her criminal

. This image has been removed by the author of this thesis/dissertation for copyright reasons

Figure 9.7 Ivy Martinek gives her trademark salute as Three Fingered Kate. (*The Pictures*. Jul. 20 1912: 14)

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis/dissertation for copyright reasons

Figure 9.8 A Three Fingered Kate story transcribed for the fan magazine. (*The Pictures*. Aug. 17 1912: 16)

boldness. An example from the story-version of *Three Fingered Kate's Pseudo-Quartette* (1912):

'How did it go off?' Chalmers shouted above the noise of the car.

'Sweetly,' said Kate. 'Sweetly . . . We gave them a fine waltz tune to open the hall with—you should have heard me on the mandoline, only Snorky's violin drowned it—and while they were sitting around eating ices and recovering their breath, we held them up. It must have been the surprise of their lives.' (7 Sept. 1912: 20)

Kate here adopts something of the Robin Hood mythology, stealing from the wealthy, capitalizing on their leisure indulgence to rob them of their material goods. Unlike Hood, however, Kate's acts of theft are to her own advantage alone. As such, the narrative closes neither with her redemption, nor any form of pacifying romantic submission or change of heart. Rather, at the conclusion of each Kate story adaptation the female criminal remains happily, defiantly crooked. The *Pictures* conclusion of *Pseudo-Quartette* is no exception:

While Lord Malcolm's maneuver was being carried out, the companions had help up the enemy's chauffeur, and captured the racer, and all Sheerluck and the rest saw was Kate leaning out of the back of the flying vehicle, and holding up three derisive fingers (7 Sept. 1912: 20).

In offering repeated representations of such female daring by adapting from screen-to-page, *Pictures* choose not to manipulate the narrative to offer any sense of remorse or justification for Kate's actions. The reader is left with a lack of moral or romantic closure as far as the status of criminal women is concerned. Crime is configured as an enabler, offering the heroine a position of power should she choose not to renounce the criminal lifestyle nor resolve the series by settling into any variation of heterosexual partnership.

Singer argues that the serial narrative form drew upon the power of the presentation of female action and heroism to celebrate "the excitement of the woman's attainment of unprecedented mobility outside the confines of the home" (258). The *Kate* narratives on screen and page fully embodied this; yet, as Singer has explored in the detailed analysis of a wealth of American serial-queen melodramas, such mobility and excitement were frequently marked by the corresponding image "of female victimization" which "envisaged the dangers of this departure" (258). The *Kate* serial is fairly unique, therefore in its flaunting of romantic or domestic resolution and avoidance of such female victimization. This distinguishes it as somewhat radical as a British production reproduced in British fan magazines. Where other prominent American serials like *The Perils of Pauline* concluded with the heroine's resignation of her active life for marriage, the *Kate* episodes refuted any overarching framework of gendered resolution, leaving the character unattached and recurrently in pursuit of new financial criminal opportunities.

The adaptations of the *Kate* screen narratives frequently attempt to engage British female readers by offering contemporary contextualizing female-coded information through alternative points of interest beyond marriage and romantic resolution. Describing Kate's past imprisonment, for example, the prose locates her firmly within the modern world:

No amount of brains will get round sheer hopeless bad luck, otherwise Three Fingered Kate would never have spent two years in gaol—not that there is in these days anything disreputable about being in prison, only that unless you are a lady suffragist or an agitator, they won't put you in the first division, which means it's rather uncomfortable. But why complain, why grumble, the two dead dull years were up, and the Help Yourself Society was itself again. Their great leader was out (20 Jul. 1912: 14).

The references to suffrage and "agitators" would have been an extremely familiar, culturally relevant aside in 1912 to a generation of women involved with or having witnessed women's public political activity.

With such references to contemporary female political and cultural changes, prose-version serializations could directly address the female reader and her engagement with a range of extra-textual discourses in which such culture circulated (tabloid press, suffrage press, newsreels, pro- and anti-suffrage film shorts, etc.). In doing so, the serialization could encourage an intertextual spectatorship that helped affirm the popularity of female-

centered crime narratives as free floating across a range of literary and visual spheres.

Other British-made serials¹⁵ had similarly distinct female representations, foregrounding active female characters who, like Kate, avoided the victimization of many of the American serial stars. The British serial *The Adventures of Dorcas Dene Detective*, for example, (adapted from the 1897 crime detective series written by George R. Sims) focused upon the exploits of the title character. A small part actress gifted at impersonation, Dene becomes a lady detective when her husband falls blind and solves cases single-handed. The four films produced in the series—*A Murder in Limehouse*, *A Well-Planned West End Jewel Robbery*, *An Insurance Fraud* and *The Blackmailer* (all produced in the UK by Life Dramas company in 1919 and starring British actress Winifred Rose—no director credit is listed)—embraced Dene the active as the female centre of the crime narrative. Although she was on a different side of the law to Kate, Dene similarly led the narratives of these films, not as a victim-turned-heroine as with prominent American serials, but as a detective actively seeking and tackling crime thrills.

Despite these potentially more radical frameworks of female agency, however, it seems likely that American serials and their stars would have held

¹⁵ Popular British serials produced in the teens and twenties include titles such as *The Amazing Quest of Mr. Ernest Bliss* (U.K, Henry Edwards, 1920); *The Amazing Partnership* (U.K., George W. Ridgwell, 1921) and *The Old Man in the Corner* (U.K., Hugh Croise, 1924). These serials had strong connections to female writers and major British production companies. *The Old Man in the Corner* was adapted from the stories of major British female crime-writer Baroness Orczy, and Stoll, who adapted numerous works by leading female crime drama author Dell as mentioned earlier, produced this serial and *The Amazing Partnership*.

greater resonance for British fans. American serials created their heroines as stars in a way that *Three Fingered Kate*, *Dorcas Dene* and other British serials failed to do. The female leads of these British serials were not stars of major international significance. While Ivy Martinek appeared in a number of British serials in the early teens, including *Don Q* (U.K., H.O. Martinek, 1912) and *Lieutenant Daring* (U.K., Charles Raymond, 1912), none of her other performances or characters were given similar fan magazine attention as was afforded her *Kate* exploits. I have been unable to find references to the star in fan letter writing, nor any material within fan magazines upon Martinek herself as a performer.

Equally, I have yet to find any further film credits for Winifred Rose, who played *Dene*, besides those of the *Dene* series, nor any reference to the *Dene* character or Rose as a performer in British fan magazines. This is potentially connected to the difficulties experienced by the British industry, explored in previous chapters, in establishing widely successful and competently marketed female stars.

The appealing nature of American crime serial actresses like Pearl White and Ruth Roland is fundamentally linked to these processes of star promotion. But the essence of their appeal would seem to signify more than fan response to dominant star images. Because American crime serial stars were promoted through British fan magazine discourses, fans could access information about the details about female stars within the genre that kept

transgressive female representations in play beyond the confines of individual narratives and characters.

By adding an extra dimension of knowledge about the performance of female stars in such roles, fan magazine material about American serial stars offered greater intimacy with real-life female representations. Female performance within the crime genre also afforded greater scope for the writing of female stars themselves within fan magazine interviews and articles promoting their serials.

Destabilizing resolution

Fan magazines enabled greater awareness of technologies of serial stardom—and women's active role within the creation of such technologies—particularly where crime serial stars penned their own articles and autobiographies discussing the details of their filmic performances.

The writing of serial stars contributed to a sense of resistance to narrative resolution. Transgressive physical daring and action were foregrounded in fan magazine star-written articles and star interviews, which provided female spectators with a secondary dimension of extra-textual knowledge keeping transgression in play beyond narrative resolution.

Serial star writing and interview quotation offered female spectators access to the technical construction of cinematic sequences detailing the role of the female performer as stunting crime serial star. In a self-penned piece recalling her work in serials for the Kalem Company, Ruth Roland recalls, for

example, her physical trials on set: “I did over fifty miles in the saddle . . . but I was determined no one . . . should know my torture. They liked my ‘gameness,’ however” (29 Oct. 1921: 20).

Interviews similarly underscored her radically active life as a serial performer, documenting Roland’s adventures, having “sailed in aeroplanes, driven Rocky Mountain stage coaches down dangerous canyons, leaped from swiftly moving trains and hair-breadth escapes all during the day” (Feb. 1918: 173).

Other examples of star writing can be found in published star autobiography from the silent era. The following extracts are taken from *Just Me*, White’s 1919 autobiography.¹⁶ White discusses explicitly her approach to her stunting performances in crime-themed serials:

I have actually gotten to like fear, and like the sensation of taking some very dangerous chances that frighten me. My old heart beats a ragtime, and I face the music feeling more thrilled than I would be doing something in which I knew there was no risk (161).

While the character may put aside physical stunts and adventures for the marriage vow, the knowledge that the performer’s risk continues in new forms was reinforced through such star writing. Interconnected sites of this

¹⁶ The book was most likely not penned entirely by the actress herself—Eve Golden wryly assess that throughout her career, White “gleefully lied her head off to interviewers about her past, her family, and her career, even signing off on a highly dubious autobiography” (198)—yet the impression that this is the authentic voice of the writing female star would nonetheless have been communicated to reading fans.

kind of star writing within female film culture kept these daring representations in play for female readers and viewers. Female performers were able to express a thrill in the “sensation of taking some very dangerous chances” without having to preface such admissions with an appeal to an abstract sense of feminizing modesty or domesticity.

The essential intertextuality of the experience of the crime genre in silent film culture—linking such star writing with fan writing, novelizations and serializations—thus enabled the continued presentation of complex representations of female agency. Women’s engagement with the genre through a variety of forms of women’s writing facilitated a fluidity of potential points of identification with a range of female representations, unable to be contained by the narrative resolution of individual texts.

In terms of the status of the genre in general, resolution masks an overarching atmosphere of transgression. Gill Plain argues this perspective in detail in relation to gender and crime fictions:

Although superficially conservative in its reliance upon resolution and restoration of the status quo, implicit within the genre is a considerable degree of resistance to reductive gender categories . . . the genre’s transgressive ‘potential’ is not to be found in its conclusions: rather, it finds expression before the ending – in the body of the text . . . these texts cannot be reduced to the sum of their resolutions (6).

Helen Hanson has argued that, although “romantic closure in the formation of the heterosexual couple is synonymous with the Hollywood ending” (66), an alliance between romance and crime in films which merge the two genres reconfigures the stabilizing implications of the romance plot, so that “although a romance closure might signal stability, or the desire for it, romance itself is constantly in flux” (66).

This is very much the case with American serials, while with the given British examples, romance is refreshingly absent (Kate has no romantic attachment; Dorcas is already married and is living an active life beyond her romantic union). And whilst the heroines of “true serials” (Marlow-Mann 148) may be classed as “victims, who found themselves in outlandish danger at the end of each episode - only to be rescued at the start of the next”¹⁷ by their betrothed, their conduct throughout the exploits of each installment would seem to offer resonant displays of resistance to their overall narrative conclusions.

Narrative resolution and its emphasis upon female resignation from active life or transgressive behavior was clearly a flexible aspect of women’s creation of and encounter with generic forms. Fan writing praising the continual imperilment and quick wit of the serial heroine sidesteps the romantic element of serial narratives and their marital conclusion.

A female written *Picturegoer* article profiling female ‘Screen Types’ neatly summarizes the sense of a lasting fascination with the thrill seeking serial

¹⁷ Marlow-Mann, Screenonline.org.

heroines, which echoes the sense of the crime film female character as escaping the pacifying conclusion of narrative containment. Pondering the life of the serial star beyond the conclusion of serial runs, the article gestures towards a female reading/writing culture similarly considering these issues in relation to the appealing nature of such female representations:

In the ordinary way, you would think she'd get sick of thrills and leave them to amuse her young man. But you realize that she is the sort who would never settle down to a quiet life. In fact, you wonder vaguely what happened to her after she did eventually marry the man of her choice. You simply cant imagine her in the sleek, well-ordered routine of married life; in fact, you begin to believe that there would be some thrilling episodes well worth recording when she got sick of mending her husband's socks and planning the next's day's dinner (Dec.—Jan. 1918: 8).

Such potential future “thrilling episodes” could be retained as a possibility in the poetry of female fans, and in the repeated portrayal of interchangeable heroines by crime serial female performers. Seemingly refuting the containing effect of narrative resolution, female film culture continued to revisit and reexamine female agency.

Different female writers thus wrote about the crime genre from different levels of authority within female film culture—as stars, novelists, fans and fan

magazine writers. Each entertained differing degrees of influence, which reflect the location of many of the female writers looked at across the thesis. Crime/romance writers like Dell had a measure of control over productions of her adapted works; fan magazine writers were influential in shaping female fan culture, whilst fan writers had a much more limited yet no less vibrant creative access to film culture.

Women's writing and its interaction with generic female representations thus tells us much about the generation of particular forms of British female film culture. Exploring issues of genre and the popular in female film culture illuminates some of the interconnected sites of women's cinema writing. Further, it illuminates particular female representations that had strong currency in national fan communities and national fan culture, offering greater insight into the complex relationship between American and British productions on British screens and in extra-textual British film culture.

Conclusion

The thesis has sought to show that women's engagement with the generative aspect of silent film culture is marked by its diversity, its varying degrees of intensity, and its attention to the specificities of gender within the experience of popular culture in early twentieth century Britain.

Women's writing about silent cinema poses a variety of questions about women's role in post-war British culture—as workers, as single or married women, as consumers and as creators of popular forms. The conduits through which women chose to reflect upon the meanings of cinema and the gendered implications of film culture reflect distinct projects related to these issues.

Some, like the writing of Winifred Holtby, were shaped by a wider investment in gender reform and the reshaping of attitudes towards specific types of women in post-war culture. Others were conditioned by very different interests. Elinor Glyn's access to film culture was tailored by her own commercial and professional investment in the production side of the film industry, and her sense of her media identity as filmic female personality. Fan letters would seem to offer a further distinctive level of authority, less tailored by the commercial imperatives of Glyn's film writing and lacking the persuasive creative oration of Holtby's novel writing. Fan writing was nevertheless engaged with insistent questions of what it meant to

be a woman in 1910s and 1920s Britain—and how cinema culture related to this sense of self, and of female community.

The tracing of these distinct yet interlinked forms of women's cinema writing across the thesis has aimed to position original examples of writing generative of a national female film culture alongside each other in such a manner as to avoid a reductive conceptualization of their value to the film scholar. Certain forms have been assessed as less representative of a broader female audience engagement with cinema culture—particularly the modernist writing projects of Virginia Woolf and H.D. Yet my aim has been to address the concerns of these women as particular individual examples of cinema 'fans', or, at the very least, interested critical and creative parties.

Their positioning alongside more popularist and more widely circulated forms of women's cinema writing has aimed to assimilate existing critical studies of these writers into a more comprehensive account of British women's responses to, uses for and critical interpretation of silent film culture. In my chapters on female fan culture in particular, I have attempted to show that those women who were most frequently spoken about as cinemagoers were themselves resistant to sweeping assessments of their polarization between passive and resistive reception practices.

Accounts of cinemagoing are marked strongly by challenge, debate, disagreement and forthright opinions. Moving away from a conceptualization of reception in general as a passive/active model, the

thesis' attention to fan letters highlights, more than anything, the ways in which such a sense of the film viewer as passive was very remote in the expression and reflection of female fans. For such writing women, vigorous interactivity with film culture was a rapidly assimilated and enthusiastically embraced mode of mediated reception in fan writing communities.

What we can take from all the voices explored throughout the thesis, is that their cinema-themed discussion, debate and creativity are illustrative of particular ways of thinking, viewing and commenting upon the contemporary cultural environment shaped by popular, political and personal discourses within the specific historical moment. In many instances this shaping is evidenced precisely through their ideological assumptions, resignations and silences as much their outspoken ideas and challenges.

The network of interlinked yet often differing female voices presented throughout the study have attested to the ways in which the culturally and historically specific experiences of gender are evidenced in the preferences, interests, and creative works of British women at the turn of the century through to the late 1920s and early 1930s.

Above all, the study has sought to make an original contribution towards the ongoing body of innovative feminist silent film scholarship, with the hope that further work on British female audiences can continue to illuminate the national specificities of a fascinating period in British film and popular cultural history.

Appendix A: Elinor Glyn Chronology 1864 – 1930

- 1864 Glyn is born Elinor Sutherland is born in Jersey, Channel Islands, England, to Elinor (née Saunders) and Douglas Sutherland.
- 1892 Aged 28, Glyn marries wealthy landowner Clayton Glyn.
- 1898 Glyn begins her career as a writer with a series of magazine articles, writing and illustrating pieces on fashion and beauty for *Scottish Life*.
- 1899 Serialization of Glyn's first work of fiction, *The Visits of Elizabeth* is published in *The World* from the beginning of August.
- 1900 Glyn publishes *The Visits of Elizabeth* with Duckworth in novel form. The book receives a positive critical and commercial response.
- 1902 Glyn publishes *The Seventh Commandment* with Duckworth.
- 1903 Glyn publishes *The Damsel and the Sage* and *The Reflections of Ambrosine*, both with Duckworth.
- 1905 Glyn publishes *The Vicissitudes of Evangeline* with Duckworth.
- 1906 Glyn publishes *Beyond the Rocks* with Duckworth.
- 1907 Glyn published *Three Weeks* with Duckworth, achieving immediate notoriety and awarding Glyn her greatest commercial success yet. The book is negatively received critically, but sales are huge. In October, Glyn sails to New York on the *Lusitania*. Glyn is greeted by considerable press upon her arrival in America.
- 1908 Glyn publishes *The Sayings of Grandmamma* with Duckworth. Clayton falls into debt; Glyn begins writing on average one novel a year to keep up her standard of living. The first play production of *Three Weeks* is put on at the Adelphie Theatre in London, with Glyn herself playing The Lady.
- 1909 Glyn publishes *Elizabeth Visits America* with Duckworth.
- 1910 Glyn publishes *His Hour* with Duckworth.
- 1912 Glyn publishes *The Reason Why*, *Halcyone* and *Love Itself* with Duckworth.
- 1913 Glyn publishes *The Contrast and Other Stories* and *The Sequence* with Duckworth.
- 1914 Glyn publishes *Letters to Caroline* and *Your Affectionate Godmother* with Duckworth. *Three Weeks* is adapted to the cinema by Reliable Feature Film Co.
- 1915 After prolonged ill health, Glyn's husband Clayton dies. Glyn publishes *Three Things* with Duckworth.

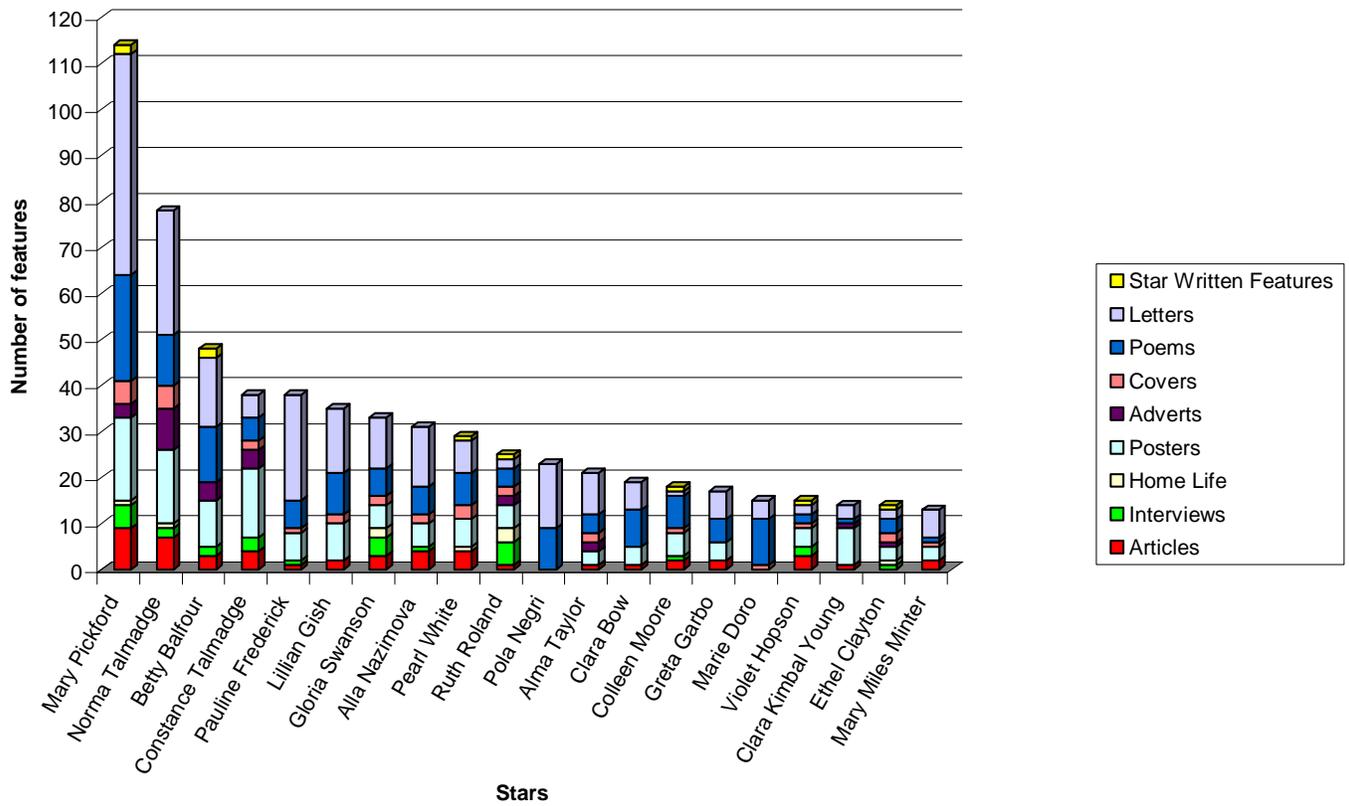
- 1916 Glyn publishes *The Career of Katherine Bush* with Duckworth, which is also serialized in the magazine *Cosmopolitan*. *One Day* is adapted to cinema by B.D. Moss Motion Picture Corporation, for which Glyn writes the scenario.
- 1917 A new theatre production of *Three Weeks* is put on at the Strand Theatre. Glyn signs an agreement with Jonathan Cape Publishers to bring out a cheap edition of her books at a shilling each, opening her work to a much wider readership.
- 1918 Glyn publishes *Destruction* with Duckworth. *The Man and the Moment* is adapted to cinema by Windsor.
- 1919 Glyn publishes *The Price of Things* with Duckworth. *The Career of Katherine Bush* is adapted to cinema by Famous Players-Lasky. Glyn meets with a representative from Famous Players-Lasky, who proposes that the author go to Hollywood, learn the film business and write film scenarios. Hughes Massie, her agent, negotiates a contract with the studio.
- 1920 Glyn sails to New York and is met in person by the head of the studio. Glyn is instructed to write an original script as a star vehicle for Gloria Swanson, who she is introduced to on the set of De Mille's *The Affairs of Anatol* (aka *A Prodigal Knight*). De Mille offers her a part as an extra in the film. Glyn publishes *The Point of View* with Duckworth in this year also.
- 1921 Glyn produces an original screenplay for Swanson, called *The Great Moment*, which is directed by Sam Wood and released to financial success. Glyn writes and publishes the novelization of the film script.
- 1922 Glyn publishes *The Elinor Glyn System of Writing* and *Man and Maid* with Duckworth. She writes the screenplay for the adaptation of *Beyond the Rocks*, produced by Famous Player-Lasky. Glyn writes for and appears in the film *The World's a Stage*, produced by Sol Lesser Productions and directed by Colin Campbell. Glyn's contract with Lasky comes to an end in March. Lois B. Mayer and Samuel Goldwyn of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer offer her a contract, promising the chance to write the screenplay for *Three Weeks* and have a major part in the directing of the film, which she accepts.
- 1923 Glyn publishes *The Philosophy of Love* with Newnes, and embarks on a lecture tour in Europe.
- 1924 Glyn publishes *Six Days* with Duckworth, which is adapted to cinema the same year by Goldwyn Pictures Corporation. *Three Weeks* (aka *The Romance of a Queen*) is also adapted to the screen for the second time, produced by Goldwyn Pictures, for which Glyn writes the screenplay and has a hand in casting Aileen Pringle as 'The Lady.' *His Hour* is also adapted by Louis B. Mayer Productions this year, for which Glyn supervises/manages and writes the screenplay. Director Alan Crosland allows Glyn to direct the wedding scene of the film. Glyn writes the story for the Warner Bros. film *How to Educate a Wife*. To reconcile Glyn's escalating financial problems, her daughters create a Limited Liability Company in her name. Elinor Glyn Limited is formed on March 1st.
- 1925 Glyn publishes *This Passion Called Love* and *The Great Moment* with Duckworth. *Man and Maid* is adapted to the cinema by Metro-Goldwyn, directed by Victor Schertzinger and starring Lew Cody and Harriet Hammond, for which Glyn produces, screen writes, acts as continuity editor, and supervises and manages. MGM adapt *Soul Mates*, based on Glyn's *The Reason Why*. Glyn writes

- the screenplay for, produces and supervises/manages the production of the film *The Only Thing*, also for MGM. Glyn appears in the MGM documentary short *1925 Studio Tour* as herself.
- 1926 Glyn publishes *Love's Blindness* with Duckworth, and writes the screenplay for the film adaptation of the novel the same year. She makes an appearance as herself in the documentary short *Screen Snapshots*, produced by Columbia Pictures.
- 1927 Glyn publishes *The Wrinkle Book, 'It' and Other Stories* and *The Man and the Moment* with Duckworth. *It* is adapted to the cinema by Famous Players-Lasky. Glyn makes a cameo in the film, and produces it, as well as writing the scenario. Glyn writes the story for the film *Ritzzy*, also produced by Famous Players-Lasky, directed by Richard Rosson and starring Betty Bronson.
- 1928 Glyn publishes *Eternal Youth* with Duckworth. *Mad Hour* is adapted to the cinema by First National Pictures. *Red Hair*, based on *The Vicissitudes of Evangeline*, is produced by Paramount / Famous Players-Lasky. Glyn provides the story for the production of *Three Weekends* by the same studio, again directed by Badger and starring Bow. Glyn makes an appearance as herself in the MGM film *Show People*.
- 1929 Glyn makes an appearance as herself in the documentary short *What Is 'It'*, produced by Paramount Pictures.
- 1930 Glyn returns to England and sets up Elinor Glyn Productions Ltd. She rents studio space at Elstree Studios and employs a Director of Photography and Production Manager, negotiating with United Artists for a guaranteed release and an advance payment when her first negative is delivered. Glyn produces her first independent film *Knowing Men*, based on her novel of the same name. She acts as screenwriter, producer and director for the adaptation of the film the same year. The film is premiered in February at the Regal Cinema in Marble Arch to poor reviews. Glyn chooses to adapt an earlier novel, *The Price of Things*, for her second venture as director. She produces and directs the adaptation. Failing to secure the necessary release, the film never gets shown to the general public.

(Chronology compiled using Joan Hardwick's *Addicted to Romance: the life and adventures of Elinor Glyn* (1994))

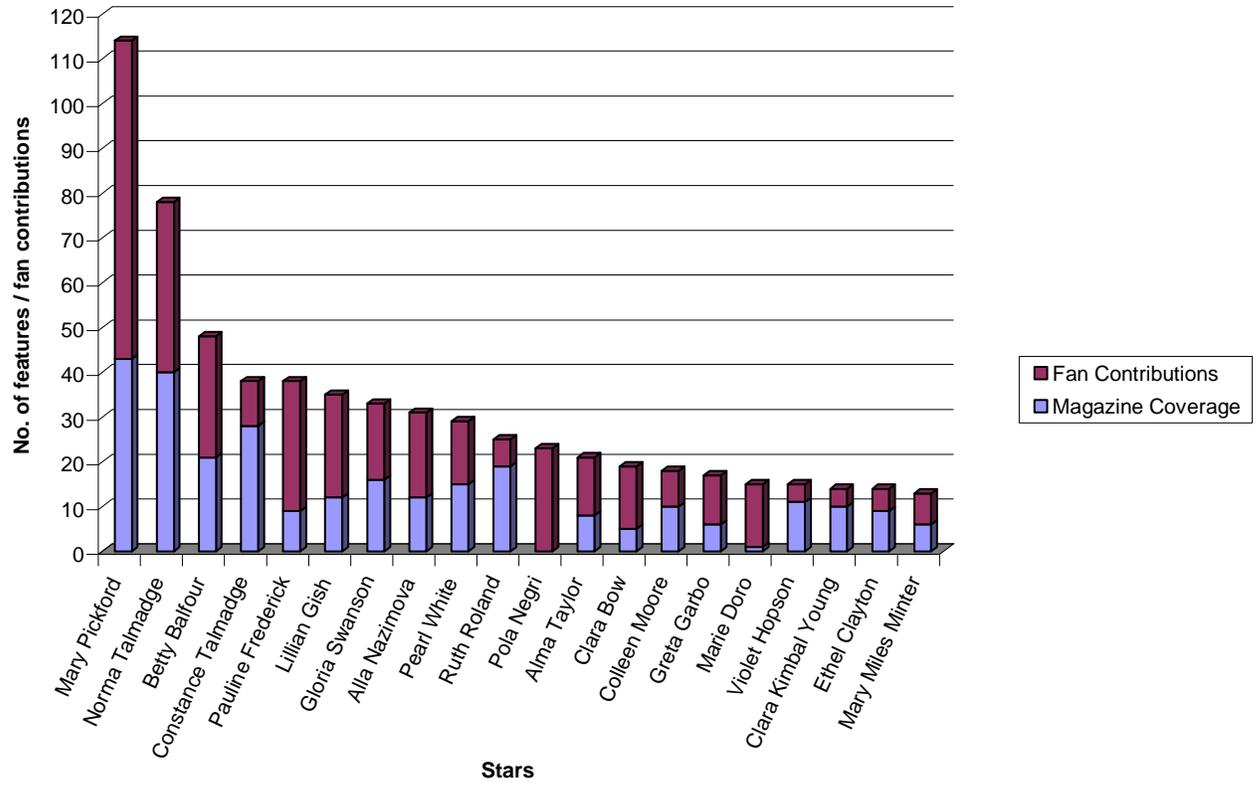
Appendix B: Featured *Picturegoer* Stars

Twenty highest featuring female stars in *Picturegoer* magazine, Jan. 1918 to Dec. 1928.



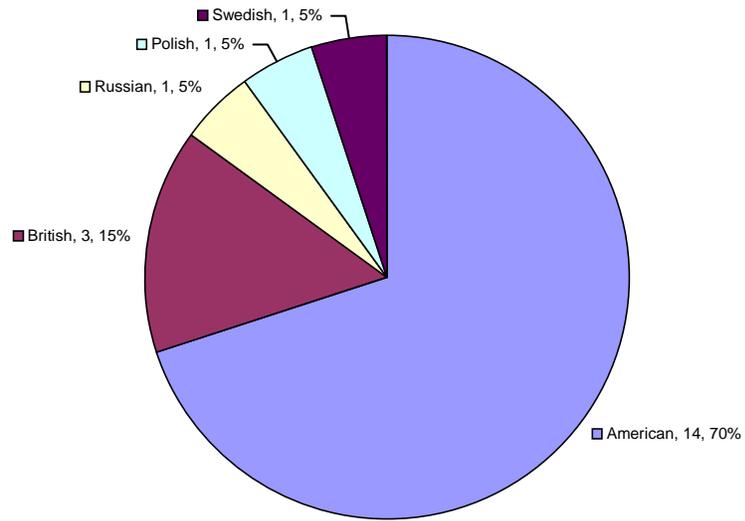
Appendix C: Magazine coverage relative to fan contribution

Magazine coverage relative to fan contributions, Jan. 1918 to Dec. 1928.

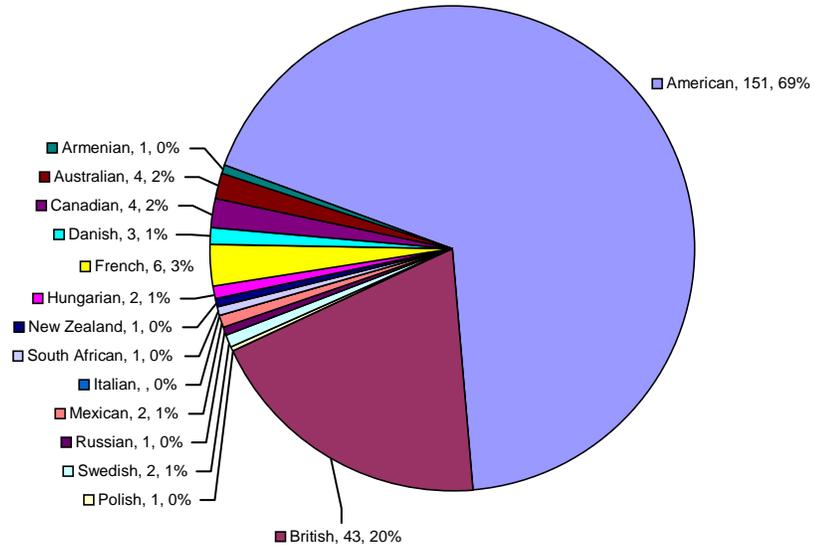


Appendix D: Nationality of featured stars

Nationality of Twenty Most Featured Stars



Nationality of All Featured Stars



Works Cited

- Adorno, Theodor W. and Max Horkeimer. *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical fragments*. (1946) Ed. Gunzelin Schmid Noer. Trans. Edmun Jephcott. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002.
- Alexander, Sally. 'Psychoanalysis in Britain in the Early Twentieth Century: an introductory note.' *History Workshop Journal*. No. 4 (Spring 1998): 135-143.
- Alton, John. *Painting with Light*. (1949) Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995.
- Armstrong, Tim. *Modernism: a cultural history*. Cambridge: Polity, 2005.
- Babington, Bruce. "Introduction." *British Stars and Stardom: from Alma Taylor to Sean Connery*. Ed. Bruce Babington. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001: 1-28.
- Bagwell, Philip, and Peter Lynth. *Transport in Britain 1750-2000: from Canal Lock to Gridlock*. London: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Bamford, Kenton. *Distorted Images: British national identity and film in the 1920s*. London: I. B. Touris, 1999.
- Barker, Chris. *Cultural Studies: theory and practice*. London: Sage, 2005.
- Barnett, Vincent L. 'Picturisation partners: Elinor Glyn and the Thalberg contract affair.' *Film History*. Vol. 19 (2007): 319-329.
- . 'The novelist as Hollywood star: author royalties and studio income in the

1920s.' *Film History*. Vol. 20 Issue 3 (2008): 281-293.

Baudelaire, Charles. *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*. London: Da Capo Press, 1986.

Baybrooke, Patrick. *Some Goddesses of the Pen*. London: Ayer, 1977.

Bean, Jennifer M. 'Technologies of Early Stardom and the Extraordinary Body.'
Camera Obscura. 48. 16:3 (2001): 8-57

---. 'Towards a Feminist Historiography of Early Cinema.' *A Feminist Reader in Early Cinema*. Ed. Jennifer M. Bean and Diane Negra. London: Duke University Press, 2002: 1-28.

Bell, Melanie and Melanie Williams. *British Women's Cinema*. London: Routledge, 2010: 19-33.

Benjamin, Walter. *Arcades Project*. Trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin. Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1999.

---. 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction.' (1936)
Illuminations. Ed. Arendt. New York: Schocken, 1968: 217-51.

Benson, Stella. *Goodbye, Stranger*. New York: Macmillan, 1926.

---. *Living Alone*. London: Macmillan, 1919.

Berman, Marshall. *All that is Solid Melts into Air: the experience of modernity*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1988.

Bingham, Adrian. *Gender, Modernity and the Popular Press in Inter-War Britain*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

- Bordwell, David. *On The History of Film Style*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997.
- Brittain, Vera. *Testament of Friendship*. London: Virago Press, 1980.
- Bruley, Sue. *Women in Britain Since 1900*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999.
- Burrows, Jonathan. "'Our English Mary Pickford": Alma Taylor and ambivalent British stardom in the 1910s.' *British Stars and Stardom: from Alma Taylor to Sean Connery*. Ed. Bruce Babington. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001: 29-42.
- Butler, Kristine J. 'Irma Vep, Vamp in the City: mapping the criminal feminine in early French serials.' *A Feminist Reader in Early Cinema*. Jennifer M. Bean and Diane Negra, eds. London: Duke University Press, 2002: 195-120.
- Callahan, Vicki, ed. *Reclaiming the Archive: feminism and film history*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2010.
- Cass, Mary Canfield. 'Letter to Garbo.' *Theatre Arts Monthly* 21 (December 1937): 952.
- Charney, Leo and Vanessa R. Schwartz eds. *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life*. London: University of California Press, 1995.
- Chow, Karen. 'Popular Sexual Knowledges and Women's Agency in 1920s England: Marie Stopes's "Married Love" and E. M. Hull's "The Sheik".' *Feminist Review* No. 63, Negotiations and Resistances (Autumn 1999): 64-87.

Comtesse de Bremont, Anna. "Gentlewomen as War Victims." *Weekly Dispatch* 12

Aug. 1917: 4.

Corelli, Marie. *God's Good Man*. London: Methuen, 1894.

---. *Holy Orders*. London: Methuen, 1908.

---. *Innocent*. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1914.

---. *The Sorrows of Satan*. London: Methuen, 1895.

---. *Thelma*. London: Methuen, 1887.

---. *Wormwood: A drama of Paris*. London: Methuen, 1886.

---. *The Young Diana: an experiment of the future*. London: Methuen, 1918.

Dell, Ethel M. *The Altar of Honour*. London: Hutchinson and Co., 1929.

---. *The Bars of Iron*. London: Hutchinson and Co., 1916.

---. *The Black Knight*. London: Cassell, 1926.

---. *By Request*. London: Ernest Benn Ltd., 1928.

---. *Charles Rex*. London: Arrow Books, 1922.

---. *The Gate Marked Private*. Birmingham: Cornfield Books Ltd., 1928.

---. *Greatheart*. London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1918.

---. *The House of Happiness and Other Stories*. London: Cassel & Co., 1927.

---. *The Hundredth Chance*. London: Hutchinson & Co., 1917.

---. *The Keeper of the Door*. London: Ernest Benn Ltd., 1915.

---. *The Knave of Diamonds*. London: C. Fisher Unwin, 1912.

---. *The Lamp in the Desert*. London: Hutchinson, 1919.

- . *A Man Under Authority*. London: Cassell, 1926.
- . *The Obstacle Race*. London: Cassell, 1921.
- . *The Odds and Other Stories*. (1922) Fairford: Echo Library, 2010.
- . *The Passer-by and Other Stories*. London: G. Putnam & Sons, 1925.
- . *The Rocks of the Valpre*. Project Gutenberg Ebook, 2004.
- . *Rosa Mundi and Other Stories*. London: Cassell, 1921.
- . *The Safety Curtain and Other Stories*. London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1917.
- . *Storm Drift*. London: Hutchinson & Co., 1930.
- . *The Swindler and Other Stories*. London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1923.
- . *Tetherstones*. London: Hutchinson & Co., 1923.
- . *The Tidal Wave and Other Stories*. London: Cassell, 1920.
- . *The Top of the World*. London: Cassell, 1920.
- . *The Unknown Quantity*. London: Hutchinson & Co., 1924.
- . *Verses*. London: G. Putnam & Sons, 1923.
- . *The Way of an Eagle*. Project Gutenberg Ebook, 2004.

Doane, Mary Anne. *The Desire to Desire: the woman's film of the 1940s*.

Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987.

---. 'The economy of desire: the commodity form in/of the cinema.' *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* 11. 1989: 22-23.

---. 'Film and the Masquerade: theorizing the female spectator.' (1982) *Writing on the Body: female embodiment and feminist theory*. Katie Conboy,

- Nadia Medina, and Sarah Stanbury, eds. Columbia University Press: 1997:
176-192.
- . 'Technology's Body: Cinematic Vision in Modernity.' *A Feminist Reader in Early Cinema*. Jennifer M. Bean and Diane Negra, eds. London: Duke University Press, 2002: 530-551.
- Dolan, Jill. 'Desire Cloaked in a Trenchcoat.' *TDR*. Vol. 33, No. 1 (Spring 1989):
59-67.
- Donald, James, Anne Friedberg and Laura Marcus, eds. *Close Up 1927-1933: Cinema and Modernism*. London: Cassel, 1998.
- Drowne, Kathleen Morgan and Patrick Huber. *The 1920s*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 2004.
- During, Simon, ed. *The Cultural Studies Reader*. London: Routledge, 1993.
- Dyer, Richard. *Stars*. London: BFI, 1979.
- Eckert, Charles. 'The Carole Lombard in Macy's window.' *Quarterly Review of Film Studies* Vol. 3, No. 1: 1-21.
- Eley, Geoff. 'Nations, publics, and political cultures: placing Habermas in the nineteenth century.' *Habermas and the Public Sphere*. Ed. Craig Calhoun. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1992: 289-339.
- Erkkila, Betsy. 'Greta Garbo: sailing beyond the frame.' *Critical Inquiry* Vol. II, No. 4 (June 1985): 595-619.
- Federico, Annette R. *Idol of Suburbia: Marie Corelli and late-victorian literary*

culture. London: University Press of Virginia, 2000.

Felski, Rita. *The Gender of Modernity*. Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1995.

Fildes, Gill. 'Winifred Holtby and "The Voice of God": a writer's view of radio and cinema between the wars.' *Winifred Holtby, "A Woman in Her Time": critical essays*. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars, 2010: 89-112.

Fraser, Nancy. 'Rethinking the public sphere: a contribution to the critique of actually existing democracy.' *The Cultural Studies Reader*. Ed. Simon During. 2nd Ed. London: Routledge: 1999: 518-536.

Friedberg, Anne. 'Introduction.' *Close Up 1927-1933: Cinema and Modernism*. James Donald, Anne Friedberg and Laura Marcus, eds. London: Cassel, 1998: 28-35.

Gaines, Jane M. 'Film History and the Two Presents of Feminist Film Theory.' *Cinema Journal*, Vol. 44, No. 1 (Autumn 2004): 113-119.

---. 'Of Cabbages and Authors.' *A Feminist Reader in Early Cinema*. Ed. Jennifer M. Bean and Diane Negra. London: Duke University Press, 2002.

Gamman, Lorraine and Margaret Marshment, eds. *The Female Gaze: women as viewers of popular culture*. London: The Women's Press, 1988: 88-118.

Geraghty, Christine. 'Re-examining Stardom: questions of texts, bodies and performance.' *Reinventing Film Studies*. Ed. Christine Gledhill and Linda Williams. London: Arnold, 2000. 183-201.

- Giddens, Anthony. *Modernity and Self-Identity: self and society in the late modern age*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998.
- Gifford, Denis. *Entertainers in British Films: a century of showbiz in the cinema*. London: Greenwood Press, 1997.
- Giles, Judy. *The Parlour and the Suburb: domestic identities, class, femininity and modernity*. Oxford: Berg, 2004.
- Gissing, George. *The Odd Women*. London: Virago, 1980.
- Gledhill, Christine. 'Pleasurable negotiations.' *Female Spectators: looking at film and television*. Ed. E. D. Pribram. London: Verso, 1988: 64–89.
- . 'Recent Developments in Feminist Film Criticism.' *Quarterly Review of Film Studies* 3.4 (1978): 457-83.
- . *Reframing British Cinema 1918-1928: between restraint and passion*. London: BFI Publishing, 2003.
- Glucksmann, Miriam. *Women Assemble: women workers and the new industries in inter-war Britain*. London: Routledge, 1990.
- Glyn, Elinor. *Beyond the Rocks*. London: Duckworth, 1906.
- . *The Career of Katherine Bush*. London: Duckworth, 1916.
- . *Elizabeth Visits America*. London: Duckworth, 1909.
- . *Eternal Youth*. London: Duckworth, 1928.
- . *Family*. London: Duckworth, 1919.
- . *The Great Moment*. London: Duckworth, 1925.

- . *Guinevere's Lover*. London: Duckworth, 1913.
- . *Halcyone*. London: Duckworth, 1912.
- . *His Hour*. London: Duckworth, 1910.
- . *It*. London: Duckworth, 1927.
- . *Love's Blindness*. London: Duckworth, 1926.
- . *Love Itself*. London: Duckworth, 1912.
- . *Man and Maid*. London: Duckworth, 1925.
- . *The Man and the Moment* London: Duckworth, 1927.
- . *The Philosophy of Love*. London: Newnes, 1923.
- . *The Price of Things*. London: Duckworth, 1924.
- . *Points of View*. London: Duckworth & Co Ltd., 1920.
- . *The Reason Why*. London: Duckworth, 1912.
- . *Red Hair*. London: Duckworth, 1928.
- . *The Reflections of Amrbosine*. London: Duckworth, 1903.
- . *Romantic Adventure: Being the autobiography of Elinor Glyn*. London: Ivor
Nicholdson and Watson Ltd., 1936.
- . *The Seventh Commandment*. London: Duckworth, 1902.
- . *Six Days*. London: Duckworth, 1924.
- . *Three Weeks*. London: Duckworth, 1907.
- . *This Passion Called Love*. London: Duckworth, 1925.
- . *The Vicissitudes of Evangeline*. London: Duckworth, 1905.

- . *The Visits of Elizabeth*. London: Duckworth, 1901.
- . 'Why I wrote "Three Weeks".' *The Grand Magazine*. March 1920. Vol. XXXVII, No. 181: 3.
- . *Your Affectionate Godmother*. London: Duckworth, 1914.
- Golden, Eve. *Golden Images: 41 essays on silent film stars*. London: McFarland & Company, Inc. 2001.
- Gunning, Tom. 'Tracing the Individual Body: photography, detectives, and early cinema.' *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life*. Leo Charney and Vanessa R. Schwartz, eds. London: University of California Press, 1995: 15-45.
- Habermas, Jurgen. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: an inquiry into a category of bourgeois society*. (1962) Trans. Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence. Cambridge: Polity, 1989.
- . *Theory of Communicative Action*. (1981) Trans. Thomas McCarthy. Cambridge: Polity, 1984.
- Hall, Stuart. 'Encoding/Decoding.' *Media Studies: a reader*. 2nd ed. Paul Morris and Sue Thornton, eds. Washington Square, NK: University Press, 2000: 51-61.
- . 'Notes on Deconstructing 'The Popular'.' *People's History and Socialist Theory*. Ed. Raphael Samuel. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981: 227-241.
- Hankins, Leslie Kathleen. 'Iris Barry, Writer and *Cinéaste*, Forming Film Culture

- in London 1924—1926: the *Adelphi*, the *Spectator*, the Film Society and the *British Vogue*.' *Modernism / modernity* 11:3 (2004): 488-515.
- Hansen, Miriam. *Babel and Babylon: spectatorship in American silent film*. London: Harvard University Press, 1991.
- Hanson, Helen. *Hollywood Heroines: woimen in film noir and the female gothic film*. New York: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 2007.
- Hardwick, Joan. *Addicted to Romance: the life and adventures of Elinor Glyn*. London: Andre Deutsch, 1994.
- Hastie, Amelie. *Cupboards of Curiosity*. London: Duke University Press, 2007.
- . 'The Miscellany of Film History.' *Film History*. Vol. 18, 2006: 222-230.
- Hepworth, Cecil. *Came the Dawn*. London: Phoenix House, 1951.
- Higashi, Sumiko. "Review: *Femme Fatales: feminism, film theory and psychoanalysis*." *Film Quarterly* 45. 4 (Summer 1992): 35-36.
- Hiley, Nicholas. 'At the Picture Palace: the British cinema audience, 1985-1920.' *Celebrating1895: the centenary of cinema*. Ed. John Fullerton. London: John Libbey, 1998: 96-106.
- Hills, Matt. *Fan Cultures*. Oxon: Routledge, 2002.
- Holden, Katherine. 'Imaginary Widows: spinsters, marriage, and the "Lost Generation" in Britain after the Great War.' *Journal of Family History* Vol. 30, No. 4 (Oct 2005): 388-409.

- Holtby, Winifred. *Anderby Wold*. London: Virago, 1923.
- . *The Astonishing Island*. London: Macmillan, 1933.
- . *The Crowded Street*. (1924) London: Virago, 1981.
- . *The Frozen Earth: and other poems*. London: Collins, 1935.
- . *The Land of Green Ginger*. London: Virago, 1927.
- . *Letters to a Friend*. London: Collins, 1937.
- . *Mandoa! Mandoa!* London: Virago, 1933.
- . *My Garden: and other poems*. Scarborough, privately printed, 1911.
- . *A New Voter's Guide to Party Programmes*. London: K. Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1929.
- . *Poor Caroline*. (1931) London: Virago, 1985.
- . *South Riding: an English landscape*. (1936) London: Virago, 1988.
- . *Take Back Your Freedom*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1939.
- . *Truth is not Sober: and other stories*. London: Collins, 1934.
- . *Virginia Woolf: a critical memoir*. (1932) London: Continuum, 2007.
- . *Women in a Changing Civilization*. New York: Longmas, 1934.
- Hull, E. M. *The Skeik*. (1919) Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001.
- Humble, Nicola. *The Feminine Middlebrow Novel, 1920s to 1950s: class, domesticity and bohemianism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Humm, Maggie. *Modernist Women and Visual Culture: Virginia Woolf, Venessa Bell,*

- photography and cinema*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2002.
- Huyssen, Andreas. *After the Great Divide: modernism, mass culture, postmodernism*.
Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986.
- Jenkins, Henry. *Textual Poachers*. New York: Routledge, 1992.
- Joannou, Mary. 'Preface.' *Winifred Holtby, 'A Woman in Her Time': critical essays*. Ed. Lisa Regan. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010: xi-xix.
- Klinger, Barbara. 'Film History Terminable and Interminable: Recovering the past in reception studies.' *Screen* 38:2 Summer 1997: 107-128.
- Kuhn, Annette. *An Everyday Magic: cinema and cultural memory*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2002.
- . *Family Secrets: acts of memory and imagination*. London: Verso, 1995.
- Landay, Lori. 'The Flapper Film: Comedy, dance, and Jazz Age kinaesthetics.' *A Feminist Reader in Early Cinema*. Jennifer M. Bean and Diane Negra, eds. London: Duke University Press, 2002: 221-250.
- Landes, Joan. *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988.
- Langhamer, Claire. *Women's Leisure in England: 1920-60*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000.
- Lant, Antonia, ed. *Red Velvet Seat: women's writings on the first fifty years of cinema*. New York: Verso, 2006.

- Lejeune, C. A. *Thank You for Having Me*. London: Hutchinson & Co. Ltd, 1964.
- LeMahieu, D. L. *A Culture for Democracy: mass communication and the cultivated mind in Britain between the wars*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998.
- Light, Alison. *Forever England: femininity, literature and conservatism between the wars*. London: Routledge, 1991.
- Loos, Anita. *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*. New York: Boni & Liveright, 1925.
- Low, Rachael. *History of British Film 1918-1929*. Vol. 4. London: Routledge, 1997.
- Lowndes, Marie Belloc. *The Lodger (1927)* Chicago: Academy Chicago Publishers, 1988.
- MacNab, Geoffrey. *Searching for Stars: rethinking British cinema*. London: Cassell, 2000.
- Marcus, Laura. 'Introduction: the contribution of H.D.' *Close Up 1927-1933: Cinema and Modernism*. James Donald, Anne Friedberg and Laura Marcus, eds. London: Cassell, 1998: 96-104.
- Marlow-Mann, Alex. 'British Series and Serials in the Silent Era'. *Young and Innocent? the cinema and Britain 1896-1930*. Ed. Andrew Higson. Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2002: 147-161.
- Marek, Jayne E. *Women Editing Modernism: "little" magazines & literary history*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1995.
- Marx, Karl and Frederick Engels. *The Holy Family: a critique of critical criticism*. Trans. Richard Dixon and Celement Dutts. MECW Vol. 4. Moscow:

Progress Publishers, 1975.

Melman, Billie. *Women and the Popular Imagination in the Twenties: flappers and nymphs*. London: Macmillan, 1988.

Montagu, L. 'Old man's mumble: reflections on semi-centenary.' *Sight and Sound* 44/4 (Autumn 1975): 220-24.

Morey, Anne. 'Elinor Glyn as Hollywood Labourer.' *Film History* Vol. 18 (2006): 110-118.

---. 'So Real as to Seem Like Life Itself': the *Photoplay* fiction of Adela Rogers St. Johns." *A Feminist Reader in Early Cinema*. Jennifer M. Bean and Diane Negra, eds. London: Duke University Press, 2002. 333-348.

Morris, Nathalie. 'Pictures, romance and luxury: women and British cinema in the 1910s and 1920s.' *British Women's Cinema*. Melanie Bell and Melanie Williams, eds. London: Routledge, 2010: 19-33.

Mulvey, Laura. 'Afterthoughts on Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema.' *Feminism and Film Theory*. Ed. C. Penly. New York: Routledge, 1988: 69-79.

---. 'Unmasking the Gaze: Feminist Film Theory, History, and Film Studies.' *Reclaiming the Archive: feminism and film history*. Ed. Vicki Callahan. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2010: 17-31.

---. 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema.' *Screen* 16: 3 (Autumn 1975): 6-18.

Napper, Lawrence. 'British Cinema and the Middlebrow.' *British Cinema, Past and Present*. Justine Ashby and Andrew Higson, eds. London: Routledge,

2000.

Nava, Mica. *Changing Cultures: feminism, youth and consumerism*. London: Sage,

1992.

---. 'Women, the City and the Department Store.' *The Shopping Experience*.

Colin Campbell and Pasi Falk, eds. London: Sage, 1997: 56-91.

Neale, Steve. *Genre and Hollywood*. London: Routledge, 2000.

---. 'Melo Talk: on the meaning and use of the term "melodrama" in the

American trade press.' *The Velvet Light Trap*. No. 32. (Fall 1993): 66-89.

Negra, Diane. 'Introduction: female stardom and early film history.' *Early*

Women Stars. Jennifer M. Bean and Diane Negra, eds. Durham: Duke

University Press, 2001:

Noble, Peter. 'A Survey of Film Periodicals, II: Great Britain.' *Hollywood*

Quarterly. Vol. 3. No. 2. (Winter 1947-48): 140-151.

Oram, Alison. 'Repressed and Thwarted, or Bearer of the New World? The

spinster in inter-war feminist discourses.' *Women's History Review* Vol. 1,

No. 3, 1992: 413-433.

Orgeron, Marsha. 'Making *It* in Hollywood: Clara Bow, fandom and consumer

culture.' *Cinema Journal* 42. 4 (2003): 76-95.

---. "'You are Invited to Participate'": interactive fandom in the age of the movie

magazine.' *Journal of Film and Video* Vol 61, No. 3 (Fall 2009): 3-23.

Orwell, George. *Keep the Aspidistra Flying*. London: Secker & Warburg, 1954.

- Parsons, Deborah L. *Streetwalking the Metropolis: women, the city and modernity*.
Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Partington, Angela. 'Consumption Practices as the Production and Articulation
of Differences: rethinking working-class femininity in 1950s Britain'.
Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Birmingham, 1990.
- . 'Melodrama's gendered audience.' *Off Centre: feminism and cultural studies*.
Sarah Franklin, Celia Lury and Jackie Stacey, eds. London: Harper
Collins/Routledge, 1991: 49-68.
- Peiss, Kathy. *Cheap Amusements: working women and leisure in turn-of-the-century
New York*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986.
- Petro, Patrice. *Aftershocks of the New: feminism and film history*. London: Rutgers
University Press, 2002.
- . *Idols of Modernity: movie stars of the 1920s*. Rutgers: Rutgers University Press,
2010.
- Plain, Gill. *Twentieth-Century Crime Fiction: gender, sexuality and the body*.
Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2001.
- Quinn, Michael J. 'Paramount and Early Feature Distribution: 1914-1921.' *Film
History* 11: 1 Film Technology (1999): 98-113.
- Rabinovitz, Lauren. *For the Love of Pleasure: women, movies and culture in turn-of-
the-century Chicago*. London: Rutgers University Press, 1998.
- Rappaport, Erika D. "'A New Era of Shopping': the promotion of women's

pleasure in London's West End, 1909-1914.' *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life*. Leo Charney and Vanessa R. Schwartz, eds. London: University of California Press, 1995: 130-155.

Regan, Lisa, ed. *Winifred Holtby: 'A Woman in Her Time': critical essays*. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010.

Roebuck, Janet, and Jane Slaughter. 'Ladies and Pensioners: stereotypes and public policy affecting old women in England, 1880-1940.' *Journal of Social History* Vol. 13, No. 1 (Autumn 1979): 105-114.

Rojek, Chris. *Decentring Leisure: rethinking leisure theory*. London: Sage, 1995.

Sanders, Lise Sharipo. "'Indecent Incentives to Vice.'" Regulating films and audience behavior from the 1890s to the 1910s.' *Young and Innocent? the cinema of Britain, 1896-1930*. Ed. Andrew Higson. Exeter: Exeter University Press, 2002: 97-110.

Shaw, Marion. 'Preface.' *Virginia Woolf: a critical memoir*. Winifred Holtby. London: Continuum, 2007.

Showalter, Elaine. 'Introduction.' *Mrs Dalloway*. Virginia Woolf. London: Penguin, 1992.

Simmel, George. 'The Metropolis and Mental Life.' *Readings in Social Theory: the classic tradition in post-modernism*. Ed. James Fargans. New York: McCraw. 149-157.

Singer, Ben. *Melodrama and Modernity: early sensational cinema and its contexts*.

West Sussex: Columbia University Press, 2001.

Sklar, Robert. *Movie-Made America: a social history of American movies*. New York: Random House, 1993.

Stacey, Jackie. 'Desperately Seeking Difference.' *Screen* (1987) 28: 1: 48-61.

---. *Star Gazing: Hollywood cinema and female spectatorship*. London: Routledge, 1994.

Staiger, Janet. *Interpreting Films: Studies in the historical reception of American cinema*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992.

---. *Perverse Spectators: the practices of film reception*. New York: New York University Press, 2000.

Stamp, Shelley. 'An Awful Struggle Between Love and Ambition: Serial Heroines, Early Celebrity and Modern Femininity.' *Silent Cinema Reader*.

Lee Grieveson and Peter Kramer, eds. London: Routledge, 2003: 210-25.

---. 'Lois Weber, Star Maker.' *Reclaiming the Archive: Feminism and film history*. Ed. Vicki Callahan. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2010: 131-153.

---. *Movie-Struck Girls: women and motion picture culture after the nickelodeon*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000.

Stanley, Liz. 'The problem of women and leisure—an ideological construct and a radical feminist alternative.' *Leisure in the 1980s*. Ed. Centre for Leisure Studies. University of Salford Press: Salford, 1980.

Stopes, Marie. *Married Love*. (1918) Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

---. *Wise Parenthood: a treatise on birth control or contraception*. (1918) London: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1928.

Storey, John. *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: an introduction*. 4th ed. Harlow: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2006.

Street, Sarah. 'British Film and the National Interest, 1927-39.' *The British Cinema Book*. Ed. Robert Murphey. London: Palgrave, 2002.

---. *British National Cinema*. London: Routledge, 1997.

Studlar, Gaylyn. 'Oh, "Doll Divine": Mary Pickford, Masquerade, and the Pedophilic Gaze.' *A Feminist Reader in Early Cinema*. Jennifer M. Bean and Diane Negra, eds. London: Duke University Press, 2002: 349-373.

---. 'Out-Salomeing Salome': dance, the New Woman, and fan magazine orientalism.' *Visions of the East: Orientalism in film*. Matthew Bernstein and Gaylyn Studlar, eds. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1997: 99-129.

---. 'The Perils of Pleasure? Fan magazine discourse as women's commodified culture in the 1920s.' *Silent Film*. Ed. Richard Abel. London: Athlone Press, 1996: 263-297.

---. 'Review: Babel and Babylon: spectatorship in American silent film.' *Film Quarterly* 47. 1 (Autumn 1993): 39-40.

Tasker, Yvonne. 'Vision and Visibility: women filmmakers, contemporary authorship and feminist film studies.' *Reclaiming the Archive: feminism and*

- film history*. Ed. Vicki Callahan. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2010.
- Taylor, Georgina. *H.D. and the Public Sphere of Modernist Women Writers, 1913-1946*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Tinkler, Penny. *Constructing Girlhood: popular magazines for girls growing up in England, 1920-1950*. London: Taylor and Francis Ltd, 1995.
- Trotter, David. 'Virginia Woolf and Cinema.' *Film Studies* Issue 6 (Summer 2006): 13-26.
- Wasson, Haidee. 'The Woman Film Critic: newspapers, cinema and Iris Barry.' *Film History* 18 (2006): 154-162.
- . 'Writing the Cinema into Daily Life: Iris Barry and the emergence of British film criticism in the 1920s.' *Young and Innocent? The Cinema in Britain 1896-1930*. Ed. Andrew Higson. Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2002: 321-340.
- West, Rebecca. *The Return of the Soldier*. London: Virago, 1980.
- White, Cynthia. *Women's Magazines 1693-1968*. London: Michael Joseph, 1970.
- White, Evelyne. *Winifred Holtby as I Knew Her*. London: Collins, 1938.
- White, Patricia. 'Nazimova's Veils: *Salome* at the intersection of film histories.' *A Feminist Reader in Early Cinema*. Jennifer M. Bean and Diane Negra, eds. London: Duke University Press, 2002. 60-87.
- White, Pearl. *Just Me*. New York: George H. Doran, 1919.
- Williams, Francis. *The Right to Know: the rise of the world press*. London: Longmas, 1969.

- Woolf, Virginia. *Between the Acts*. (1941) *The Selected Works of Virginia Woolf*. Wordsworth Library Collection. Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Ltd., 2007.
- . 'The Cinema.' (1926) *Collected Essays Vol II*. London: Hogarth Press, 1972.
- . *The Common Reader*. (1925) London: Pelican, 1938.
- . *Flush: a biography*. London: The Hogarth Press, 1933.
- . *Jacob's Room*. (1922) *The Selected Works of Virginia Woolf*. Wordsworth Library Collection. Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Ltd., 2007.
- . *The Voyage Out*. (1915) London: Grafton Books, 1978.
- . *Night and Day*. (1919) London: Penguin, 1969.
- . *Mrs Dalloway*. (1925) *The Selected Works of Virginia Woolf*. Wordsworth Library Collection. Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Ltd., 2007.
- . *Monday or Tuesday*. (1921) Hesperus Press, 2003.
- . *Orlando: a biography*. (1928) *The Selected Works of Virginia Woolf*. Wordsworth Library Collection. Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Ltd., 2007.
- . *Roger Fry: a biography*. (1940) London: Penguin, 1979.
- . *A Room of One's Own*. (1929) *The Selected Works of Virginia Woolf*. Wordsworth Library Collection. Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Ltd., 2007.
- . *Three Guineas*. (1938) *The Selected Works of Virginia Woolf*. Wordsworth Library Collection. Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Ltd., 2007.
- . *To the Lighthouse*. (1927) *The Selected Works of Virginia Woolf*. Wordsworth

Library Collection. Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Ltd., 2007.

---. *The Waves*. (1931) *The Selected Works of Virginia Woolf*. Wordsworth Library

Collection. Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Ltd., 2007.

---. *The Years*. (1937) London: Penguin, 1993.

Webliography

"Annual UK Feature Film Production." Film and Television Information

Statistics. 28. Jun. 2005. Screen Digest, Screen Finance. BFI. 30 Dec. 2005.

<http://www.bfi.org.uk/filmtvinfo/stats/filmprod/ukfeatures_annual.html>.

Brown, Erica. 'Introduction.' *Investigating the Middlebrow*. Working Papers on the Web. Vol 11 (July 2008)

<<http://extra.shu.ac.uk/wpw/middlebrow/index.html>>

Kazis, Richard. 'Benjamin's age of mechanical reproduction.' *Jump Cut: a review of contemporary media*. No. 15 (1977): 23-25.

<<http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/onlinessays/JC15folder/WalterBenjamin.html>>.

Kemper, Tomas. 'Received Wisdom: three reception studies.' *Jump Cut: a review of contemporary media*. No. 46 (Summer 2003).

<<http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/jc46.2003/kemper.staiger/index.html>>.

Salmonson, Jessica Amanda. 'Marie Corelli & the Cinema: a filmography.'

Violetbooks.com. 15 Oct. 2010. <<http://www.violetbooks.com/corelli-cinema.html>>

"UK Cinema Screens: Average number of screens open during the year." *Terra*

Media. 1 Jan. 2005.

<http://www.terramedia.co.uk/statistics/uk_cinema_screens.htm>.

Whitaker's Almanac 1941. *Genedocs* Geneological Research in England and Wales

John Hitchcock: 2005. 30 Jul.

<<http://homepage.ntlworld.com/hitch/gendocs/index.html>>.

Filmography

Abenteurer G.m.b.H., Die. Dir. Fred Sauer. Perf. Carlo Aldini, Hilda Bayley, Eve

Gray and Eberhard Leithoff. Orplid-Film GmbH, 1929.

The Adventures of Kathlyn. Dir. Francis J. Grandon. Perf. Kathlyn Williams,

Charles Clary, William Carpenter and Lafe McKee. Selig Polyscope

Company, 1913.

The Adventures of Ruth. Dir. George Marshall. Perf. Ruth Roland, Herbert Heyes,

Thomas G. Lingham, and William Human. Ruth Roland Serials, 1919.

The Affairs of Anatol (aka A Prodigal Knight). Dir. Cecil B. DeMille. Perf. Wallace

Reid, Gloria Swanson, Wanda Hawley and Theodore Roberts. Famous

Players-Lasky Corporation, 1921.

The Amazing Partnership. Dir. George W. Ridgwell. Perf. Milton Rosmer, Gladys

Mason, Arthur Walcott and Temple Bell. Stoll Pictures Company, 1921.

The Amazing Quest of Mr. Ernest Bliss. Dir. Henry Edwards. Perf. Henry

Edwards, Chrissie White, Gerald Ames and Mary Dibley. Hepworth,

1920.

Beyond the Rocks. Dir. Sam Wood. Perf. Gloria Swanson, Rudolph Valentino,

Edythe Chapman and Alec B. Francis. Famous Players-Lasky

Corporation, 1922.

Bond of Fear. Dir. Jack Conway. Perf. Roy Stewart, Belle Bennett, Melbourne

MacDowell and George Webb. Triangle Film Corporation, 1917.

Borderline. Dir. Kenneth MacPherson. Perf. Paul Robeson, Eslanda Robeson,

Hilda Doolittle and Gavin Arthur. Pool Films, 1930.

The Career of Katherine Bush. Dir. Roy William Neill. Perf. Catherine Calvert, John

Goldsworthy, Crauford Kent and Mathilde Brundage. Famous Players-

Lasky Corporation, 1919.

The Constant Nymph. Dir. Adrian Brunel. Perf. Ivor Novello, Mabel Poulton,

Frances Doble and Mary Clare. Gainsborough Pictures, 1928.

Das Kabinet Des Dr. Caligari. Dir. Robert Wiene. Perf. Conrad Veidt, Werner

Krauss, Friedrich Fehe and Lil Dagover. Decla-Bioscop AG, 1919.

The Diamond Queen. Dir. Edward A. Kull. Perf. Eileen Sedgwick, George

Chesebro, Frank Clark and Burton S. Wilson. Universal Film Manufacturing

Company, 1922.

The Exploits of Elaine. Dir. Louis J. Gasnier and George B. Seitz. Perf. Pearl

White, Arnold Daly, Creighton Hale and Raymond Owens. Wharton, 1914.

Érdekházasság. Dir. Antal Forgács. Perf. Jenő Törzs, Sándor Szöke, Gustáv

Vándory and Tiber Lubinszky. Glória Filmvállalat, 1918.

The Fatal Ring. Dir. George B. Seitz. Perf. Pearl White, Earle Foxe, Warner Oland

and Ruby Hoffman. Astra Film, 1918.

For Heaven's Sake. Dir. Sam Taylor. Perf. Harold Lloyd, Jobyna Ralston, Noah

Young and Jim Mason. The Harold Lloyd Corporation, 1926.

Gentlemen Prefer Blondes. Dir. Malcolm St. Clair. Perf. Ruth Taylor, Alice White, Ford Sterling and Holmes Herbet. Paramount Famous Lasky Corporation, 1928.

The Glorious Adventure. Dir. J. Stuart Blackton. Perf. Diana Manners, Gerald Lawrence, Cecil Humphreys and Victor McLaglen. J. Stuart Blackton Feature Pictures, 1922.

God's Good Man. Dir. Maurice Elvey. Perf. Basil Gill, Peggy Carisle, Barry Bernard and Hugh Dabernoon-Stoke. Stoll Picture Productions, 1919.

Going Crooked. Dir. George Melford. Perf. Bessie Love, Oscar Shaw, Gustav von Seyffertitz. Fox Film Corporation, 1916.

The Gold Rush. Dir. Charlie Chaplin. Perf. Charlie Chaplin, Mack Swain, Tom Murray and Henry Bergman. Charles Chaplin Productions, 1925.

Grand Hotel. Dir. Edmund Goulding. Perf. Greta Garbo, John Barrymore, Joan Crawford and Wallace Beery. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1932.

The Great Gold Robbery. Dir. Maurice Elvey. Perf. Douglas Payne, Babs Nevill and Sidney Smith. Motograph, 1913.

Greatheart. Dir. George Ridwell. Perf. Cecil Humphreys, Madge Stuart, Ernest Benham and Olive Stone. Stoll Picture Productions, 1921.

The Great Moment. Dir. Sam Wood. Perf. Gloria Swanson, Alec B. Francis, Milton Sills and Frank Butler. Famous Players-Lasky Corporation, 1921.

The Green Archer. Dir. Spencer Gordon Bennet. Perf. Allene Ray, Walter Miller,

Burr McIntosh and Frank Lackteen. Pathe Exchange, 1926.

The Grell Mystery. Dir. Paul Scardon. Perf. Earle Williams, Miriam Miles, Jean

Dumar and Denton Vane. Vitagraph Company of America, 1917.

Három hét . Dir. Márton Garas. Perf. Jenö Balassa, Sári Fedák, Dezsö Kertész and

Adolf Sieder. Hungária Filmgyár, 1917.

His Hour. Dir. King Vidor. Perf. Aileen Pringle, John Gilbert, Emily Fitzroy and

Lawrence Grant. Louis B. Mayer Productions, 1924.

Holy Orders. Dir. A.E. Coleby & Arthur Rooke. Perf. Malvina Longfellow, A.E.

Coleby, Arthur Rooke and Tammy White. I.B. Davidson, 1917.

How to Educate a Wife. Dir. Monta Bell. Perf. Marie Prevost, Monte Blue, Claude

Gillingwater and Vera Lewis. Warner Bros. Pictures, 1922.

Il mistero di Osiris. Dir. Aldo Molinari. Perf. Ruggero Barni, Giulio Cascapera,

Marina Giomar and Guido Guiducci. Vera Film, 1919.

Il Potere Sovrano. Dir. Percy Nash & Baldassare Negroni. Perf. Hesperia, Emilio

Ghione, Diana D'Amore and Ignazio Lupo. Tiber-Film, 1916.

Innocent. Dir. Maurice Elvey. Perf. Madge Stuart, Basil Rathbone, Lawrence

Anderson and Edward O'Neill. Stoll Picture Productions, 1921.

Intolerance. Dir. D.W. Griffith. Perf. Mae Marsh, Robert Harron, F.A. Turner and

Sam De Grasse. Triangle Film Corporation, 1916.

The Iron Claw. Dir. Edward Jose and George B. Seitz. Perf. Pearl White,

Creighton Hale, Sheldon Lewis and Harry L. Fraser. Edward Jose

Productions, 1916.

It. Dir. Clarence G. Badger. Perf. Clara Bow, Antonio Moreno, William Austin,
Priscilla Bonner. Paramount, 1927.

Jeanne Ney. Dir. George Wilhelm Pabst. Perf. Edith Jehanne, Uno Henning, Fritz
Rasp and Brigitte Helm. Universum Film, 1927.

Joyless Street. Dir. Georg Wilhelm Pabst. Perf. Greta Garbo, Robert Garrison,
Valeska Gert and Tamar Geva. Sofar-Film, 1925.

Knowing Men. Dir. Elinor Glyn. Perf. Carl Brisson, Elissa Landi, Helen Haye and
C.M. Hallard. Elinor Glyn Productions Ltd., 1930.

L'Inhumaine. Dir. Marcel L'Herbier. Perf. Jaque Catelain, Leonid Walter de Malte,
Philippe Heriat and Fred Kellerman. Cinegraphic, 1924.

Leaves from Satan's Book. Dir. Carl Theodor Dreyer. Perf. Helge Nissen, Halvard
Hoff, Jacob Texiere and Hallander Helleman. Nordisk Film, 1919.

Little Annie Rooney. Dir. William Beaudine. Perf. Mary Pickford, William Haines,
Walter James and Gordon Griffith. Mary Pickford Company, 1925.

The Lodger: a story of the London fog. Dir. Alfred Hitchcock. Perf. Ivor Novello,
Marie Ault, Arthur Chesney and June. Gainsborough Pictures, 1927.

Love's Blindness. Dir. John Francis Dillon. Perf. Pauline Starke, Antonio Moreno,
Lilyan Tashman and Sam De Grasse. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1926.

Lucille Love: Girl of Mystery. Dir. Francis Ford. Perf. Grace Cunard, Francis Ford,
Harry Schumm and Ernest Shields. Universal Film Manufacturing

Company, 1914.

Mad Hour. Dir. Joseph C. Boyle. Perf. Sally O'Neil, Alice White, Donald Reed and Larry Kent. First National Pictures, 1928.

Man and Maid. Dir. Victor Shertzinger. Perf. Lew Cody, Harriet Hammond, Renée Adorée, and Paulette Goddard. Metro-Goldwyn Pictures, 1925.

The Man and the Moment. Dir. Arrigo Bocchi. Perf. Manora Theew, Hayford Hobbs, Charles Vane and Maud Cressall. Windsor, 1918.

Manslaughter. Dir. Cecile B. DeMille. Perf. Leatrice Joy, Thomas Meighan, Lois Wilson and John Milern. Paramount Pictures, 1922.

Mata Hari. Dir. George Fitzmaurice. Perf. Greta Garbo, Ramon Novarro, Lionel Barrymore and Lewis Stone. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1931.

The Million Dollar Mystery. Dir. Howell Hansel. Perf. Florence La Badie, Marguerite Snow, James Cruze and Frank Farrington. Thanhouser Film Corporation, 1914.

A Modern Thelma. Dir. John G. Adolphi. Perf. Vivian Martin, Harry Hilliard, William H. Tooker and Albert Roccardi. Fox Film Corporation, 1916.

Mother. Dir. Vsevolod Pudovkin. Perf. Vera Baranovskaya, Nikolai Batalov, Aleksandr Chistyakov and Anna Zemtsova. Mezhrabpom-Rus, 1926.

The Mystery of 13. Dir. Francis Ford. Perf. Francis Ford, Rosemary Theby, Peter Gerald and Mark Fenton. Buston Films Inc., 1919.

The Mystery Ship. Dir. Harry Harvey and Henry MacRae. Perf. Ben F. Wilson,

Neva Gerber, Duke Worne and Nigel De Brulier. Universal Film Manufacturing Company, 1918.

The Old Man in the Corner. Dir. Hugh Croise. Perf. Rolf Leslie and Renee Wakefield. Stoll Pictures Company, 1924.

One Day. Dir. Hal Clarendon. Perf. Jeanne Iver, Victor Sutherland, Bradley Barker, and Robert Broderick. B. S. Moss Motion Picture Corporation, 1916.

The Only Thing. Dir. Jack Conway. Perf. Eleanor Boardman, Conrad Nagel, Edward Connelly and Arthur Edmund Carewe. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1925.

Partners in Crime. Dir. Warwick Buckland. Perf. Alma Taylor, Harry Roysto, Flora Morris and Harry Gilbey. Hepworth, 1913.

The Passing of Mr Quinn. Dir. Julius Hagen and Leslie S. Hiscott. Perf. Clifford Heatherley, Mary Brough, Vivian baron and Kate Gurney. Julius Hagen Productions, 1928.

Pearl of the Army. Dir. Edward José. Perf. Pearl White, Ralph Kellard, Marie Wayne and Theodore Friebus. Astra Film, 1916.

The Perils of Pauline. Dir. Louis J. Gasinier and Donal MacKenzie. Perf. Pearl White, Crane Wilbur, Paul Panzer and Edward Jose. Pathé Frères, 1914.

Piccadilly. Dir. Ewald Andre Dupont. Perf. Anna May Wong, Gilda Gray, Charles Laughton and Jameson Thomas. British International Pictures, 1929.

The Price of Things. Dir. Elinor Glyn. Perf. Elissa Landli, Stewart Rome, Walter Tennyson and Alfred Tennyson. Elinor Glyn Productions Ltd., 1930.

The Profiteers. Dir. George Fitzmaurice. Perf. Fannie Ward, John Miltern, Leslie Stuart and Edwing Stevens. Astra Film, 1919.

The Reason Why. Dir. Robert G. Vignola. Perf. Clara Kimball Young, Milton Sills, Florence Billings and Frank Losee. Clara Kimball Young Film Corporation, 1918.

Rebecca of Sunnybrooke Farm. Dir. Marshall Neilan. Perf. Mary Pickford, Eugene O'Brien, Helen Jerome Eddy and Charles Ogle. Mary Pickford Company, 1917.

The Red Circle. Dir. Sherwood MacDonald. Perf. Ruth Roland, Frank Mayo, Philo McCullough and Gordon Sackville. Pathe Exchange, 1915.

Red Hair. Dir. Clarence G. Badger. Perf. Clara Bow, Lane Chandler, William Austin and Jacqueline Gadsden. Paramount Famous Lasky Corporation, 1928.

Ritzy. Dir. Richard Rosson. Perf. Betty Bronson, James Hall, William Austin and Joan Standing. Famous Players-Lasky Corporation, 1927.

The Rocks of Valpre. Dir. Maurice Elvey. Perf. Basil Gill, Peggy Carlisle, Cowley Wright and Humerston Wright. Stoll Picture Productions, 1919.

Ruth of the Rockies. Dir. George Mashall. Perf. Ruth Roland, Herbert Heyes, Thomas G. Lingham and Jack Rollens. Ruth Roland Serials, 1920.

The Safety Curtain. Dir. Sidney Franklin. Perf. Norma Talmadge, Eugene O'Brien, Anders Randolph and Gladden James. Norma Talmadge Film Corporation, 1918.

Screen Snapshots. Documentary short. Columbia Pictures Corporation, 1926.

Show People. Dir. King Vidor. Perf. Marion Davies, William Haines, Dell Henderson and Paul Ralli. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1928.

"Silent Britain." Narr. Matthew Sweet. *Silent Cinema Season*. BBC 4. 31 May 2006.

The Silent Mystery. Dir. Francis Ford. Perf. Francis Ford, Mae Gaston, Rosemary Thelby and Jerome Ash. Burston Films Inc., 1918.

The Single Standard. Dir. John S. Robertson. Perf. Greta Garbo, Nils Asther, Johnny Mack Brown and Dorothy Sebastian. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1929.

Six Days. Dir. Charles Brabin. Perf. Corinne Griffith, Frank Mayo, Myrtle Stedman and Claude King. Goldwyn Pictures Corporation, 1923.

Soul Mates. Dir. Joseph Conway. Perf. Aileen Pringle, Edmund Lowe, Phillips Smalley and Tony D'Algy. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1925.

The Sorrows of Satan. Dir. Alexander Butler. Perf. Gladys Cooper, Owen Nares, Cecil Humphreys and Lionel d'Aragon. G.B. Samuelson Productions, 1917.

The Sorrows of Satan. Dir. D.W. Griffith. Perf. Adolphe Menjou, Ricardo Cortez, Carol Dempster and Lya De Putti. Famous Players-Lasky, 1926.

Squibs. Dir. George Pearson. Perf. Betty Balfour, Hugh E. Wright, Fred Groves and Mary Brough. Welsh-Pearson, 1921.

Squibs Wins the Calcutta Sweep. Dir. George Pearson. Perf. Betty Balfour, Hugh E.

Wright, Fred Groves and Bertrum Burleigh. Welsh-Pearson, 1922.

Stella Dallas. Dir. Henry King. Perf. Ronald Colman, Belle Bennet, Alice Hoyce

and Hean Hersholt. Samuel Goldwyn Company, 1925.

Studio Tour. Dir. Henry King. Perf. Ronald Colman, Belle Bennett, Alice Joyce

and Jean Hersholt. Samuel Goldwyn Company, 1925.

Such Men are Dangerous. Dir. Kenneth Hawks. Perf. Warner Baxter, Catherine

Dale Owen, Hedda Hopper and Claud Allister. Fox Film Corporation, 1930.

Suspense. Dir. Frank Reicher. Perf. Mollie King, Howard Truesdale, Iseth Munro

and Harrie Gordon. Frank Reicher Productions, 1919.

The Swindler. Dir. Maurice Elvey. Perf. Cecil Humphreys, Marjorie Hume,

Neville Percy and Teddy Arundell. Stoll Picture Productions, 1919.

Thelma. Dir. A.E. Coleby & Arthur Rooke. Perf. Malvina Longfellow, Arthur

Rooke, Maud Yates and Marsh Allen. I.B. Davidson, 1918.

Thelma. Dir. Chester Bennett. Perf. Jane Novak, Barbara Tennant, Gordon Mullen

and Bert Sprotte. Chester Bennett Productions, 1922.

The Thief. Dir. Charles Giblyn. Perf. Billy Franey, Pearl White, Charles Waldron

and Wallace McCutcheon Jr. Fox Film Corporation, 1920.

The Third Eye. Dir. James W. Horne. Perf. Warner Oland, Eileen Percy, Jack

Mower and Olga Grey. Astra Film, 1921.

Three Fingered Kate. Dir. Charles Raymond. Perf. Ivy Martinek, Bessie Booker,

Charles Calvert and W. Gladstone Haley. British & Colonial Biograph Company, 1912.

Three Weeks. Dir. Perry N. Verkoff. Perf. Madlaine Traverse, George C. Pearce, John Webb Dillon and Joseph C. Fay. Reliable Feature Film Co., 1914.

Three Weeks aka *The Romance of a Queen*. Dir. Alan Crosland. Perf. Aileen Pringle, Conrad Nagel, John St. Polis and H. Reeves-Smith. Goldwyn Pictures Corporation, 1923.

Three Weekends. Dir. Clarence G. Badger. Perf. Clara Bow, Neil Hamilton, Harrison Ford and Lucille Powers. Paramount Famous Lasky, 1928.

The Tidal Wave. Dir. Sinclair Hill. Perf. Poppy Wyndham, Sydeny Seaward, Pardoe Woodman and Annie Esmond. Stoll Picture Productions, 1920.

The Tiger's Trail. Dir. Robert Ellis et al. Perf. Ruth Roland, George Larkin, Mark Strong and Harry Moody. Astra Film, 1920.

Tih-Minh. Dir. Louis Feuillade. Perf. Mary Harald, Rene Creste, Georges Biscot and Edouard Mathe. Societe des Etablissements L. Gaumont, 1918.

Underworld. Dir. Joseph von Sternberg. Perf. George Bancroft, Evelyn Brent, Clive Brook and Fred Kohler. Paramount Pictures, 1927.

The Virgin of Stamoul. Dir. Tod Browning. Perf. Priscilla Dean, Wheeler Oakman, Wallace Beery and Clyde Benson. Universal Film Manufacturing Company, 1920.

The Voice on the Wire. Dir. Stuart Paton. Perf. Ben F. Wilson, Neva Gerber, Joseph

W. Girard and Francis McDonald. Universal Film Manufacturing Company, 1918.

The Way of an Eagle. Dir. G.B. Samuelson. Perf. Isobel Elsom, Andre Beaulieu, Odette Giombault and Mary Dibley. G.B. Samuelson Productions, 1918.

What Is 'It'. Dir. Joseph Santley. Perf. Elinor Glyn. Paramount Pictures, 1929.

White Eagle. Dir. Fred Jackman and W.S. Van Dyke. Perf. Ruth Roland, Earl Metcalf, Harry Girard and Virginia Ainsworth. Ruth Roland Serials, 1922.

The White Moll. Dir. Harry F. Millarde. Perf. Pearl White, Richard Travers, Jack Baston and Walter P. Lewis. Fox Film Corporation, 1920.

Why Change Your Wife? Dir. Cecil B. DeMille. Perf. Gloria Swanson, Thomas Meighan, Bebe Daniels and Theodore Kosloff. Famous Players-Lasky, 1920.

Wing Beat. Dir. Kenneth MacPherson. Perf. H.D. Pool Films, 1927.

A Woman of Paris. Dir. Charles Chaplin. Perf. Charles Chaplin, Edna Purviance, Clarence Geldart and Carl Miller. Charles Chaplin Productions, 1923.

The World's a Stage. Dir. Colin Campbell. Perf. Dorothy Phillips, Bruce McRae, Kenneth Harlan and Otis Harlan. Sol Lesser Productions, 1922.

Wormwood. Dir. Marshal Farnum. Perf. John St. Polis, Ethel Kauffman, Charles Arthur and Edgar L. Davenport. Fox Film Corporation, 1915.

The Young Diana. Dir. Robert Vignola and Albert Capellani. Perf. Marion Davies, Macklyn Arbuckle, Forrest Stanley and Gypsey O'Brien. Cosmopolitan Productions, 1922.