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IRVINE

The Adolescent in American Print and Comics

DISSERTATION

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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in Visual Studies

by

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The Adolescent in American Print and Comics

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This research examines images of adolescents made in late 19th and early 20th century America, the same time that "adolescence" as a concept was coined and codified. Many of these first images of adolescence were forged in marginal and experimental visual media, particularly in early newspaper comics. The medium of comic strips arose simultaneously with the invention of adolescence, largely to answer the same social crises. By the end of the 19th century, mass immigration, changes to economic production, and civil rights movements had overturned antebellum and wartime constructions of national identity. Comic strips flaunted the feelings of chaos this incited, especially for the middle classes. Adolescence offered allegorical solace, reassuring that these "storm and stress" years of national development could eventually be tamed and corralled toward maturity.

This dissertation explores how visual constructions of the adolescent became a battle ground, reshaped to express either hegemonic control or youthful rebellion. The early association between comic strips and adolescence held fast, influencing the evolution of comic books as an adolescent rite of passage and counter-cultural medium. College humorists and

even Norman Rockwell employed aberrant or “comic” adolescent bodies to critique the edicts of mainstream print media. While this dissertation focuses on adolescence, my ultimate goal is to map the messy process by which mass-produced images influence the formation of cultural concepts.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Nearly ten years ago, at the beginning of this project, I thought I was writing a dissertation about American nerds, concentrating on their renewed prominence as stock characters during the Silicon Valley tech boom. Instead, this dissertation became focused on the visual constructions of American male adolescence between 1890 and 1945, long before the term "nerd" was coined. I discovered this subject as I researched the nerd as a specter of failed manhood and hunted for when comic books and science fiction first became a solace for ostracized adolescence. The quagmire of materials led me to two seemingly disparate yet coinciding origin points: adolescence was coined and codified as a psychological field at the end of the nineteenth century, while simultaneously the Sunday comic strip, the American predecessor to full comic books, emerged in the 1890's. As I retraced these two historical arcs, I found a surprisingly symbiotic relationship. The explosive visual medium of comics devoted an unprecedented amount of attention to juvenile and adolescent development, even though this age range was not their target audience. Meanwhile medical descriptors of adolescence, namely adolescence gone wrong, also bore an uncanny resemblance to the clumsy movements and irregular bodies of cartoon characters.

This study explores how adolescence and comics emerged as codependent concepts, one invoking the constructs of the other. These two concepts, adolescence and comics, were not just in parallel development, but inextricably intertwined by the beginning of the 20th

century, cementing a relationship that persists through the 21st century. Both concepts were defined by unbridled humor, irreverence, and corruptive idleness. Both invoked bodies that were elastic, pliable, and uncontrolled. Both were havens for heightened imagination and sensory experience that concurrently promised and threatened to birth new creative forms and social concepts.

Although he features only rarely in this dissertation, Alfred E. Neuman, *Mad Magazine*'s cover boy, provides a concise sampling of the culmination of this phenomenon. Neuman's dopey expression and homely face, the antithesis of American success and beauty, symbolized *Mad Magazine*'s irreverence and resistance to ideologies expressed within mainstream print. The satirical magazine launched its iconic halfwit Alfred E. Neuman in 1956 as a fictional write-in candidate for president.[1] However, Neuman claims much deeper origins, which surfaced during a copyright infringement lawsuit. Cartoonist Henry Spencer Stuff trademarked a nearly identical face forty years prior under the name "The eternal optimist". When his widow brought legal action against the magazine, *Mad* argued that Stuff's creation was only one of many similar faces circulating on cartoony postcards during the 1910's, all seemingly stemming from a shared prototype.[2] Stuff's "eternal optimist" was specifically attached to the "I should worry!" fad of the 1910's, a dismissive catch phrase that caught on with the youth culture and purportedly annoyed their Victorian elders.[3] *Mad* historian Maria Reidelbach demonstrates

[1] Alfred E. Neuman's face appeared in the magazine as early as 1954 in the border illustration and in smaller interleafing cartoons under different names.
[2] Sam Sweet, "A Boy with No Birthday Turns Sixty," The Paris Review, March 3, 2016, https://www.theparisreview.org/blog/2016/03/03/a-boy-with-no-birthday-turns-sixty/
[3] Peter Jensen Brown, "Wurra-Wurra, I Should Worry! And Billikens – a Proto-Neuman Worry Warrior," October 16, 2017, https://therealalfrede.blogspot.com/ and "What? Me Worry? Isch ka Bibble and

how these popular Alfred E. Neuman faces were also scooped up by advertisers to sell items ranging from pie to dentistry.[4] Peter Reitan, who blogs under the name Peter Jensen Brown, argues that Neuman's origin point can be definitively traced back to posters produced for the 1894 theatrical production "The New Boy," a farce about a 30 year old man forced to bluff his way as a 14 year old student through a boarding school (Fig. 1.1).[5] This "new boy" face seems to have also influenced the jug-eared, wise-cracking smile of R. F. Outcault's "Yellow Kid," a comic strip protagonist of the 1890's whose image launched a commercial craze.[6] Over 100 years later, this incorrigible face harbors almost the same humorous release for its admirers: the loser, embodied by a gawky early adolescent, laughs off his lowly status.

Alfred E. Neuman did not invent the commercial craze for cackling, ugly adolescents, but rather was one its outposts. Several aspects of Alfred E. Neuman's history encapsulate the core issues of my research. Foremost is the craze for consuming images of abject adolescents. This wise-cracking face remained connected to "The New Boy" play only during its first few years before splitting off as a recognizable, resonant image that could easily migrate between various print media and artists' handlings. He was also a contradictory icon. While Neuman persisted as an object of consumer desire, to be compared with him would be an insult. Although Neuman never inhabited a comic strip of his own, his gawky proportions and asinine expression

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Alfred E. Neuman," March 13, 2013, https://therealalfrede.blogspot.com/2013/03/what-me-worry-isch-ka-bibble-and-alfred.html

[4] See "Alfred E. Neuman: The Untold Story" in Maria Reidelbach, *Completely Mad: A History of the Comic Book and Magazine* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1991).

[5] Peter Jensen Brown, "The Real Alfred E.," March 10, 2013, https://therealalfrede.blogspot.com/2013/03/the-real-alfred-e.html

[6] Maria Reidelbach suggests the Yellow Kid may have inspired the Alfred E. Neuman prototype, but Peter Jensen Brown argues the original *New Boy* more likely inspired the look and success of the Yellow Kid. See Reidelbach, *Completely Mad*, 148 and Brown, "The Real Alfred E."

characterized many comic strip characters who wielded their imbecility and abject physiognomy for both endearment and power. When *Mad Magazine* launched, the underground magazine caused a revolution by harnessing the same stinging sarcasm and institutional critique that one can find throughout the early history of modern American comic art. Typical of adolescent types from the Progressive Era, Alfred E. Neuman is a clumsy conglomerate of both childlike and adult characteristics. However, as his historian Peter Reitan explains, this indeterminacy expands his ability to function as an empathetic type: "When I was twelve, [Alfred E. Neuman] looked twelve. Now that I'm fifty-five, he looks fifty-five."[7]

This dissertation targets the evolving image of the adolescent. Comics form a cornerstone of this study as their highly unique aesthetic framework would become a popular tool, utilized by fine artists, commercial artists, and most of all cartoonists, for imaging adolescence. Indeed, it was often through depictions of the adolescent subject that these separate spheres of visual production came crashing together. This opening chapter is not so much an introduction to this history as an introduction to its elusive terms and varied methodological approaches. Foremost, I aim to clarify how I am defining these two umbrella concepts of comics and adolescence, and why, aligned on a shared axis, they offer unique insights into the dialogs framing American identity at the beginning of the twentieth century. Specifically, images of American adolescence proffered resistance to dominant ideological frameworks, epitomizing American identity as a dispossessed and volatile experience.

[7] Quoted in Sam Sweet, "A Boy with No Birthday Turns Sixty," *The Paris Review*, March 3, 2016, https://www.theparisreview.org/blog/2016/03/03/a-boy-with-no-birthday-turns-sixty/

LINKING COMIC ART AND THE ADOLESCENT

The subheading here begs the question of what exactly is meant by "comics". As many comics historians have demonstrated, a concise, definitive appraisal of this term is nearly impossible. The diverse artifacts defined as comics overlap profusely in their visual structures, narrative devices, production formats, and cultural operations. However, analysis of these materials typically manifests in a bubbling ven diagram with no core cross point. I use Ian Gordon's definition of "comic art" to both encapsulate a range of materials, including "caricature, cartoons, animation, and comic books," and address the permeation of comic art across broader genres.[8] Comics historian Jean-Paul Gabilliet advises that comic art must be approached as "not a medium of expression in the absolute sense (in the manner of painting, sculpture, and cinema) but a category comprising means of expression that are more or less proximate".[9] Despite this categorical hurdle, I found that this "proximate," unbounded quality allowed both comic art to readily adopt an adolescent aesthetic and images of adolescents to be imbued with a comic aesthetic.

The adolescent in comics emerged in the comic strips of the Sunday color-printed supplements, a new product offered by American newspapers in heated competition throughout the early 1890's. I begin here because of the introduction of the juvenile as the comic anti-hero and master of ceremonies over the comic strip's carnivalesque antics. These raucous strips drew on visual strategies traceable back to at least the comics of the early 19th

[8] Ian Gordon, *Comic Strips and Consumer Culture: 1890 – 1945* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1998), 9.
[9] Jean-Paul Gabilliet, *Of Comics and Men: A Cultural History of American Comic Books*, trans. Bart Beaty and Nick Nguyen (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2010), xv.

century, most notably in Rodolphe Töpffer's picture narratives.[10] However, newspapers comics also launched what art historian David Kunzle terms a "new epoch" in comics history, defined by episodic characters and commercial distribution.[11] This new epoch gave rise to the many visual structures that have become synonymous with modern comics in the popular imagination, such as word balloons and sequential paneling. While not the origin of modern comic books and comic art, Sunday strips provided a seismic evolutionary step in that direction.[12]

Ian Gordon's *Comic Strips and Consumer Culture* demonstrates how these newspaper strips launched a commercial craze that shaped the formation of American mass culture.[13] Comic strip super stars not only flooded into novelty merchandise, but photographs and theatrical events also reveal an audience eager to intermingle with popular characters across inventive virtual interactions. What exactly caught the public imagination is less clear and remains the key question of my exploration. I believe comics historian Scott McCloud, author of the ground-breaking analysis *Understanding Comics*, pinpoints the success of these original comics in his introduction to *Making Comics*: "Do you want to create comics that pull readers into the world of story? A reading experience so seamless that it doesn't feel like reading at all but like being there? Populated by characters so vivid they seem as real as the reader's own

[10] For more about the position of Rodolphe Töpffer within the development of modern comics, see the chapter "Goethe and Töpffer" in David Kunzle, *The History of the Comic Strip: The Nineteenth Century* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990), 28-71.
[11] Kunzle, *History of the Comic Strip*, 1.
[12] The exact position of 1890's newspaper comic strips within the development of comic art and comic books continues to be debated. For a close examination of newspaper strips and the evolution of comics, see Thierry Smolderen, *The Origins of Comics: from William Hogarth to Winsor McCay*, trans. Bart Beaty and Nick Nguyen (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2014).
[13] Gordon, *Comic Strips*, 10.

friends and family?"[14] Comics had harnessed a unique visual language that dissolved the barrier between reader and the imaged character. My guiding interest in these 1890's comic strips, and the examples of comic art I analyze thereafter, thus lies in how comic artists experimented with new ways to ignite this interactive relationship with their readers.

My second chapter explores why Sunday comic strips in particular mark a crucial new era in the history of comics as a medium and are integral to an image history of adolescence. Foremost is the placement of these strips within the context of the Sunday humor section as opposed to their position in weekly magazines dedicated to humor. Newspaper cartoonists were often previously or simultaneously employed by other periodicals, hired precisely because they could execute industry-standard methods for visual satires. [15] However, Sunday supplements marked a new and innovative space where comics redefined the meanings behind their anarchic chaos and metamorphic play. The Sunday supplement supplied a carnivalesque reversal of the norms and rules of journalism. The pages were loaded with experimental layouts, kaleidoscopic color, and raucous rude humor. Even more so, comic strips in the supplements often encouraged joyful identification with its serialized characters in addition to stress-relieving laughter at the character's daily trials.

During the 1890's and through the first decade of the 20th century, juvenile miscreants and pre-teen street urchins became popular lead characters in comic strips. Through their antics, the comic character's very spirit became commensurate with a "juvenile" outlook that

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[14] Scott McCloud, *Making Comics: Storytelling Secrets of Comics, Manga, and Graphic Novels* (New York: Harper Collins Books, 2006), 1.
[15] Bill Blackbeard, *R. F. Outcault's The Yellow Kid: A Centennial Celebration of the Kid Who Started the Comics* (Massachusetts: Kitchen Sink Press, 1995), 42.

achieved the fullest and most uproarious expression in immigrant and tenement children, who were depicted as developing largely free of parental control. Comic strip critiques, spearheaded by juvenile pundits, destabilized views not only broadly held in popular culture but also within the serious-minded editorials of the newspaper. This bond between demeanor and age would continue to resonate throughout the Progressive Era, particularly in theatricals and theme parks designed to rejuvenate the world-weary adult with a juvenile elixir of good humor.[16]

In my second chapter I focus on how the artist R. F. Outcault wielded comics in his series nicknamed the "Yellow Kid" to deliver intricate yet scathing political critiques couched within the seemingly naïve antics of childhood play. These antics teetered between youthful rebellion and misdemeanor, a discrepancy made all the more threatening by stringy bodies that suggested an accelerated gallop into adulthood. My third chapter uses R. F. Outcault's other commercial success, Buster Brown, to further examine how pubescent development lay at the heart of R. F. Outcault's humorous critique. The smart sailor suit and pageboy haircut of middle-class Buster Brown seemed to cater to 20th century demands to "clean-up" the Sunday supplement and make it suitable for child consumption. However, Buster Brown's weekly performances continually emphasized his addiction to chaos and guileless stupidity, visualizing the worst predictions about developmental rot in the upper classes.

Both Yellow Kid and Buster Brown flaunted their resistance to decorum and the violent onslaughts incurred from modern living. The celebratory, rather than admonishing, nature of

[16] See especially Woody Register, *The Kid of Coney Island: Fred Thompson and the Rise of American Amusements* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

these cartoons merged the aesthetics of comic strips with ecstatic youthful bodies and contempt for authority. Crucially, these growing bodies did not accord with the soft, solid physiques of sheltered childhood, but instead suggested the angular and uneven distortions just before pubescence. This brand of slapstick comedy, and its dependence on the spasms of elastic bodies, are central to my discussion of a comic "aesthetic" that became commensurate with an adolescent frame of mind. This aesthetic did not suddenly erupt in 1890, but rather drew from at least a century's worth of cartooning practices focused on bodily metamorphosis and sequential movement.

David Kunzle's history of 19th century comic art traces how the cartooning obsession with physical transformation was both symptomatic of "modern" living while also intertwined with the industrial inventions of the 19th century. Looking primarily at European cartoonists, Kunzle crucially ties these qualities to the "lower middle/upper working class" that 19th century comic magazines targeted, most notably their potential to accelerate up or down the social scale. Kunzle quotes Karl Marx to describe the "petty bourgeoisie" as trapped in a state of social contradiction, caught on the borderline between class categories. For these individuals, class mobility manifested "as both a challenge and a nightmare," which comics embraced by sending their cartoon bodies into metamorphic transformations and convulsions.[17] America's shift toward an industrialized economy inflamed a similar cultural neurosis as the financial security of the middle-class became increasingly unstable. Kunzle likens this social mutability to the adolescent, who is "caught between past and future, subservience and independence." [18]

[17] Kunzle, *History of the Comic Strip*, 7-8.
[18] Ibid, 8.

By the 1890's this connection between adolescence and identity crisis became more literalized, both in comics and as a metaphor for national maturity.

The ductile cartoon body was more than a worrying signature of social anxiety. Cartoon physics rewrote the laws of motion, making rigid authoritarian structures suddenly pliable. Film and media historian Scott Bukatman uses the term "plasmatic possibility" to describe this animative aspect of early 20th century cartoons.[19] Plasmatic transcendence opened revelatory experiences of pleasure and freedom, a potential state of unbounded adaptability. Like David Kunzle, Bukatman connects cartoons to children's bodies, which "are close to anima: they have not yet learned to accept the ossification of form" and thus act as "a conduit for atavistic attraction to an animistic world". [20] In the early 20th century, both comics and the adolescent became sites where contradictory notions could be combined and suspended in the palpable cartoon body.

While my examination begins with 1890's newspaper comic strips, it continues its search for the American adolescent across fine art, advertising, theater, and illustration. These visual fields repeatedly contested and reformulated concepts of the maturing body. Yet, the "cartooned" body and the comic aesthetic frequently manifested in portrayals of adolescence far outside the cartoonist's panel. To conduct this search for "comic" bodies across a variety of visual disciplines, I rely on Hans Belting's theory of images, which contends that images can be unlinked from their material embodiment in pictures and discussed as concepts physiologically

[19] While this thread is explored throughout Bukatman's text, see especially Scott Bukatman, *The Poetics of Slumberland: Animated Spirits and the Animating Spirit* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2012), 20.
[20] Ibid., 13.

embodied in human perception. In Belting's theory, the image operates as an amorphous concept, a subject that hovers in between those pictures that confront us in the world and those pictures we hold in our own mental catalogues. For images of the adolescent to manifest as pictures, they must be materialized through a physical container or medium. I explore why "comics" so often served as the default medium for the adolescent in the early 20th century.

As comics historians have argued, this concept of comics as a medium, rather than a genre, resolves many of the ambiguities around cataloguing its formal attributes.[21] Schematic devices unique to the comics (panels, word balloons, visual onomatopoeias used to embody sound and movement) are as elemental and ingrained into their construction as binders and supports are to the medium of painting. Comic strip artists reach for action lines or an exaggerated bodily spasm just as a painter might reach for a round or flat brush. This invention of comics as a new medium is partly what cleaved the newspaper comics of the late 19th century from deeper histories of cartooning and pictorial storytelling. Perceived as a medium, the aesthetic signifiers of comics are not married to newspaper strips, but migratory, able to influence other fields of visual production. Many illustrators and painters were eager to "pick up" the tools of comics just as an artist might gravitate toward a newly synthesized pigment or technologically advanced printing process. This transference leaves an impression, blending the meanings and reading practices prescribed to each specific medium. Rebecca Zurier's analysis of the Ashcan School artists and their adoption of a cartoonist vision pioneers this

[21] Charles Forceville, Elisabeth El Refaie, and Gert Meesters explore the concept of comics as a medium and summarizes its academic history in "Stylistics in comics" in ed. Michael Burker, *The Routledge Handbook of Stylistics* (London: Routledge, 2017).

concept, defining cartooning as a way "to picture the city and make it knowable".[22] I follow Zurier's example in contending that a comic strip body, when exported to another medium, not only transmits a new physiognomy, but also the social rebellion embedded in this medium.[23]

Visual products constantly shape mental catalogues of images and their indexical meanings, an operation that performed in overdrive in the image saturated environment of the Progressive Era. To understand how pictures of adolescents resonated with mental constructs of adolescents, one must understand how adolescence came to be defined within the Victorian and Progressive Era mentality.

DEFINING ADOLESCENCE

Constructing an image history of adolescence, especially as a concept in development, has blurry edges. It can be difficult to tell whether the figure presented is even actually at adolescence, particularly in early historical periods that predate the solidification of that term. Some images completely invented new physical types and markers to embody this unique developmental stage. Others cobbled together visions from long-standing prototypes used for either men or children. Idealists smoothed out these incongruences while the more comic minded alarmingly heightened them. The quick production and seriality of comic images means that characters can sometimes change drastically in appearance during their production run.

[22] Rebecca Zurier, *Picturing the City: Urban Vision and the Ashcan School* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2006), 183.
[23] Social rebellion, however, is only one aspect of the "cartoonist's vision" in Zurier's analysis. For a full discussion see Chapter 6 "The Cartoonist's Vision (Part 1)" and Chapter 7 "The Cartoonist's Vision (Part 2)" in *Picturing the City*, 181-212 & 213-245.

For instance, R. F. Outcault's comic strip character the Yellow Kid seems to freely see-saw in age between young childhood to middle adolescence.[24] Often, the images I am analyzing are not precisely even of adolescents but of juveniles or adults who bear troubling markers of an adolescence either flushing too early or never successfully completed. When possible, I try to pinpoint the age of my subjects via clothing, such as the introduction of trousers, or social markers, such as entrance into college, that bookend their age. More often adolescence emerges as a visual specter that worryingly haunts the body because, for this period, the most successful adolescence is one that escapes notice.

While both American adolescence and the invention of the comic strip have received a surge of scholarly attention, few studies focus on their historical relationship. Laura Saguisag's seminal study on the construction of childhood and citizenship in Progressive Era comics is unique in confronting the lack of scholarly attention to the proliferation of young protagonists in comics.[25] While Saguisag's study analyzes comic strip production through theories and depictions of childhood in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, my study views this production specifically through the newly emerging concept of adolescence. I contend the looming threat of approaching, onset, or dormant adolescence is crucial for understanding the Progressive Era comic strip body.

[24] In his earliest appearances in 1895 the Yellow Kid appeared to be of an extremely young age, just beyond toddler hood. However, by 1898, not only did the character appear much taller and lankier, but even suggested a full, developed chest in "The Yellow Kid Experiments with the Wonderful Hair Tonic," *New York Journal*, January 23, 1898.

[25] Laura Saguisag, *Constructing Childhood and Citizenship in Progressive Era Comics* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2019), 4.

My search for adolescence as an emerging visual concept depends heavily on George Stanley Hall's 1904 treatise titled "Adolescence: Its Psychology and its relations to physiology, anthropology, sociology, sex, crime, religion, and education". While consolidating many nineteenth century theories and themes circulating around adolescence, Hall's tome comprised its first full-length theoretical treatment.[26] Hall perceived childhood as recapitulating the evolutionary history of the species and posited that successful development demanded that the evolutionary process run its course. Under Hall's theory, the phase of pre-adolescent "savagery" was unavoidable and stimulated necessary strength and protective provider instincts. If suppressed through over-civilized coddling, the child would fail to hone important skills, particularly his or her ability to repress innate truant instincts. On the path toward adulthood, children would presumably advance from a savage love of nature toward a humanistic learning of culture. Hall referred to this adolescent stage as a second birth, marked by increased bodily plasticity, individuality, and imagination.[27] The body and mind behaved much like an impressionable putty that, depending on their surroundings, could easily pivot toward enlightened or disastrous retrogression.

In my study Hall's work serves as a looming, influential source for understanding how adolescence operated as a creative invention rather than an empirical discovery. Hall's ambitious title reveals how anxieties over American juvenile development had gradually seeped across social and civic fields. John Demos and Virginia Demos position Hall's ideas of

[26] Kent Baxter, *The Modern Age: Turn-of-the-Century American Culture and the Invention of Adolescence* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2008), 4.
[27] G. Stanley Hall, *Adolescence: Its psychology and its relations to physiology, anthropology, sociology, sex, crime, religion, and education* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1904), xiii.

adolescence as the "capstone" to the 19th century child-study movement, tracing common themes such as recapitulation theory and bodily plasticity back to the early decades of the century. While Hall's crusader approach was criticized, and the scientific relevancy of work his expired after two decades, his ideas quickly perforated through popular culture and educational reform.[28] Many historians of Progressive Era boyhood have framed Hall's adolescence as a timely answer to various emerging social crises.

A crisis demands resolution, which the Progressive Era offered in abundance. Historian Kent Baxter traces adolescence's performance as a rehabilitative concept, effectively capping and controlling a period of youth that was beginning to drift from the confines of the domestic sphere. Social engineers advocated robust outdoor programs to redirect natural savagery into educational growth and cure the suffocating ills of urban life. In *Building Character in the American Boy*, Marshal MacLeod performs a deep investigation of this rehabilitative role in character-building programs. As MacLeod states, Hall's "recapitulation-based theories of gangs and adolescence gave character builders their first semblance of scientific expertise and allowed them to define theirs as a unique service."[29] Hall's work thus creates a crucial and pivotal touchstone that links emergent 19th century conceptions of adolescence with 20th centuries formulas built both to herd and commercially exploit adolescent desires.

This study focuses primarily on male adolescent development, a sphere that demanded the reaffirmation of safe models of masculinity. Scholars working within masculinity studies, an

[28] John Demos and Virginia Demos. "Adolescence in Historical Perspective," *Journal of Marriage and Family* Vol. 31, No. 4 (November 1969): 635 – 636.
[29] David MacLeod, *Building Character in the American Boy: the Boy Scouts, YMCA, and their Forerunners, 1870 – 1920* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1983), 109.

emergent field within gender scholarship, have demonstrated how American concepts of manliness influenced not only pubescent men, but pervaded deep into its definitions of citizenship and national identity. By denaturalizing "manliness" from universalized cultural precepts and myths of genetic predisposition, scholars have revealed the historical origins and contingencies of American masculinity.

In *Manhood in America: A Cultural History,* Kimmel charts how the Victorian ideology of "Self-Made" manhood had eclipsed competing models.[30] Fortified by courage and independence, the deliberate and active construction of manhood successfully combated the perceived dangers of the modern world. By the end of the nineteenth century, these dangers gained critical momentum in a masculinity crisis, onset by the alarming independence of women, influx of hardened immigrant bodies during the 1880's, and rise of family-owned conglomerates, that threatened the comfortable supremacy of America's established white Anglo-Saxon Protestant populace.[31] In *Manliness and Civilization*, Gail Bederman argues that Americans of Anglo-Saxon heritage, mired in sedentary jobs with shrinking access to the corporate ladder, alarmed social theorists who anticipated a cultural takeover by inferior races and genders.[32] As Kimmel demonstrates, self-made manhood formalized moral and physical development into a civic duty and measurable quality for this target population. It is no

[30] See "The Birth of the Self-Made Man" in Michael Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).
[31] While this history is widely explored and accepted by many historians, John F. Kasson's introduction provides a synopsis that is particularly thorough and succinct. John Kasson, *Houdini, Tarzan, and the Perfect Man: the White Male Body and the Challenge of Modernity in America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001), 10 – 13.
[32] Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880 – 1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 12-15.

surprise then that American fitness culture flourished in the late nineteenth, growing from a civic imperative to a cult obsession.[33]

Chapter 4 examines how these pressures on masculine development manifested in the high cultural realm of painting, the natural foil to comic art. As the Fine Arts entered the arena of American masculinity, the adolescent emerged only as a marginal figure, yet one grasped at with many different and contradictory strategies. Despite the relatively rare appearances of adolescents, images of developing males often incited discussions, either as a symbol of a lost past or disturbing vision of an uncertain present. In her examinations of masculine themes through American painting, art historian Sarah Burns has demonstrated the potent force of these images to reshape the visual memory of the nation's past while giving directives toward constructing a safe, robust American future.[34] Images frequently reveal a concept torn between outmoded classical ideals and stark realities. When strongman Eugene Sandow produced statuesque near-nude poses for collectible photographs, he not only endeavored to become a modern improvement on the Greek ideal but also further blurred the lines separating art from the documentary photograph and the living model. Chapter 4 concludes with an examination of George Bellows, an Ash Can School painter whom Rebecca Zurier has shown

[33] While this subject pervades nearly all examinations of 19th and early 20th century histories of American masculinity, for a focused discussion on fitness culture see *Fitness in American Culture: Images of Health, Sport, and the Body: 1830-1940,* ed. Kathryn Grover (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1989).

[34] Sarah Burns' study of the popularity of rustic "barefoot" boys in the nineteenth century and Winslow Homer's increasing turn toward painting outdoor dramas of "manly health" explore how such images combined both a longing for a mythical past and directive for future development. See "Barefoot Boys and Other Country Children: Sentiment and Ideology in Nineteenth-Century American Art," *The American Art Journal* 20, no. 1 (1988): 24-50; "Revitalizing the "Painted-Out" North: Winslow Homer, Manly Health and New England," *American Art* 9, no. 2 (Summer 1995): 20-37.

directly quoted comic art in his various paintings of adolescent boys.[35] By exporting the misshapen bodies and rude gestures of comic strip adolescents into Fine Art, Bellows also exported their joyful deflation of American self-satisfaction over its cultural progress.

COMICS AS A WINDOW TO CULTURAL DYNAMICS

I share Mark. C. Carnes' and Clyde Griffen's concern that a "top down" study of cultural symbols (such as President Theodore Roosevelt's hyper masculine performances and speeches) assumes that most individuals absorbed and subscribed unquestioningly to uniform constructions of masculinity.[36] Scholars have presented a number of methodologies for circumnavigating the historical silence from those who did not share widely circulated "top down" views. The collections of essays in Carnes' and Griffen's co-edited *Meanings for Manhood* tackle this challenge by rooting their explorations of masculinity "in the concrete details of everyday life rather than its intellectual or literary manifestations."[37] Although Michael Kimmel describes his work on manhood as "less about what boys and men actually did than about what they were told that were *supposed* to do," he cross-examines "top down" cultural dictates against "the multiplicity of masculinities that collectively define American men's actual experiences". For these multiplicities, Kimmel examines the cultural conditions of

[35] Zurier, *Picturing the City*, 216 – 231.
[36] *Meanings for Manhood: Constructions of Masculinity in Victorian America*, ed. Mark C. Carnes and Clyde Griffen (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 2 – 4.
[37] Ibid, 5.

groups that did not fall within the earmarks of middle-class, Christian, straight, Anglo-Saxon manhood.[38]

I am excited by the potential of comic art to similarly push against a top-down approach in the search for how individuals actually processed and experienced the cult of masculinity. Categorized as low-brow, many comics garnered a marginalized status in the entertainment industry. Yet, both elite and cheap comics twisted this illicit reputation into their chief selling point, capitalizing on consumer desires for entertainments that were progressively more sensational and boundary breaking. Thus, comics were simultaneously marginal and central within consumer culture, frequently associated as a product of and by "the people".[39] During the Progressive Era, comics experienced repeated cycles of criticism and censorship for their rude humor and abrasive opinions, yet they also reveal resilient rebounds. Throughout the 20th century, comics continued to critique not only society at large but the very frameworks of truth in printed industries that curbed and shaped public opinion. The popularity, profits, and broad recycling of popular jokes and serialized strips suggest the "counter" opinions embedded in comics found resonance with a widespread and diverse reading public.

Unfortunately, we know very little about the actual reading practices around early newspaper comics. Although newspapers regularly published reviews of the political cartoons that appeared in *Puck* and various high-line magazines, the historical record is eerily silent on the messages conveyed by Sunday comics. The few reviews that do exist often circulate

[38] Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, 4.
[39] See especially Ian Gordon's "Comic Strips, National Culture, and Marketing," *Comic Strips*, 37-58. Rebecca Zurier analyzes and challenges the position of comics as a form of cultural "vernacular" in "Forty-Two Kids and the Sunday Comics" in *Picturing the City*, 216-231.

completely contradictory accounts of what a newspaper comic strip might signify for its audience. Yellow Kid historian Christina Meyer comments on this loss with a quote by historian Charles Johaningsmeier, who describes historical readers as "elusive beings who rarely recorded how they reacted to written material."[40]

However, some of these original reactions can be restored indirectly through amateur productions. Chapter 5 tries to shed further light on this reclusive populace by focusing on college humor magazines. Originally limited in production and distribution to the college campus, these humor magazines provide clues to the reciprocal relationship between image, creator, and consumer. Crucial for this study, college humor magazines also provide one of the few examples where both the cartooned subjects and their flesh-and-blood readers can be categorically defined as adolescents. This history shows how, by the turn of the 20th century, college students began imaging themselves in the style of juvenile miscreants of the newspaper strips. The transformation not only grated against earlier Victorian models of adolescents as smartly dressed young men engaging in witty banter. It also positioned the college student as an abject and frightful apparition of America's future. Yet, like the figure of Alfred E. Neuman, these images embraced the freedom and illicit power wielded by such a position. Through the first two decades of the twentieth century, these magazines skyrocketed in popularity, with cartoons being actively reprinted across newspapers. By releasing full parody issues of popular magazines, college humor magazines made its "adolescent" comedy commensurate with taking out social pretensions merely by revealing their ridiculous inconsistencies.

[40] Christina Meyers, *Producing Mass Entertainment: The Serial Life of the Yellow Kid* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2019), 10.

Understanding the meanings created by the mass syndicated images found in newspapers and magazines often relies on assessing implied or imagined reading publics.[41] Christina Meyers uses the term "reading options" to distinguish her proposals for the possible meanings embedded in comics from actual reading practices.[42] My own attempt to reconstruct the "reading options" of comic art leans heavily on the materialist approach to visual studies modelled by Jennifer Roberts. In *Transporting Visions,* Roberts imbues visual studies with thing theory to investigate how an object's phatic qualities leave an indelible mark on their forms and iconography.[43] Comics' phatic qualities seemed to prioritize physical and connective reading practices. Within the Sunday supplements, newspapers comics appeared alongside such tactile features like cut-outs that could be folded into physical toys or printed colors that could be wetted as a makeshift watercolor palette.[44] Comic strips participated in these three-dimensional ambitions when their characters climbed through columns of text, making abstract print layouts suddenly palpable. Thierry Smolderen defines the word balloons and onomatopoeias invented for these strips as "soundscapes," a newly formed concept influenced

[41] Historians of modern journalism have helped reconstruct this audience by amassing data about circulation numbers, pricing, and audience demographics. Ian Gordon elucidates this numeric information by examining how the formal properties of various comic art products, including their visual complexity, treatment of movement, and attitude toward text, reflected the tastes and leisurely practices of their target reading audiences. See especially Ian Gordon's "From Caricature to Comics Strips" in *Comic Strips*, 13-36 and his Appendices. Christina Meyer's structures her investigation of the Yellow Kid's commercial success with seriality studies to elucidate their interpretive schemes in *Producing Mass Entertainment*.

[42] Meyers, *Producing Mass Entertainment*, 10.

[43] Jennifer Roberts, *Transporting Visions: The Movement of Images in Early America* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2014).

[44] Examples of these can be found reprinted in Nicholson Baker and Margaret Brentano, *The World on Sunday: Graphic Art in Joseph Pulitzer's Newspaper, 1898-1911* (New York: Bulfinch Press, 2005), 53-54.

by the captured and disembodied voices projected by phonographs.[45] These devices, alongside a preference for impact lines and explosions, generated a visual experience designed to stimulate multiple senses.

Rebecca Zurier's construction of New York City as an image capital, where citizens operated in a compact environment of "perpetual visibility," provides a cornerstone for understanding the visual inventions and success of newspaper strips and their protagonists.[46] Living as an image was both a proviso of living in New York and a frame of mind conditioned by the city's visual industries.[47] Zurier positions the illustrated metropolitan press as the beating heart of this visual capital, both creating and chronicling this landscape of representation.[48] The comparing, trading, and consuming of images operated as cultural tender, priming comics to participate in the imaged-based practices for understanding one's identity within urban society.

The comic strip's intention to incite laughter adds to its visceral interactive potential. Jennifer Greenhill's *Playing it Straight* demonstrates how humor permeated through the high cultural forms of 19th century painting. While part of a lucrative industry, humor also constructed a cultural outlook and easily intertwined with serious, contemplative subjects.[49] In

[45] See "From the Label to the Balloon" in Smolderen, *The Origins of Comics*, 137-147. See also Eike Exner, "The Creation of the Comic Strip as an Audiovisual Stage in the New York Journal 1896 – 1900," *ImageTexT* 10, no. 1 (2018). Accessed March 12, 2021. http://imagetext.english.ufl.edu/archives/v10_1/exner/.
[46] Zurier, *Picturing the City*, 47.
[47] Ibid, 49.
[48] Ibid, 53.
[49] Jennifer Greenhill, *Playing it Straight: Art and Humor in the Gilded Age* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2012), 3.

the print industry, humorous products became categorized for marketability and the "laughs" they produced deeply analyzed for their physical mechanisms and socio-mechanical purposes. Sociologists distributed surveys to collect data on the humor preferences of the public, providing some insight into how, at least certain groups, of people actually laughed at comic art. Yet who laughed and how denotes a critical stumbling block in reconstructing the true "reading options" offered by comics. The cheap price and "low" status of these materials made them accessible to diverse populations within America's stratified society. Images of oppressive racial stereotypes were regularly circulated to the very populations periodicals hoped to include as new subscribers. In attempt to bracket the various "reading options" of comics and adolescence, this study focuses primarily on male adolescence of American citizens with European origins.

WHY FOCUS ON THE WHITE MALE ADOLESCENT?

This narrow cross-section was far from my intention, but one that slowly solidified through this research. A focus on white male adolescence excludes a diverse range of subjects over-ripe for examination. There are a few reasons, both practical and theoretical, for not addressing images of non-European ethnicities or women in depth. Foremost is that cartoons of "white" male adolescents were created by and aimed at the very audience they pictured and frequently mocked, namely men with European (frequently recent immigrant) origins. While subject, consumer, and producer frequently overlap in these depictions, what constitutes a self-image and "othered" image can be far from straightforward.

My focus on men is partly due to the pool of materials. The large majority of comic-strip mischief makers from the late 19th and early 20th century were specifically male juveniles and adolescents. Male adolescence prolonged the playground of childhood, a tempting option connected to the steep drop-off in marriage rates in the late nineteenth century.[50] Young female miscreants occasionally headlined strips. For example, R. W. Taylor produced "Little Alice," which appeared in the *Chicago Tribune*. Despite the overt literary allusion to *Alice in Wonderland*, little Alice pranked just as voraciously as the Katzenjammer Kids. However, female adolescence typically presented a more complicated fit for the comic strip incorrigible. Comic strip artists took less exaggerated liberties with the distortions and injuries accumulated by female characters. In the early Sunday comics, young women most typically emerged as sweet temptations and rewards for the male buffoon. The female adolescent's threat frequently manifested in the rift between her body as caretaker of America's progeny and her development as a willful and educated individual. During the first two decades of the 20th century, this dynamic tended to play out in cartoons of assertive, curvaceous females set on domineering men, generally treating the pubescent female body as a fully formed adult.[51] Models of rebellious females that highlighted their youthful adolescence exploded during 1920's and 1930's following a period of sexual rebellion and the development of comic books as an independent enterprise. Chapter 6 offers a brief exploration of this burgeoning image

[50] Kasson, *The Perfect Man*, 12 – 13.

[51] Exceptions to this rule occur. George Bellows' 1908 painting *Coney Island* and 1913 *Cliff Dwellers* prominently displayed girls with lanky juvenile and adolescent physiques. John Sloan's 1905 etching *The Show Case* displayed a group of young adolescent girls giggling at a ladies' underwear display.

culture focusing on John Held, Jr.s and Norman Rockwell's portrayals of pubescent girls during the interwar period.

My focus on European subjects is also partly determined by the Progressive Era's definition of adolescence. Adolescence was deeply tied to social Darwinist anxieties about white male development. In Hall's recapitulation theory, adolescence was only conceivable for populations that had attained high culture, excluding populations deemed "savage" and said to progress more or less on a straight path from juvenility to adulthood.[52] As populations such as Italians, Irish, and Jews became reluctantly folded into pseudo-scientific concepts of the "white race," they were upheld as deformed warnings of how savage evolutionary instincts could fester and flourish in a hothouse adolescence produced by impoverished tenements and crumbling economies. Enfeebled and inbred Anglo-Saxon aristocrats provided a counter-warning about how evolutionary progress could atrophy in overly softened conditions. These definitions did not halt the depiction of other adolescent subjects. For instance, there is a stream of late nineteenth cartoons focused on interchanges between Jewish fathers and their sprouting sons. However, it does mean adolescents become increasingly difficult to identify outside of Hall's racist framework.

The self-deprecatory or institution-challenging implications of many comics become compromised, if not outright negated, when producers generated ethnic caricatures from populations tyrannized by bigotry and racism. I do not address R. F. Outcault's serialized

[52] For more on Hall's concept of adolescent and evolutionary histories, see Gail Bederman, "Adolescent Races" in *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880 – 1917* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1996), 110-117.

cartoon “Pore Lil’ Mose” headlined by a rural Southern African American juvenile who inexplicably navigates New York City’s various social echelons with charming ease. Although in many ways Li’l Mose follows Outcault’s formula of inversing tired stereotypes that pivoted on juvenile reverie, it also generated the question Nicholas Sammond confronts in his exploration of blackface minstrelsy and its assimilation into early animation: “If you perform racist behaviors and stereotypes in order to demonstrate their absurdity, do you deflate them or invest them with new life by stigmatizing them?”[53] In such strips, adolescent metaphors are far overshadowed by dialogs about race and inequality.

The low prices of comic materials suggest a broad purchasing demographic, diverse in economic status. Yet active consumption does not necessarily equate to acceptance or endorsement of certain kinds of caricature. The reading demographics of early newspapers comics are particularly unclear about their consumption, let alone their interpretation, by populations such as African Americans or Asian immigrants. The historical record is not entirely silent on this issue. During the Progressive Era, Irish, Jewish, and African American campaigns formed to express their indignation at decades of caricaturing and lobby for legal suppression of racial ridicule. Alison Kibler’s *Censoring Racial Ridicule* analyzes the concurrence of these three movements by Irish, Jewish, and African American protests to “jettison identifications with racial otherness.”[54] Her study also reveals the complex and non-homogenous means by which each group formulated their own ethnic identity.

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[53] Nicholas Sammond, *Birth of an Industry: Blackface minstrelsy and the rise of American animation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 17.
[54] Alison Kibler, *Censoring Racial Ridicule: Irish, Jewish, and African American Struggles over Race and Representation 1890-1930* (Chapel Hill: North Carolina Press, 2015).

My focus on white male adolescence does not eradicate problems of assessing voice, agency, and interpretation in these materials, especially as all three of these terms, particularly "whiteness," were being actively revised during the Progressive era. Historians strongly disagree on how to analyze images of immigrant, especially Irish, juveniles in "yellow" journals, which were consumed by poorer immigrant populations and produced by Pulitzer, a Hungarian Jewish immigrant who advocated Irish freedom.[55] As Nicholas Sammond has shown, images of abject whiteness do not escape dialogs of racist caricature. The process of constructing one's own aberration is often deeply intwined with associations built on othering discriminated populations. The dynamics of reprinting and recycling cartoons further confuses this question of how groups contended with their own ethnic representations.[56]

By focusing on images of the white male adolescent, particularly his abject representation, I do not propose to elide the complexities of racial and gendered differences. Rather, this subject is uniquely poised to reveals doubt and dismissal of the cultural edicts that were typically manifested in the white male body. In comics, adolescent images became a contentious site for battling over legitimacy and existence.

This dissertation's final chapter on Norman Rockwell might seem like an odd detour from these imperatives. Afterall, Rockwell is frequently dismissed and despised for creating illustrative fantasies of exclusionist American values. However, Chapter 6 examines how

[55] Jonathan Bolton, "Richard F. Outcault's Hogan's Alley and the Irish of New York's Fourth Ward, 1895-96." *New Hibernia Review* 19, No. 1 (Spring 2015): 72

[56] For example, as Germans were speaking out against the doltish depiction of German immigrants in Katzenjammer Kids, Lithuanian-Jewish artist Samuel Zagat began creating a Yiddish Katzenjammer strip by 1914 inhabited by stereotyped Jewish figures for the Yiddish press.

Rockwell, unlike many of his contemporaries illustrating at the *Saturday Evening Post*, actively infused a comic art aesthetic into his illustrations, particularly in the attenuated bodies of his youthful protagonists. In Rockwell's characters, plastic adolescence rarely ossified into successful adulthood. While aping conservative values, Rockwell's images often simultaneously rendered these visions as anachronistic, ineffective, and ridiculous. Likening Rockwell's reception to that of comics, I suggest that Rockwell's longevity and mass popularity was not solely founded on benign fantasies of American homogony. Rather, he often actively exposed these fantasies as untenable charades unconvincingly acted with cartoon movements.

This dissertation ends where I originally thought it would begin: the beginning of comic book culture in the 1930's and its close association with adolescent groups and their identity-shaping practices. What I hope it achieves is a blueprint for understanding conditions that lay this foundation. Comics and adolescence were never happenstance bedfellows but entwined in a complex marriage. In the 21st century, graphic storytelling has received a new respect and resurgence. The art form continues to be heralded for providing deep, interior access to characters' internal dialogs, particularly those who feel excluded by societies' internal reward systems. I argue that this unique ability of comics to shed light on internal inquiry and struggle stems from this early transformative history of adolescent humor and the cartoon aesthetic.



Fig. 1.1 Newspaper advertisement for "The New Boy."
Los Angeles Herald, December 2, 1894.
From Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers, Library of Congress, Image provided by University of California, Riverside
https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85042461/1894-12-02/ed-1/seq-14/
via Wikimedia Commons, (Accessed May 31, 2021).

Chapter 2

THE IMMIGRANT JUVENILE AS URBAN AVATAR: SUNDAY COMICS AND THE YELLOW KID

The body of the male juvenile developed and thrived within the Sunday comics of the late 19th century. These dedicated comic sections published in the newspaper's Sunday supplement featured an unprecedented explosion of male juveniles as central characters. Celebrated Sunday strips, such as *Hogan's Alley*, the *Katzenjammer Kids*, and *Foxy Grandpa,* promised readers a weekly round of boyhood pranks. The first five years of the Sunday supplements and its dedicated comics section constructed entirely new genres of pictorial narrative and humor. The visual innovations made for the modern comic panel were dependent on the introduction of male juveniles as central characters.

These juvenile bodies did more than entertain the masses and shepherd in a new art form; they deconstructed the worldviews embedded within the very structures of the emerging modern newspaper. Periodicals presented the city as a tightly bound pulpy microcosm. Meanwhile, the most radical of comic strip juveniles did their worse to ridicule and erode the periodical's internal logic. Employing a new brand of humor, newspaper comics engaged the reader in a self-reflexive critique. They invited readers to acknowledge the chaos of modern urban living and, alongside their incorrigible juvenile characters, trudge through an inarticulate soup of headlines and misinformation.

R. F. Outcault's colloquially termed "Yellow Kid" comics spearheaded many of these innovations. Historians praise the Yellow Kid's formative role as first comic strip to serialize a recognizable character and to launch a mass media craze that spilled beyond the comics.[1] Comic historians continue to debate the Yellow Kid's contributions to foundational inventions such as the word balloon and paneled storytelling.[2] Outcault also pioneered new relationships between line and color, a playful use of ecstatic violence, jolting non sequiturs, and running gags that make fun of the repetitive, inconclusive nature of serial comics. Foremost this study analyzes the convivial repartee Outcault encouraged between his miscreant characters and diverse readership to generate a comedy that was simultaneously bodily, empathetic, and intellectual. The juvenile miscreant status of the Yellow Kid's cast was crucial to the success of Outcault's visual rebellion. By violating established pictorial protocols, Outcault heightened his characters as *images* and thus as avatars that readers could imbue with their own dispossessed exasperated experience of the "American Dream".

[1] While historians debate the definitive origin of the modern comic strip and its visual formulas, most agree that Yellow Kid comics were a major player in its formation. For an analysis of the emergence of Yellow Kid comics and its relationship to comics as a new art form, see Bill Blackbeard, *R. F. Outcault's The Yellow Kid: A Centennial Celebration of the Kid Who Started the Comics* (Massachusetts: Kitchen Sink Press, 1995). For Yellow Kid comics and the development of America's culture of consumption, see Ian Gordon, *Comic Strips and Consumer Culture: 1890 – 1945* (Washington: Smithsonian Institute Press, 1998). For an analysis of Yellow Kid through seriality studies, see Christina Meyer, *Producing Mass Entertainment: The Serial Life of the Yellow Kid* (Columbus: Ohio State University, 2019).

[2] See Pascal Lefevre and Charles Dierick, eds., *Forging a New Medium: The Comic Strip in the Nineteenth Century* (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1999). Thierry Smolderen places the Yellow Kid as central to the development of word balloons and the conception of an audiovisual stage. Eike Exner argues that dislocating the word balloon as an isolated invention misses the much larger concept of the audiovisual narrative that various comics developed through transdiegetic signs. See Thierry Smolderen, "Of Labels, Loops, and Bubbles: Solving the Historical Puzzle of the Speech Balloon," *Comic Art* 8 (Summer 2006): 90 – 112. Eike Exner, "The Creation of the Comic Strip as an Audiovisual Stage in the New York Journal 1896-1900," *ImageTexT* 10, no. 1 (2018), http://imagetext.english.ufl.edu/archives/v10_1/exner/.

THE SUNDAY SUPPLEMENT VS. THE COMIC WEEKLY

The comic strip juvenile was birthed out of color-printed Sunday comic supplement, an invention of the late 1890's. Comics designed for this dedicated weekly section built on entrenched precursors in the field of cartooning. However, Sunday comics deliberately distanced themselves from traditional practices in periodical cartooning. It was newspaper comics that first standardized many of the techniques that have become inseparable from contemporary graphic storytelling, including sequential paneling, word bubbles, and motion lines.[3] These early newspaper comics have held fascination for scholars precisely because of this visual legacy that led to modern comic books and graphic novels. However, as many historians have shown, the Sunday comic strip was not a neophyte art form that predicated comic books but an experimental and unique artistic genre and cultural phenomenon unto itself.

When the Sunday comics first appeared in the newspapers in 1893, pricier humor magazines, or "comic weeklies," dominated the market on polychrome cartoons. *Puck*, one of the most respected and influential humor magazines, established the tradition of using chromolithography to produce full-color political cartoons for its front cover and double-page centerfold, and a social lampoon for its back cover.[4] Originally a German-language humor magazine, *Puck*'s first English edition in 1877 drew on the cartooning forms and structures

[3] Gordon, *Comic Strips*, 7-11.
[4] Stephen Hess and Milton Kaplan, *The Ungentlemanly Art* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co, Inc, 1968), 104-105.

imported from European comic weeklies.[5] As pictured in Keppler's inaugural cover, *Puck* aspired to stand alongside acclaimed illustrated news magazines such as *Leslie's Weekly* and *Harper's Weekly*.[6] *Puck* highlighted chromolithography as a technical innovation and chief selling point in an 1887 illustration demonstrating its multi-stone technique by separating the stages of printing a cartoon over 5 differently drawn and inked stones. This standardized format was soon adopted by competitors *Judge* and *Life*, distinguishing American humor magazines from *Punch* and other European counterparts.[7] As political vehicles, *Judge*'s Republican sympathies veered away from *Puck*'s Democratic leanings while *Life* attempted to avoid overt political allegiance.[8] Yet all these comic weeklies contributed to raising the art of the political cartoon into a respected and impactful form of social critique.[9]

Over its four-decade run, *Puck* continued to publish cover and centerfold cartoons designed to tantalize readers with its color wizardry. These images also employed visual puns that aligned the ecstatic aspects of color directly with the sensational experience of pleasure and chaos embedded within New York City's elite societies. Frederick Burr Opper's 1882 "Puck's Pyrotechnics" (Fig. 2.1) helped launch an Independence Day tradition of illustrating a radiant firework display that cartoonists rendered synonymous with corrupt elite characters and political chaos. J. F. Keppler's 1885 centerfold "Puck's Palette" (Fig. 2.2) aligned the beauty of the polychrome cartoon with the elegance of high society females. In this clever morph,

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[5] Michael Alexander Kahn and Richard Samuel West, *What fools these mortals be!: The story of Puck*, (San Diego: IDW Publishing, 2014), 11.
[6] Gordon, *Comic Strips*, 15.
[7] Idem.
[8] Blackbeard, *R. F. Outcault's Yellow Kid*, 22. For the distinctions between *Puck*, *Judge*, and *Life*, see also Hess and Kaplan, *The Ungentlemanly Art*, 104-112.
[9] Gordon, *Comic Strips*, 20.

Keppler transformed paint dabs on a drawn palette into fashionable ladies. With subtle layers of lithographic inks, Keppler's cartoon created a dazzling spectrum of color reminiscent of oil painting. The portfolio of drawings and range of brushes tucked under the palette alluded to the fine arts training undergirding Keppler's humorous products.

N. C. Christopher Couch explains how high priced "glossies" such as *Puck, Judge,* and *Life* calibrated their political humor and social commentaries to the interests of their elite readership.[10] As Couch states, "the consumption of humor magazines was a class marker, and the contents of humor magazines reinforced class and social boundaries."[11] These class markers were embedded in the complex and sophisticated construction of their political cartoons. Images presumed a common visual literacy, dependent on a classical education and knowledge of political events. With comfortable middle-class salaries, comic weekly cartoonists shared their clientele's interests in sophisticated humor as well as urban reform.[12] Louis Dalrymple's "Out of the Silver Flood!" (Fig. 2.3) published on *Puc*k's September 13, 1893 cover provides a prototypical example. Here Uncle Sam rescues a beautiful young woman in Grecian dress bearing a tiara labeled "business interests". Her classical features harken to the allegorical function of Neo-Classical art, connecting the nation's economy with universal virtues. Uncle Sam meanwhile pulls himself up a rope labeled "public opinion" to escape an ocean of silver coins. A threatening wave labeled "Sherman Silver Purchase Act" threatens to engulf the rescue while Uncle Sam scales a cliff labeled "Repeal of the Sherman Law". All are illuminated

[10] N. C. Christopher Couch, "The Yellow Kid and the Comic Page" in *The Language of Comics: Word and Image*, eds. Robin Varnum and Christina T. Gibbons (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2001), 63.
[11] Ibid, 64. See also Gordon, *Comic Strips*, 20.
[12] For a discussion on the competitive incomes offered to cartoonists by the comic weeklies and newspapers, see Blackbeard, *R. F. Outcault's Yellow Kid*, 42.

under the glowing rays of a twenty-dollar gold coin sun, constructing a political push for the gold standard amidst the economic crash of 1893.

Upholding its Shakespearian motto "What fools these mortals be," *Puck*'s visual parodies worked "to expose folly and puncture pretension" by combining contradictory visual ideologies.[13] Artists sweetened scathing parodies with witty visual ciphers. Readers decoded their wit through visual symbols, a process assisted by labels and explanatory texts. Foul analogies delivered a visual sting but were processed, like allegorical paintings, by navigating a network of symbols that were 'read' and knitted together. For example, Bernhard Gillam's *Puck* cover from January 28, 1885 (Fig. 2.4) created a disturbing image of senatorial candidates William M. Evarts and Levi P. Morton pitched into a Roman era gladiatorial battle. The title "Grand Triumph of Brains" was expressed by Evarts' grotesquely enlarged head and shriveled, wizened body. A defeated rotund Morton spills coins rather than blood from a jagged gash in his side. Spectators tossed a laurel wreath labeled "popular approval" into the arena.

Following its reformative maxim, many of these polychrome images included exaggerated portraits of public individuals or stereotyped ethnic caricatures deployed to summarize a nation or population. Although physically crude antics and vulgar physiognomic caricatures abound in these images, artists rendered the rude humor with elegant draftsmanship. For example, Frank Marion Hutchin's vertical centerfold in the May, 23 1894 issue of *Puck* illustrated New York senator David B. Hill hybridized as a kicking jackass (Fig. 2.5). Sporting ass's ears and a donkey's body dressed in a suit, he kicked toward a looming moon bearing the features of Grover Cleveland. Hutchin completed the insult with a distant group of

[13] Kahn and West, *What Fools*, 13.

politicians that point and laugh. Despite the deprecating humor, Hutchin built his image with sophisticated drawing techniques, controlling texture, anatomy, and space to drive home the lampoon. He varied his contour lines to distinguish between the textures of ragged donkey fur and the finely tailored suit. Deft marks captured the tension and compression of the laughing politicians to communicate convulsive laughter. In the sky, soft cross-hatching built a hazy atmosphere, convincingly setting the bulbous Cleveland moon into unreachable deep space. The cartoon's title ("An Old Fable with New Application") matched the erudite quality of its rendering by appealing to the reader's literary knowledge.

When one opened an issue of *Puck* or *Judge*, there was a stark visual contrast between the brilliantly colored illustrations and the interleafing monochrome pages. These inside pages, printed in black and white, were crammed together with humorous stories, pun-laden comic panels, and ethnically driven humor. The 19th century fascination with kinetic transformation fed "evolution" style cartoon strips in which an artist carefully morphed one form into another through sequential steps.[14] To mock social foibles, cartoonists often worked from a narrow menu of visual characteristics to immediately convey specific urban populations. Orderly columns kept these features organized, perfect for quick consumption during the businessman's short respites.[15]

Inside the comic weekly, ethnic caricatures of immigrants and "savage" races sported particularly grotesque physiognomic traits. Caricaturists echoed the stereotypes that also

[14] See David Kunzle, *The History of the Comic Strip: The Nineteenth Century* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990), 293-297.
[15] Couch, "The Yellow Kid," 73.

pervaded the vaudevillian ethnic routines rose to popularity in the 1880's.[16] Humor often rode on these groups' attempts to parrot Western or upper-class leisure activities. In contrast, illustrations of upper and middle-class parties pictured witty exchanges and evoked the idealized styles found in magazine advertisements. Within these grayscale layouts that ran between the polychrome political cartoons, pen-drawn parlor room jokes and their zingy punchlines juxtaposed the obscene slapstick of urban-street humor (Fig. 2.6). The stark contrast provided an indexical signal to readers; ethnic cartoons were objects of distant contempt, while elite cartoons pointed to the reader's own experience of witty repartee.

Because of its prestige, color was a crucial ingredient not only to the Sunday supplement's reinvention of the periodical funny but also its signifier as an upper-class commodity. Previously too expensive and laborious for daily newspapers, cheap color printing developed from a series of technical innovations. In 1892 Walter Scott & Company installed the first four-color rotary press for the *Chicago Inter-Ocean*, the first American newspaper to offer a color illustrated supplement.[17] As necessitated by the newspaper format, these presses were configured to print both sides of the newspaper sheet in polychrome. In 1894 the *Journal* installed a five-color rotary press and published its first full color Sunday supplement in November of that year, complete with comic cartoons.

At its origin, the newspaper's colored supplement was not conceived as a natural abode for silly amusement. In 1892 the *Inter-Ocean* advertised its colored supplement as a culturally

[16] Rebecca Zurier, *Picturing the City: Urban Vision and the Ashcan School* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2006), 207-208.
[17] Richard Samuel West, "Secret Origins of the Sunday Funnies" in *Society is Nix: Gleeful Anarchy at the Dawn of the American Comic Strip*, ed. Peter Maresca (Sunday Press Books, 2013), 11.

elevating feature showcasing collectible artwork.[18] The *Inter-Ocean*'s color supplement occasionally featured a full page spread of its comic feature, the "Ting-Lings," which derided Chinese immigrants as they mimicked fashionable society.[19] However the *Inter-Ocean*'s headlining artwork typically featured half-tone portraits of distinguished individuals. When the *Inter-Ocean* abandoned its Sunday art supplement in 1895, it fretted that its feature could "not fill the artistic desire of the readers".[20]

Meanwhile, on the east coast, Joseph Pulitzer launched his maiden issue of the *New York World's* colored Sunday supplement on May 7, 1893. Pulitzer had purchased the failing *New York World* 10 years earlier in 1883 and aggressively launched a new form of journalism that skyrocketed circulation and prompted competitors to study his techniques. Pulitzer dramatically describes his vision "for a journal that is not only cheap but bright, not only bright but large, not only large but truly democratic . . . that will battle for the people with earnest sincerity."[21] Frank Luther Mott's *Journalism* breaks down Pulitzer's winning formula, placing emphasis on the *World's* new proactive breed of reporter, its commitment to crusades and public stunts, and its promotion of its editorial page.[22] Equally important was the expansion in quality and quantity of its illustrations.

Historians Nicholson Baker and Margaret Brentano recall the *World*'s more evocative advertisements for the *Sunday World*. One campaign claimed, "like rainbow tints in the spray

[18] *The Daily Inter Ocean*, June 25, 1892, 4.
[19] For more on the appearance of the Ting-Lings, see West, "Secret Origins," 11; Robert C. Harvey, *Children of the Yellow Kid: The Evolution of the American Comic Strip* (Seattle: Frye Art Museum, 1998), 20.
[20] "Our New Art Feature," *The Daily Inter Ocean*, August 18, 1895, 28.
[21] Frank Luther Mott, *American Journalism* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1962), 434.
[22] Ibid., 436-439.

are the hues that splash and pour from its lightning cylinders" while another more bluntly crowned its color press "the most marvelous mechanism of the age."[23] Similar to the comic weeklies, the *Sunday World* linked color printing to the technical innovations and visual overload of city life. Art historian Rebecca Zurier positions the illustrated metropolitan press as the motherboard of late nineteenth century New York's visual capital. By "creating and chronicling" the city's visual industries of fashioning, publishing, and entertainment, new journalism consolidated New York's position as an image capital by "making individual events resonate in representations of representation".[24]

The visual innovations of the *Sunday World* progressively spread to its layouts, which grew evermore fluid and pictorial. On Sundays, orderly columns of text gave way to images that bulged and flexed, pushing columns into odd shapes and often drowning text in color. So successful was the *World*'s design strategy that William Randolph Hearst followed suit with the *New York Journal*, launching its first color printed Sunday supplement in 1896 with equally raucous use of imagery and color. While not the only Sunday supplements produced during the 1890's, the *New York World* and *New York Journal* operated as the main juggernauts in this bid for subscribers through visual sensationalism.

Hearst's advertising strategy for the *Journal's* forthcoming Sunday issue focused on a juvenile comic strip character, informally named "The Yellow Kid" by his fans, as its chief barker. By 1896, images of the Yellow Kid combined the promise of an uproarious cartoon section with

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[23] Quoted in Nicholas Baker and Margaret Brentano, *The World on Sunday: Graphic Art in Joseph Pulitzer's Newspaper 1898 – 1911* (New York: Bullfinch Press,2005), xi.
[24] Rebecca Zurier, *Picturing the City: Urban Vision and the Ashcan School* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2006), 49-53.

social scandal, a winning combination for new journalism. As a customary business practice, William Randolph Hearst elbowed out competition by hiring away the premier staff members of rival journals. In October of 1896, the *New York World* notoriously hired away Richard F. Outcault from Pulitzer's paper and issued Yellow Kid comics under the new title "McFadden Flats". However, with no copyright preventing the reproductions of Yellow Kid's signature costume and features, Pulitzer continued to run Outcault's original strip "Hogan's Alley" in the *New York Journal* illustrated by George Luks.[25] Between 1896 and 1897, this rivalry for the authentic Yellow Kid played out in dazzling advertisements that accentuated Yellow Kid's garish features and brazen gait. The advertising feud between Hogan's Alley and McFadden Flats testifies to the preeminent appeal of the supplement's humor section and the Kid's commercial draw. Some urban legends even link the derogatory term "Yellow Journalism" to this underhanded business which played out on a very public stage using mudslinging advertisements, editorials, and even "Yellow Kid" cartoons themselves. Despite the battle for the Yellow kid, comics did not originally headline the advertisements of Pulitzer's *Sunday World*.

Posters advertising the *Sunday World* in 1895 often failed to mention its "comic feature," instead promoting an array of special interest stories. These posters frequently featured a fashionable young woman by E. P. Upjohn in a flamboyant costume distilled into elegant, flat graphic shapes. Her combination of grace and vigor, as well as the image's

[25] This famous history is recounted by many historians of the Yellow Kid. For a concentrated account, see Bill Kartalopoulos, "Tug of War: Joseph Pulitzer and William Randolph Hearst" in *Society is Nix: Gleeful Anarchy at the Dawn of the American Comic Strip*, ed. Peter Maresca (Palo Alto: Sunday Press Books, 2013), 16.

geometric play, aligned the supplement more with the delights of high fashion and the stage than with the comics. An advertisement from July (Fig. 2.7) boasted at the bottom "Four sparkling pages of howlingly funny humor!," but the central image presented a serene yachting girl sporting a polka-dot jacket with ridiculously large sleeves and lethally pointed lapels, juxtaposed against the text "Summer resorts, beautifully illustrated." Perhaps her cartoonish, monocled pet cat, pictured reading the paper, was laughing at the humor section, but the women herself exuded hyperbolic sophistication. Sunday supplements included a diverse array of specialty sections that provided reviews of the metropolis' recreational delights, emulating the breadth of subjects offered by premier 50 cent magazines.[26] Early *Sunday World* advertisements place the supplement in alignment with these more expensive periodicals, flattering the reader's more sophisticated sensibilities.

Following the passage of worker reforms in the late 19th century, middle and working class-citizens possessed both the leisure time and purchasing power to subscribe to various amusements. Entrepreneurs clamored for primacy within a quickly growing leisure industry, luring in new audiences for professional sports, vaudevillian performances, amusement parks, department stores, and circuses. As a Sunday feature, the periodical positioned itself on the one day its working-class audience would logistically engage in extended reading. N. C. Christopher Couch has shown how the complex visual narratives of their comics sections, designed for prolonged reading, differed from the truncated jokes of the humor magazine, which were fitted to the businessman's interstitial respites between appointments and social

[26] Couch, "The Yellow Kid," 63.

engagements.[27] While competing within this leisure economy, Sunday supplements also encapsulated the leisure industry with sections dedicated to sports, theater, and fashion. These sections vicariously generated the physical experience of these pleasures by employing splashy color, experimental layouts, and visceral language.[28] As Rebecca Zurier shows, newspapers wielded immersive narrative and pictorial techniques to virtually transport the reader into the city's milieu, prioritizing physical experience in their claims for authenticity.[29] The Sunday supplement thus operated as a crucial cog in the newspaper's aspiration to function as a pulpy, and indispensable, microcosm of the city itself.

From the outset comics contributed to the popular success of Pulitzer's new journalism. Pulitzer's visual renovation of the *World* included the addition of editorial cartoons, which previously had been the purview of the comic weeklies.[30] In 1889 the *World* began publishing one full page black and white humor section, a precursor to the colored Sunday funnies. Two weeks after the 1893 launch of the *Sunday World*, a multi-page section dedicated to full color comics featured regularly.[31] By 1896, the *Sunday World*'s colored comics had maneuvered to the center of its advertising campaigns. Although elegant females still abounded, "8 Funny Pages!" and descriptors of the Yellow Kid's strip "Hogan's Alley" often headlined the text. A particularly dramatic 1896 poster of the Manhattan skyline (Fig. 2.8) brandished "8 Funny Pages" in a triangular beam of light emanating from the glowing dome of the New York World Building, the newspaper's headquarters. A figure in a plaid cap with the *Sunday World* tucked

[27] Ibid., 73.
[28] See Nicholson Baker and Margaret Brentano for a full exploration of the *New York World*'s innovations in layout and imagery in their catalog *The World on Sunday.*
[29] See Zurier's section on "A Public Culture of Looking" in *Picturing the City,* 51-52.
[30] Gordon, *Comic Strip*, 13.
[31] Bill Kartalopoulos, "Tug of War," 16.

under his arm gazed at the scene across the Hudson River, conflating a vision of the city with a purchase of the *Sunday World*. His working-class attire typified the characters (both human and cartoon animals) shown indulging in the funny pages in these advertisements despite the fact the comic supplements also likely appealed to higher social classes.[32] Frequently these exaggerated characters were nearly indistinguishable from the lampooned urban types who populated the strips of the "8 Funny pages" (Fig. 2.9). The posters thus blur the distinction between consumer and subject, between the tactility of the newspaper and mirage of the city, where it is unclear whether the newspaper consumer is masquerading as a comics character or vice versa.

Once a privileged feature of pricier humor magazines (in 1893 *Puck* sold on newsstands for 10 cents), colored comics could now be purchased for a nickel.[33] Sunday comics inherited many of their conventions from the humor magazines. This is unsurprising as the artists who drew them often hailed from the comic weeklies, enticed by competitive salaries.[34] However, the inherent nature of newspaper printing precluded Sunday comics sections from mirroring the visual hierarchies that structured the comic weeklies. Newspaper color printing took off only when technology allowed both sides of the broadsheet to be printed in full color.[35] In contrast, comic weeklies produced their chromolithographs through a complex multi-stone process that generated a single sided image. Artists thus conceived these cartoons specifically for the chromolithographic process, distinguishing them through larger formats, sophisticated

[32] For a discussion of class and newspaper readership, see Lisa Yaszek, "'Them Damn Pictures': Americanization and the Comic Strip in the Progressive Era," *Journal of American Studies* 28, No. 1 (April 1994): 24-35.
[33] Couch, "The Yellow Kid," 65. See also Blackbeard, *R. F. Outcault's Yellow Kid*, 23.
[34] Blackbeard, *R. F. Outcault's Yellow Kid*, 42.
[35] West, "Secret Origins," 11.

draftsmanship, and witty symbolism. In the newspaper, the ubiquity of color meant color was no longer a limited commodity, prioritized only for certain kinds of comics. Silly slapstick comedies, previously relegated to the black and white margins in the comic weeklies, now moved into prime full-page real estate with lavish color, overturning the visual etiquette set by traditional humor magazines.

Sunday supplements also differed from their comic weekly predecessors in their approach to layout design. Similar to humor magazines, the Sunday "funnies" formatted their cartoons between blocks of humorous text. However, newspaper cartoons did not always follow the clean, linear grid pattern that regulated comic weeklies.[36] In particular, the *New York Journal*'s "American Humorist" section liberally experimented with how drastically images could upset the vertical rhythms of text. The *American Humorist*'s layouts organized chunks of text to create evocative shapes. Comic panels stepped diagonally, rather than horizontally, through the page shaping surrounding text into a staircase (Fig. 2.10). Text ebbed for egg-shaped comic panels. Vertical columns of text, reminiscent of New York's soaring skyscrapers, crumble and fracture as clumsy cartoon characters appeared to dissolve their structures.

Far from just a container for independent comics, broadsheet layouts performed as comedic forms in their own right. Layouts could momentarily transform the newspaper into an alternate leisure object. On Valentine's Day of 1897, the *American Humorist* fashioned its comic panels to mimic the shape of posted love notes and a string of paper hearts (Fig. 2.11). Later in the month, the entire page emulated a bound book, playfully collapsing the experience

[36] Couch analyzes the columned structure of text within American humor magazines. Couch, "The Yellow Kid," 66-67.

of reading the paper with thumbing through an enormous tome. Another layout transforms the page into a giant deck of cards, alternately placing its comic panels in frames shaped as hearts, spades, diamonds, and clubs (Fig. 2.12). This compositional play merges comics with other parlor room entertainments while simultaneously making these polite diversions untenable and illogical over the giant broadsheet dimensions.

These formats challenged the predictable grid-structure of the newspaper itself, creating a funhouse environment in which regulations relaxed and comics could masquerade as other familiar entertainments. Comic supplements transformed reading into a physically mobile experience, where stories and images needed to be scaled and chased throughout the broadsheet. Such images contributed to a burgeoning urban visual culture that film historian Ben Singer defines as a hyperstimulus system of "shocks and jolts."[37] Tom Gunning situates early experimental film (the "cinema of attractions") alongside vaudevillian performances and carnival rides within this "exhibitionist confrontation" of popular culture.[38] The *American Humorist* directly invoked this new cinema of attractions by regularly running a "Kinetoscope" feature, a vertical comic strip with hole-punched borders mimicking a film reel. Satirizing the cultural fascination with the raw properties of motion, these time-lapse comic strips offered a close analysis how a cartoon character could throw a simple occupational function, like opening a champagne bottle, into uncontrollable chaos. Yet, like early film, such strips also heightened their own visibility by accenting their simultaneous distance from and likeness to the film genre.

[37] See Ben Singer's "Sensationalism and Urban Modernity" in *Melodrama and Modernity: Early Sensational Cinema and its Context* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 59-99.
[38] Tom Gunning, "The Cinema of Attraction: Early Film, Its Spectator, and the Avant-Garde" in *Film and Theory: An Anthology*, eds. Robert Stam and Toby Miller (New York: Blackwell, 2000), 232.

Gunning emphasizes how late 19th century popular entertainment could offer liberation rather than anesthesia via "its accent on direct stimulation" that directly engaged the spectator.[39]

Painstaking political satires, which reigned supreme in the cartoon universe, were noticeably absent from the supplements. Libel suits filed against humor magazines attest to the power of these political illustrations.[40] In 1890 the *Boston Daily Advertiser* acknowledged outright their potency, proclaiming that "the cartoon and the caricature is one of the great political powers of this day."[41] So prestigious were the satires published by *Puck* or *Judge* that newspaper articles would recreate them verbally and offer analyses. Political caricaturists reaffirmed their status as pundits by emphasizing the overriding importance of the idea in political caricature, often devaluating the mechanics of drawing. In a 1903 article for the arts and crafts journal *Brush and Pencil*, McCutcheon separated his practice as a political cartoonist from that of the sketch artist by aligning political cartoonists' professional success with "the excellence of their ideas."[42] For McCutcheon, the cartoonist's qualifications prioritized first "a clear knowledge of what is happening in the world of politics" and second "a news sense," with drawing talent coming last. Only in the final paragraph does McCutcheon admit to "indulging" in "harmless pictorial squibs" not strictly related to breaking news.

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[39] Idem.

[40] See Alfredo Castelli, "Rude and Crude: Bad boys of the comics on both ends of the pen" in *Society is Nix: Gleeful Anarchy at the Dawn of the American Comic Strip*, ed. Peter Maresca (Palo Alto: Sunday Press Books, 2013), 15. Accusations of libel did not always resort to legal action but more frequently took place in vitriolic reviews within other periodicals.

[41] "Making a Cartoon," *Boston Daily Advertiser*, Tuesday, September 2, 1890, 5.

[42] John T. McCutcheon, "The Practical Work of a Cartoonist," *Brush and Pencil* 11, No. 6 (March 1903): 402.

Newspaper comics were mostly devoid of the allegorical political critiques within comic weekly centerfolds. Rather, they reveled in "harmless pictorial squibs" and replaced laborious reading customs with the messy, sensational experience of physical life. R. F. Outcault's (and later George Luks') headlining Yellow Kid comics were notable for their especially raucous brand of anarchic violence set within the Irish tenements. Frequently published as half or full broadsheet illustration, Yellow Kid comics often structured the aesthetics and layout of the comic supplement page. Thierry Smolderen describes how the "swarming effect" in these sheets generated a labyrinthic tour through a series isolated slapstick events.[43] This prioritized intricacy and variety, prolonging the quick delivery of slapstick into a complex read that catered to the immersive leisurely reading experience of a relaxed Sunday. In addition, the Yellow Kid's innovative approaches to line, color, and action set the stage for the radical experiments that comics artists such as Winsor McCay and Lyonel Feininger would conduct in engendering hallucinatory other worlds.

In the humor magazines, chromolithographs typically reserved saturated color for a clear symbolic function. For example, an 1893 cover of *Puck* ridiculing the Blue Laws, which forced closure of institutions on Sundays, accomplished its lampoon by depicting a blue figure painting the city's white sculptures, emblematic of learning and culture, blue.[44] The Yellow Kid's very moniker alludes to this association between color and symbolism in the periodical illustration.[45] From a coterie of street urchins, a jug-eared child in a yellow nightshirt emerged

[43] Thierry Smolderen. *The Origins of Comics: From William Hogarth to Winsor McCay* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2000), 5.
[44] Keppler, "Painting the Fair Blue," *Puck*, March 15, 1893.
[45] The very fact that comic strip character Mickey Dugan was colloquially termed "Yellow Kid" by his fans reveals how periodical consumers read color as an identifier.

as a central and reoccurring character. Though named Mickey Dugan by his creator, Yellow Kid became his defacto title and soon became synonymous with Outcault's production.[46] However, color in the large-scale newspaper comics generally eschewed symbolic weight and prioritized how free flowing color could generate visual dynamism. In Outcault's "Hogan's Alley" and "McFadden Flats," color punctuated explosions and collisions and flowed unhindered by black boundary lines, creating atmospheric effects.[47] Compositions freely bleed color into adjacent passages of text.[48] Rendered purely in color with no black outlines, the Yellow Kid's miscreants could even climb up and invade columns of text without severely impairing their readability during a Coney Island visit. Thus, newspaper comics not only invaded the revered space of color printing with low-end ethnic humor but also utilized color to invade the previously respected domain of the text.

As with color, Yellow Kid's inclusion of word panels equally triggered an overwhelming sensory, rather than deductive, experience. These images forced the reader to fight against the visual din of text in order to access any meaning, duplicating the frustrations of city-life. Yellow Kid comics were often claustrophobically compacted with text-laden signs, hand-scrawled posters, and even lumpy word balloons that offered little coherence to the visual content. Any relatively blank surface became a receptive surface for inscription, including shirts, hats, and

[46] For the history of Outcault's naming of the Yellow Kid, see Meyer, *Producing Mass Entertainment*, 83.
[47] See R. F. Outcault. "An Old-Fashioned Fourth in Hogan's Alley." *New York World*, July 5, 1896. San Francisco Academy of Comic Art Collection, The Ohio State University Cartoon Research Library. CGA.SFS57-1-1. https://hdl.handle.net/1811/e5d035b2-83cc-45bc-a63d-2e8353e8f84c (Accessed May 31, 2021).
[48] See R. F. Outcault. "McFadden Flatters Skating and Tobogganing Expedition." *New York Journal*, December 6, 1896. San Francisco Academy of Comic Art Collection, The Ohio State University Cartoon Research Library. CGA.SFS59-3-1. https://hdl.handle.net/1811/4cec3bb1-e5f9-4f38-91a5-3c62573109a0 (Accessed May 31, 2021).

even clouds.[49] These layouts deliberately echoed New York City's long-maligned visual pollution of advertisements and sandwich boards.[50] In a full broadsheet comic from July 12, 1896, R. F. Outcault even inscribed the clouds with the advertisement "Have your name on the clouds: The Enterprise Advertising Sign Co.". Unlike the political cartoons of humor magazines, these texts neither operated as guiding labels nor easily coalesce into expository meanings. They instead constructed their critiques by misquoting and misappropriating New York signage, a technique that stimulated the reader's physical memories of the city.

Following the *Sunday World*, competing newspapers joined the bandwagon of color printing and illustrated supplements. This competition played out most publicly and viciously between Pulitzer's *Sunday World* and William Randolph Hearst's *New York Sunday Journal*. Each launched progressively more outlandish advertising campaigns and raucous illustrations to flag their products, pushing Sunday supplements as a competitive field and popular pastime. Sunday comics were distinctly the progeny of the newspaper but also called into question the newspaper's boundaries and regulations. While providing amusement, provocative techniques of layout and color were key in poking fun at the newspaper's testament to truth and stability.

[49]R. F. Outcault. "A Hot Political Convention in Hogan's Alley." *New York World*, July 12, 1896. San Francisco Academy of Comic Art Collection, The Ohio State University Cartoon Research Library. CCGA.SFS57-1-2. https://hdl.handle.net/1811/cec43408-ff2c-4dad-9d9e-3d958d92d2bf (Accessed May 31, 2021).

[50] Benjamin Singer looks at sign board pollution as part of the city's overwhelming stimuli in *Melodrama*, 59-71. For a discussion of the history of sign pollution as a legal issue, see Jacob Loshin, "Property in the Horizon: The Theory and Practice of Sign and Billboard Regulation," *Environmental Law and Policy Journal*, UC Davis School of Law 30 (December 2006): 101-71. See also Zurier on "Billboards" in *Picturing the City*, 55-59.

In addition, Sunday funnies launched another game changing invention: the introduction of serial comics with reoccurring characters.[51]

BAD BOY COMIC STRIPS

Many of these characters in the longest running and most popular strips were naughty boys.[52] Lara Saguisag positions R. F. Outcault's launch of "Hogan's Alley" as setting the newspaper trend for the child-centered comic series.[53] Comics historians searching for deeper origins cite Wilhelm Busch's 1865 *Max and Moritz* as the progenitor for the naughty boy comic genre.[54] Written in German verse, *Max and Moritz* followed two colluding brothers as they wreak havoc about their town, concluding with their nasty but fitting demise. Rudolph Dirk's *Katzenjammer Kids* directly adopted this narrative by weekly following two German immigrant brothers, Hans and Fritz, through pranks that always lead to a punishing spank. Other strips altered the familiar pattern of tag-team mischief and comeuppance. In Carl E. Schulz's *Foxy Grandpa*, two misbehaving middle-class brothers are constantly out-witted, rather than

[51] Ian Gordon names "the use of continuing characters and their appearance in mass-circulated newspapers" as the central factors that set American comic strips apart from earlier European forms. Gordon, *Comic Strips*, 9.
[52] For a thorough history on this phenomenon, see Lara Saguisag. *Incorrigibles and Innocents: Constructing Childhood and Citizenship in Progressive Era Comics* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2019).
[53] Saguisag, *Incorrigibles and Innocents*, 52.
[54] Gordon, *Comic Strips*, 33-34. David Kunzle performs an in-depth analysis of Max and Moritz in "Max and Moritz (1865): Rebellion, Crime, and Punishment" in *The Comic Strip in the Nineteenth Century* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990), 244-250.

paddled, by their grandfather.[55] Meanwhile serials like *Hogan's Alley* left their miscreants relatively free of any rectifying punishments. While connected by themes of anarchy, comic authors approached bad boy comics as a flexible genre, which Lara Saguisag demonstrates became enmeshed with different discourses about citizenship and nationhood.[56]

The body of the juvenile delinquent widened the gap between American newspaper funnies and previous European-based traditions. To begin, the young cast of the newspapers looked different. R. F. Outcault's first installation of *McFadden's Row of Flats* on October 25, 1896 labeled his Irish gang as juveniles with a background placard touting "Here's the Headquarters of the Juvenile Political Club." The nation's first juvenile court laws placed juvenility between early childhood and adolescence, capping the upward age between sixteen and eighteen years.[57] The diverse height and proportions of Outcault's gang suggest this gamut of age ranges, a spread that was echoed by the various headlining characters of other newspaper strips. Even the Yellow Kid himself ambiguously straddled juvenility throughout his run. Outcault suggested his progressive growth by hemming a cloth extension (a "new piece") to his nightshirt and gradually morphing his physique from a "saffron infant" into late boyhood.[58]

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[55] Katherine Roeder describes how Foxy Grandpa and his ability to outmaneuver his juvenile grandsons marked an exception to the "naughty boy" genre. *Wide Awake in Slumberland: Fantasy, Mass Culture, and Modernism in the Art of Winsor McCay* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2014), 20.
[56] See Saguisag, *Incorrigibles and Innocents*, 1.
[57] Kent Baxter, *The Modern Age: Turn-of-the-Century American Culture and the Invention of Adolescence* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2008), 30.
[58] See Yellow Kid's shirtless appearances in "The Yellow Kid's Great Fight," *New York Journal*, December 20, 1897 and "The Yellow Kid Experiments with the Wonderful Hair Tonic," *New York Journal*, January 23, 1898.

In the comic weeklies, rebellious male juveniles appeared sparingly as characters and rarely isolated from parents or relishing in independent horseplay. Comic weeklies were flush with violent slapstick, but these strips typically focused on adult subjects. Their unwieldly, bulbous bodies looked garish as they collided or tumbled, reinforcing the strips' intention to admonish or humiliate their subjects. Newspaper juveniles often hailed from the tenements, sporting pygmy, wiry forms that were topped by faces made comparatively cute with larger foreheads, softer cheeks, and round eyes. While these juveniles typically avoided the cherub physiques of idealized Victorian childhood, their pliant bodies appeared more primed to absorb the shocks and jolts of urban life. Bill Blackbeard points out that Hogan's Alley included a reoccurring child that fell from his apartment building on a weekly basis, showing off a "cartoon violence in which no one is actually hurt."[59] This motif also played of off the serial indestructability of the juvenile body.

A predecessor to the attenuated bodies of the Sunday comics, the comics strip juvenile visually echoed the bobble-headed political caricatures from the comic weeklies. Comic magazines frequently infantilized popular authority figures to diminish their authority and asserted the superiority of the viewer.[60] These caricatures typically sutured an oversized adult face to a dwindled body. The infantilized physiques shrunk capable adults into unnatural preadolescents who lashed out in puerile fits. With instantly recognizable pathetic overtones, these babyish caricatures were also used to personify despised political policies or weak

[59] Blackbeard, *R. F. Outcault's Yellow Kid*, 52.
[60] Lara Saguisag also points out this visual connection in *Incorrigibles and Innocents*, 5. For an analysis of political caricature and the infantilized body, see Martha Banta's chapter "War in the Nursery" in *Barbaric Intercourse: Caricature and the Culture of Conduct*, 1841-1936 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 295-338.

countries. Within the newspaper's comics supplement, comic strip boys recalled this tradition by sporting gawky, adult-like faces accompanied by stringy, ineffectual bodies. Yet rather than a purely derogatory invention of the cartoonist, the awkward displacement of body, limbs, and head invoked a vulnerable and familiar period of growth. This approach to cartooning as commentary aligns with Rebecca Zurier's discussion of journalistic drawing in the metropolitan newspaper. Artists largely avoided empirical and authoritarian approaches and instead opted for authentic, on-site sketched approaches that emphasized individual testimony and physically embodied experience. In Zurier's discussion, the cartoon operated as a form of reporting by "re-presenting things the artists had seen in a distinctive, opinionated voice."[61] The replacement of the artificially bobble-headed social caricature with the naturally bobble-headed adolescent signaled new strategies in editorial cartooning, one focused on authenticating its urban perspective.

The seriality of newspaper strips went hand-in-hand with the new visibility of juvenile characters, who now reappeared each week as a recurrent cast. Seriality furthered separated the newspaper comic from the comic weekly while presenting new challenges to the slapstick genre.[62] Serial slapstick comics built their humor on the audience's anticipation of a calamitous conclusion. Preconceived expectations helped to generate habit-forming reading practices that would boost circulation, but also risked fatigue, even frustration, with incorrigible protagonists and a consistently predictable outcome.[63] The developing juvenile potentially helped off-set

[61] Zurier, "Picturing the City," 183.
[62] See especially Christina Meyer's chapter "Serial Aesthetics and Consumption Practices of the Yellow Kid Comic-Tableaux" in *Producing Mass Entertainment,* 71-115.
[63] Ian Gordon addresses seriality and habitual reading practices in *Comic Strips*, 34-35.

this problem. In 1892, social reformer Jacob Riis published *Children of the Poor* and pondered how juvenile delinquency posed a solvable problem in the section titled "What it is that makes boys bad."[64] Following research within intercity schools and detention centers, Riis blamed institutional incompetence, not hereditary degeneracy, for failing to provide nurturing outlets for boys' "natural exuberance."

The array of juvenile bodies that varied from gangly growth spurts to stunted children imbued these forms with plastic potential. R. F. Outcault's distinct approach to the juvenile body included gargantuan feet, indicative of an imminent growth spurt. The rationale of "natural exuberance" and the possibility, however distant, for juvenile reform could potentially relieve despair over a central character weekly repeating the same error. Potential for reform could also counter concerns about truancy carried by the juvenile's vulgar, often ethnic, features. Kerry Soper's investigation of Irish ethnic cartoons like *Bringing Up Father* reveals how artists used caricature to imply that American soil and upper-class privileges could transmogrify the young ethnic body into Victorian models of Anglo-Saxon stock.[65] Yet often these comics of juvenile marauders and pranksters stoked anxieties about irreconcilable delinquency. R. F. Outcault's free falling child never reformed and continued to plummet to his doom on a weekly basis, yet he did innovate, floating down with an umbrella on October 4, 1896. Later resigned to his fate, on March 7, 1897 he commented, "I'm an expert faller – I hops I dun fall heir to a fortune." Whether ameliorative, provocative, or adaptive, juvenile's implied

[64] Jacob A. Riis, *The Children of the Poor* (Createspace Independent Pub, 2013), 59.
[65] For example, *Bringing Up Father*, a rags to riches story of an Irish immigrant, contrasted heavily caricatured Irish parents to their beautiful Gibson-girl style daughter. Kerry Soper, "Performing 'Jiggs': Irish Caricature and Comedic Ambivalence toward Assimilation and the American Dream in George McManus's 'Bringing up Father'," *The Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 4, No. 2 (Apr. 2005): 197.

growth and transformation permitted artists to toy with the deterministic format of the serial comic.

The flourish and success of juvenile anti-heroes implies more than a pragmatic solution. As Kerry Soper demonstrates, the serial format prompted newspaper artists to explore these inky juveniles as characters rather simply performing types, thus upsetting the complacency of the ethnic gag cartoon. Character development was integral to the serio-comic format which Soper states, "started with stereo-typical visual types and formulaic premises but then built, over the course of weeks and months of narrative progression, complex storylines, and sympathetic characters."[66] For the juvenile protagonist, delinquency could thus double as heroics by taking down the stock comic scoundrel or authority figures.[67] Christina Meyer's analysis of Yellow Kid comics through seriality studies shows how comic artists used these naughty pranksters to mobilize the conventions of serial storytelling. By commenting self-reflexively on their own iconicity and world events, Yellow Kid's cast performed a metacritique on cartooning while permitting multi-leveled readings of its cartoon violence.[68] Lara Saguisag articulates how all these operations were filtered through a turbulent and anxiety-ridden dialog

[66] Kerry Soper, "Performing 'Jiggs'," 184. By the early 1900's, artists like Winsor McCay premeditated this serial progression in strips like "Hungry Henrietta," which followed its heroine from infancy through pre-adolescence in weekly strips labeled as chapters.
[67] For a discussion of the "leveling effect" of slapstick in the character of Happy Hooligan see Kerry Soper, "From Swarthy Ape to Sympathetic Everyman and Subversive Trickster: The Development of Irish Caricature in American Comic Strips between 1890 and 1920," *Journal of American Studies* 39, no. 2 (August 2005), 284. Lisa Yaszek also discusses how the Katzenjammer Kids' struggles with authority might have a provided a cathartic release for immigrant readers. "Them Damn Pictures," 38.
[68] Meyer, *Producing Mass Entertainment*, 43.

that judged national health by the state of its children.[69] R. F. Outcault's "Yellow Kid" comic is embedded as a central actor in all these discussions.

THE YELLOW KID AND THE RESIDENTS OF HOGAN'S ALLEY

The longevity, popularity, and preeminence given to this intensive cartoon make the Yellow Kid comic a rich subject for close analysis. Its titular character did something previous cartoons and characters rarely attempted: he talked directly to the audience. By confronting the reader, the Yellow Kid misbehaved not only as an urban miscreant, but as a comic image.

Only months after his first appearance in the *New York World* on May 5, 1895, Richard F. Outcault's juvenile "Yellow Kid" became one of the Sunday supplement's most famous juvenile characters. Making prolific appearances in the *New York World's* and *New York Journal*'s advertisements, the Yellow Kid began to stand in as the Sunday supplement's defacto figurehead. By selecting a youthful boy, the *Journal* and *World* had engineered a cheeky foil to *Puck* magazine's figurehead that embodied its new approach to cartoon humor. Rather than a timeless and European allegorical cherub, the newspaper chose a distinctly urban American character that grated against elite tastes.

Puck's figurehead, a charming young putto named Puck, was modelled after editor-in-chief Keppler's daughter. He flaunted his cherubic nudity while donning a top hat and suit jacket. This modernized the Shakespearean "Puck" and mirrored sophisticated aspirations of its

[69] Saguisag, *Incorrigibles and Innocents*, 8.

readers, who were frequently prompted to recall their Shakespeare when decoding the allegories constructed for their political cartoons.[70] In comparison to Puck, the Yellow Kid is gawky, misshapen, and irrevocably lower class with pronounced Irish ethnic features and dialect. His features eventually became so exaggerated compared to his Irish tenement companions that both his fin de siècle fans and current scholarship have struggled to pinpoint his heritage through awkward analysis of ethnic shorthand.[71] Just through his features, the Yellow Kid prompted viewers to not only recall but meditate on their conditioning in low-brow caricature.

In an interview, Outcault recalled encountering the "Kid" when he "used to go about the slums on newspaper assignments," specifying his Kid represented "not an individual but a type."[72] Although working as a journalist, Outcault's description evoked the detached gaze of the privileged flaneur who could simultaneously reflect on the horrors of poverty while deriving pleasure from the Kid's "sweet character" and "sunny disposition."[73] This flaneur-like combination of curiosity, distance, and judgement corresponds to Rebecca Zurier's research on how such modes of viewing the city comprised a collective form of urban citizenship. Ethnic ghettoes became a tantalizing subject within New York's "culture of looking."[74] Illustrated articles on the urban ghetto transported readers into New York's gritty realism and facilitated

[70] Kahn and West, *What Fools*, 13.
[71] Meyer, *Producing Mass Entertainment*, 82-83.
[72] R. F. Outcault, "How the Yellow Kid was Born," *New York World*, May 1, 1898, reprinted in *Society is Nix: Gleeful Anarchy at the Dawn of the American Comic Strip*, ed. Peter Maresca (Sunday Press Books, 2013), 13.
[73] Idem.
[74] See Rebecca Zurier's chapter "Seeing New York: The Turn-of-the-Century Culture of Looking" in *Picturing the City*, 45-85.

access to the metropolises' casualties.[75] Throughout his career, the Yellow Kid acquired plenty of critics who frequently castigated his ugly features, indicating few found the Yellow Kid aesthetically pleasing. Thus, the Yellow Kid is an acquired taste, accessible to the metropolises' insider residents.

Artists often threw Puck and the Yellow Kid into the company of various cartoons figures from different comic genres. While *Puck*'s aesthetics emphasized rationality and cohesion in the comic tableau, the Sunday supplement accentuated discord and disconnect, a well-entrenched urban aesthetic that signaled the discombobulating experience of the city. Puck represented the comic weekly's moral compass, welcoming in approved political actions and firmly castigating reprehensible actions with rectifying written labels. Mingling amongst *Puck*'s caricatures of high-ranking politicians and socialites, Puck performed like a cherubic dignitary, reaffirming the magazine as a trustworthy source of commentary. *Puck*'s 1894 Christmas cover (Fig. 2.13) demonstrates his ease in fashionable society as two modish ladies skate while pulling a plump Puck on a gilded sled as he holds a Christmas tree. An elegant drawing style unifies the image and evokes the gentile winter delights of Victorian Christmas cards. In contrast, an advertisement for the *New York Journal*'s October 18, 1896 inaugural issue of "McFadden's Flats" (Fig. 2.14) features a young woman in tantalizing circus costume leading the Yellow Kid by a leash. Decked in a clown's hat and ruffled color, the Yellow Kid stands like a performing dog, on tiptoe with limp hands mimicking paws. R. F. Outcault and Archie Gunn employed two contrasting illustrative styles for the simply outlined Yellow Kid cartoon and the painterly

[75] Ibid., 94-101.

rendition of a showgirl, courting a broken and disturbing aesthetic that became the Sunday supplement's signature look.

The *New York Journal*'s Sunday supplement advertisements also highlighted what Christina Meyer terms the "medial and narrative liminality" of the Yellow Kid as a character. As a comic-strip fad that rapidly leaked into advertising, toys, and theatrical entertainments, the Yellow Kid frequently acknowledged his own ability to migrate across different popular media. Narrative liminality arose through the varied, often ambiguous, reading options the Yellow Kid imbricated through his guise, text, and actions.[76] For example, the *New York Journal*'s 1896 poster addressed above evoked a typical ethnic gag cartoon. The Yellow Kid typically "spoke" to his audience via misspelled dialect speech scrawled across his iconic nightshirt, here expressing "Are we going te de ball dis evenink well say!". The text mocked his inability to distinguish between being honored as a beau and ridiculed as an animal circus act. Yet this topic of swindling was also entangled with the posters central message: R. F. Outcault had officially moved from illustrating the *New York World's* "Hogan's Alley" to the *New York Journal*'s "McFadden's Row of Flats". The rope leash around the Yellow Kid's neck seemingly placed the Yellow Kid's as an innocent pawn in the periodical war between Pulitzer and Hearst. Yet this read grew even thornier when put in context with the adjacent script "In Gay New York," a newly released comic opera. "In Gay New York" followed a naïve newlywed's trip to New York City as they were swindled into backing a new musical play. The couple became

[76] Meyer, *Producing Mass Entertainment*, 50.

quickly plunged into New York's outrageous and seedy theatrical entertainments.[77] The juxtaposition between illustration and text thus also joyfully aligned the *Journal* with sleazy, dishonest business practices, leveraging this headline-grabbing identity to entice more readers. Such a concocted scenes makes it difficult to determine whether the Yellow Kid functions as a truly innocent participant or a knowing actor.

Two more ads for the *Journal*'s Sunday supplement suggest a similarly nuanced and self-reflexive relationship between the comic character, the newspaper, and the reader. At first glance the "Yellow Kid" seemed to be performing his typical clumsy antics. However his actions constructed a more deliberate parody. In the May 9 advertisement, Yellow Kid effeminately strutted on tiptoe and grasped his nightshirt like a gown adjacent to the headline boasting "The World's Greatest Beauties: Photographs beautifully reproduced". By asking the viewer "Gee, Wouldn't I Make a Hot Queen of De May," it is ambiguous whether he pokes fun at the headline, at himself, or at the whole concept of the fashion pages. In a football themed advertisement, the Yellow Kid uncharacteristically sported a shaggy wig that flies off his head, parodying the feral hair that denoted football players in cartoons. Holding a fistful of hair, he both mocked the animal savagery for which the sport was criticized while advertising the sports section to football enthusiasts. Christina Meyer identifies how Yellow Kid's "meta-comments," constructed through both text and image, ". . . trigger an awareness of the Yellow Kid's permeability and versatility . . . that invite us to engage with the evolution and reception of the

[77] Gerald Bordman and Richard Norton, *American Musical Theatre: A Chronicle* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 166.

Yellow Kid."[78] These meta-comments found their most complex manifestation in the elaborate comic tableaux of "Hogan's Alley" and "McFadden Flats".

A comparison between two comics parodying the New York yachting "craze" during the tenth America cup of 1895 demonstrates how Outcault's child-driven comedy leveraged its liminal approach to construct ambivalent and slippery critiques. On September 22, 1895, the *New York World* ran Walt McDougall's full page comic parodying how the New York yacht club's champion vessel, The Defender, catalyzed a consumerist windfall. McDougall's image depicts an urban street crammed with mostly adult consumers all donning nautically themed outfits. Advertisements and sandwich boards broadcasted products with a yachting theme, even advertising "Defender" corsets and bicycles. As a title page cartoon, the image acted as a frontispiece, remaining separate from pages of content laden text within. McDougall's work peppered his crowd with both unideal lower-class types and gentile sophisticates to capture the totality of New York. He also emulated the polite social humor of the glossy magazines by rendering his figures ridiculous primarily by their fashion and taste, not by antics or slapstick.

In contrast, Outcault's cartoon "The Great Cup Race on Reilly's Pond" was placed adjacent to a report documenting the results of the tenth America Cup.[79] The scene was distinctly set outside the consumerist metropolis in a muddy lot, with tenement blocks and factories on the horizon. Typical of Outcault's work, the children's hand-me-down clothing either bagged or pulled on their scrawny bodies. This contrasted with their attempts to adopt

[78] Meyer, *Producing Mass Entertainment*, 43.
[79] R. F. Outcault. "The Great Cup Race on Reilly's Pond." *New York World*, September 22, 1895. San Francisco Academy of Comic Art Collection, The Ohio State University Cartoon Research Library, CGA.SFS54-4-4.
https://hdl.handle.net/1811/5b0fa6fa-fdd1-40be-a138-2b834f5f5756 (Accessed May 31, 2021).

the social pretensions of the upper class. Smoking, wearing monocles, and using a bottle as a makeshift telescope, the children constructed their own yachting spectacle. Moving into the latter half 19th century, social behaviorists performed psychological analyses on childhood play and accepted that emulation of adult activities was a natural part of development.[80] Outcault's image alluded to this boisterous stage of mock-play while also ridiculing their pathetic pretensions at a rich man's sport. However, as an illustration accompanying the yachting articles, the cartoon also potentially mocked the pretensions and obsessions of the reader.

Like Outcault's children, the reader experienced the yachting spectacle vicariously through a cheap imitative medium.[81] Many of the *New York World*'s diverse readers would similarly find themselves excluded from directly enjoying this rich man's sporting exhibition, described as "pretty toys in a silver sea". While the children wore rags, they somehow obtained a formal jacket and dress shirt to serve as sails, symbolizing yachting's moneyed status and highlighting the class gap. The prominent American flag in the foreground highlighted the questionably inclusive zeal for the America Cup.

Outcault constructed ambivalent meanings for the Yellow Kid by equipping him and his comics with contradictory qualities. The cartoon bore the buffoonish characteristics of immigrant stupidity and infantile naïveté. These qualities were repeatedly confirmed by both satirical cartoons and the social journalism that explored the degradation of immigrant classes and helplessness of impoverished children. Yet Outcault also maneuvered his children for

[80] See J. Mark Baldwin, "Imitation: A Chapter in the Natural History of Consciousness," *Mind* 3, No. 9 (Jan. 1894): 26 – 55.
[81] See especially Meyer, *Producing Mass Entertainment*, 108 – 115. Lara Saguisag's argument is interwoven throughout her close analysis of individual comics in *Incorrigibles and Innocents*.

knife-edged satire, rarely clarifying whether the Yellow Kid and tenement children fully understood the collusion. Kerry Soper defines Outcault's comics as carnivalesque performances, generating an environment where "social order can be temporarily inverted and social superiors freely mocked."[82] By parodying the viewer's own reading practices, these cartoons exposed the artificial structures periodicals used to construct the illusion of authentic experience.

Very little in the historical record discloses how readers actually responded to these comics. While data around subscriptions and distribution imply their popularity, puzzling contradictions exist between their content and their audience demographics.[83] As Jonathan Bolton shows, Joseph Pulitzer's decision to forefront *Hogan's Alley*, a coterie of Irish stereotypes, amidst his own political support of Irish immigration, Home Rule for Ireland, and Tammany Hall points to a puzzling relationship between his periodical, commercial interests, and political stance. Peter Conolly Smith explores a similar contradiction in William Randolph Hearst's German-Language *Deutsches Journal*, which not only included an ethnic-driven comics sections, but even made over some of its serialized Irish caricatures into Germans.[84] Smith attempts to reconcile why such representations increased the *Deutsches Journal*'s subscriptions when other German-language periodicals were actively decrying exaggerated representations of Germans in the comics. M. Alison Kibler demonstrates that caricatured groups did rise up against ridiculing representations with fervor and even violence. Kibler's research follows how

[82] Soper, "Swarthy Ape," 276.
[83] Ian Gordon is one of many historians who point to this lack of information on specific demographics in *Comic Strips*, 11. Gordon's appendices tabulate the circulation and growth of newspapers in individual American cities and their syndication of comics, providing valuable insight on reading demographics.
[84] Jonathan Bolton, "Richard F. Outcault's Hogan's Alley and the Irish of New York's Fourth Ward, 1895-96." *New Hibernia Review* 19, No. 1 (Spring 2015): 72.

the theatrical spin-off production *McFadden's Row of Flats* received a wave of demonstrations and riots by Irish Nationalists, yet she does not cite any resistance against the original comic.[85]

Scholars continue to debate whether the power relations in Outcault's cartoon leaned more toward subverting hierarchical class relationships or toward upholding racial and ethnic prejudices. Christina Meyer and Lara Saguisag both conclude that the open-ended structure of these comics prod at double-meanings, but their dependence on stereotypes upholds white upper-class programs for American assimilation. Lisa Yaszek similarly discusses how the Yellow Kid demonstrates "the semiotic openness of popular culture" by permitting different reads about immigrants and Americanization based on one's socio-historical position.[86]

It is doubtful that the Yellow Kid promised progressive insight into the actual struggling impoverished and minority groups of America. However, the Yellow Kid had much to say about the profitable image mill that churned out images of the New York tenements' poor. The Yellow Kid's ghetto functioned not as a social project but as a lens for sorting out the din of strategies for creating meaning within the city. The comic's oft-cited ambiguity possessed the ability of ingratiating it to the newspaper's diverse audience and positioned the Yellow Kid himself as an avatar for navigating the city.

[85] M. Alison Kibler, *Censoring Racial Ridicule: Irish, Jewish, and African American Struggles over Race and Representation: 1890-1930* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 51-58.
[86] Lisa Yaszek, "Them Damn Pictures," 23-35.

THE RETURN GAZE AND A NEW FORM OF POLITICAL HUMOR

This next section closely analyzes how Hogan's Alley evolved from an unremarkable tenement cartoon to a new narrative genre lead by an interactive, reoccurring character. Most crucially, the Yellow Kid and his companions violated conventional reading practices in the ways he attempted to directly address the viewer. Many comics historians have emphasized the importance of reading Outcault's work in the context of Jacob Riis, Michel Angelo Woolf, and other prominent 19th century image makers of the poor.[87] In Outcault, the unorthodox reciprocal gaze functions as a way to give his characters self-awareness as images and thus an implied sense of agency.

"Hogan's Alley" first appeared in the *New York World* on May 5, 1895 as a half page cartoon titled "At the Circus in Hogan's Alley."[88] These 1895 installments of Hogan's Alley preceded the promotion of the Yellow Kid to lead character. A bald, nondescript child in a nightshirt typically appeared once or twice in the comic tableau, but usually off to the side as an onlooking youngster too little to engage in the juvenile roughhousing. These early Hogan's Alley comics echoed many of the visual distancing techniques that governed both ethnic gag cartoons and the periodical's illustrated slum tours.[89] The high vantage point and panoramic view implied the metaphorically elevated viewpoint of the flaneur. In ethnic cartoons, characters typically interacted in profile, a viewpoint that easily accentuated their stereotyped

[87] Blackbeard analyzes the Yellow Kid's relationship to this practice of using the urban poor as cartoon characters. *R. F. Outcault's Yellow Kid*, 17-21.
[88] R. F. Outcault. "At the Circus in Hogan's Alley." *New York World*, May 5, 1895. San Francisco Academy of Comic Art Collection, The Ohio State University Cartoon Research Library. CGA.SFS53-10-1. https://hdl.handle.net/1811/a3921d83-1a32-488d-ab49-09f52ff78b73 (Accessed May 31, 2021)
[89] See Zurier, *Picturing the City*, especially "Breaking up the Crowd," 192-205 and "The View from the Balcony," 210-212.

physiognomy and ignored the outside reader. The reader could thus comfortably read and judge the presented dynamics in the implied comfort of their own private space. Although "At the Circus" is much more populated and complex than the typical ethnic gag cartoon, none of the participants acknowledge the viewer's presence with their gaze.

Comics historian Bill Blackbeard demonstrates how Outcault's early Irish tenements cartoons emulated the techniques of Michael Angelo Woolf, whose cartoons of street children appeared in *Life* and *Puck* throughout the 1880's.[90] Outcault adopted Woolf's distinctive rendition of the impoverished physique, particularly the stringy body paired with oversized hands and feet rendered in ragged pen lines. Woolf's dark humor derived from his characters' wretchedness as the children attempted social graces, normalized alcoholic fathers, and threatened to infect each other with measles. His images often adopted a sympathetic and reformist tone as the children tried to reconcile their childhood with such desolate conditions.[91] A number of Woolf's cartoons forwent humor all together and functioned as pleading editorials, trying to stimulate social action by lamenting the plight of the poor.

Although aping Woolf's style, Outcault's cartoons largely resisted his paternalism. Woolf's children are frequently hunched with clasped hands in feeble looking poses. When Woolf's children attempt aggression or independence, Woolf emphasizes the whittled skeletal frames and pull of threadbare clothing. Broad and high urban environments dwarf and intimidate Woolf's children. In contrast, Outcault rendered Hogan's Alley street urchins as resourceful and resilient individuals rather than meek starving waifs. Outcault's bodies often

[90] Blackbeard, *R. F. Outcault's Yellow Kid*, 17-19.
[91] Ibid., 18.

moved with strong diagonals, expressing dynamic energy. In Outcault, malnutrition and absent resources were unable to suppress what sociologists diagnosed as children's natural boisterousness. The children instead expressed an irascible penchant for mischief by climbing, transforming, and dominating their surroundings. Even the simple act of bringing such characters into a full color upended the longstanding association of darkness with the immigrant experience.

When it came to the gaze of the poor, Outcault's 1895 cartoons echoed Woolf's influence while testing different strategies. By avoiding a reciprocal gaze with the reader, Woolf's cartoon waifs preserved their isolated despondency. When Woolf's characters did look forward, they typically expressed longing or despair, subtly beseeching the reader for help. Outcault's December installment "Merry Xmas Morning in Hogan's Alley" emulated this same reformist strategy.[92] As the Hogan children showed off their Christmas gifts to one another in the snow filled alley, a young begging girl with a foreshortened hand reached directly toward the reader. A sweet character with a smudged face, she looked visually out of step with the jovial, roguish atmosphere of playful children. It is unclear whether this interactive gesture created a provocative break in the reader's distant enjoyment, realigned the poor with their position as a social project, or both. Either way, the gesture demonstrated Outcault's early interest in disrupting the cartoon's self-containment and pivoting ethnic humor toward social reform.

[92] R. F. Outcault. "Merry Xmas Morning in Hogan's Alley." *New York World*, December 15, 1895. San Francisco Academy of Comic Art Collection, The Ohio State University Cartoon Research Library. https://cartoons.osu.edu/digital_albums/yellowkid/1895/1895.htm (Accessed May 31, 2021)

However, Outcault's interactive elements were rarely so directly pleading and more often left the reader in an ambiguous situation. Although no one gazed outward in "At the Circus," the comic did include a single hand-scrawled sign turned toward the viewer that instructs "Dont guy the performers." While showing off the children's efforts to recreate the circus atmosphere, the sign can also work as a directive for the reader not to harangue the slapstick recital which has, albeit, been offered in the guise of an ethnic gag routine. On November 17, 1895, "The Horse Show as Reproduced in Shantytown" included a young girl decked in an oversized yellow and orange blouse who deliberately examined the reader through a pair of spectacles. Parroting the exaggerated fashions of elites, she scrutinized the reader with serious disapproval, perhaps mirroring the audience's reaction to this pantomime of upper-class pretentiousness.

Hogan's Alley summer episode titled "The Day After 'The Glorious Fourth'" demonstrates how Outcault complicated the relationship between reader, cartoon characters, and the events and images captured by the newspaper.[93] On and around July 4th, issues of the *Evening World* ran a number of articles and editorial cartoons addressing New York City's firecracker ban alongside ironic acknowledgements that "it is not likely that the children's fun will be checked."[94] Cartoons displayed helpless cops harassed by swarms of children setting off explosives underfoot. Both lower and upper-class cartoon children strung fireworks to animals

[93] R. F. Outcault. "The Day After "The Glorious Fourth" Down Hogan's Alley." *New York World*, July 7, 1895. San Francisco Academy of Comic Art Collection, The Ohio State University Cartoon Research Library. CGA.SFS54-2-1. .https://hdl.handle.net/1811/e4f9d1e3-7ed6-4568-bda6-b47cc8bf5b7e (Accessed May 31, 2021).

[94] See "The small boy with a predilection for arson is wide awake as ever," *The Evening World*, July 3, 1895, 2.

and, showing "the way it usually ends," nursed their own subsequent injuries.[95] The styles were boisterous and light-hearted, matter-of-factly delivering naughty children their comeuppance. In contrast, Outcault's "The Day After 'The Glorious Fourth'" showed off a morbid range of explosive-induced injuries in an unusually somber Hogan's Alley. In the foreground, one child displayed his missing fingers to companions, who were in turn missing an arm and sporting bandaged heads. The range of injuries and property damage echoed previously published reports on "The Fourth's Casualties," infusing cartoon violence with real events.[96] A burned out second floor window closely recalled an article three days prior about a fire in Mulberry Street started by children who chucked a firework through an apartment window.

Historian Roy Rosenzweig records how July 4th was a sore point in the struggles over the Americanization, culminating in a "divided fourth" where middle-class families frequently left the city to escape the noise and violence of urban celebrations.[97] Outcault's cartoon appeared at a time when the blame for "loud celebrating" started to shift away from young boys who "embodied nostalgic recollections of the writer's own youth or indulgent feelings about his or her children" and onto immigrant populations.[98] Rosenzweig interprets how the "excesses and exuberances" closely associated with Irish and other working-class celebrations functioned as

[95] See the two panel editorial cartoon titled "The Small Boy's Day" displaying a smartly dressed child blowing on a firecracker and then the presumably same child with crutches, *The Evening World*, July 4, 1895, 3.
[96] Idem.
[97] See Gavin Jones' chapter "Immigrant workers and the Fourth of July" in *Eight Hours for What We Will: Workers and leisure in an industrial city, 1870-1920* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 65-90. This middle-class practice of escaping the city is also recorded in news articles published on July 3 and 4, 1895.
[98] Ibid., 156.

forms of communal identity, ethnic expression, and resistance against society's affluent beneficiaries.[99] However, moving into the 20th century, papers increasingly highlighted the deaths and injuries resulting from these immigrant gatherings, which in turn became a target of reform and legislation. To conclude, boyish misbehavior and immigrant misbehavior were two very different problems when it came to Independence Day, both of which appear uncomfortably suspended together in Outcault's "The Day After 'The Glorious Fourth'."

Outcault's "The Day After 'The Glorious Fourth'" introduced an interactive gaze through an injured boy in an orange shirt who stared directly out toward the viewer. The pathetic confrontation as well as the injuries (bandaged foot, crutches, and bandaged eye) almost directly recalled a reprimanding cartoon of an injured prankster that ran in the *Evening World* three days prior. However, Outcault's figure lacked overt self-satisfaction and instead focused on the figure's abject misery. Neither did the injured boy seem to supplicate the reader for intervention in the style of Woolf. Although an unharmed boy in the background laughed at Hogan Alley's self-inflicted miseries, Outcault's cartoon rode uncomfortably on the cusp of dark humor and straight abjection, making neither laughter nor pity a fitting response.

The dumbstruck or desolated gaze evoked by Outcault's Independence Day cartoon recalls the photographs created by Jacob Riis, one the 19th century's most famous social reformers.[100] Using the popular visual device of the slum tour, Riis's documentary photographs of tenement life both introduced a stark, new aesthetic for immigrant poverty while subscribing

[99] Ibid., 72-77.
[100] Christina Meyer writes on how Outcault's Yellow Kid comics may have functioned as "humoristic responses to the bleakness and somberness of the black-and-white engravings printed in the main sections of the newspaper, as well as in periodicals . . .," *Producing Mass Entertainment*, 75.

to Victorian conceptions of the urban destitute.[101] His images were first published in 1889 in *Scribner's Magazine* translated into line drawings, combining the expository promises of photography with traditional aesthetics of illustration.[102] Like Riis's work, Outcault's bodies were often discombobulated, piled on top of one another, and disrupting the viewer's indifference with a direct gaze. Outcault's illustrations also echoed Riis' commitment to capturing poverty's modern look within New York's stark architecture: tenement dwellings, narrowly packed streets, and vacant lots. Outcault's drawings suggested the use of photographic references, possibly Riis's work, through their complexity and coherent sense of perspective.

Although they captured a new shocking reality of modern poverty, Riis's images also reinforced established traditions of picturing the poor. Riis posed children sleeping on the streets in full daylight for his image "Street Arabs".[103] To create images of juvenile truancy, Riis asked boys to enact the "typical" poses of shooting craps and selling newspapers.[104] Riis accepted these practices of manipulation as means to capturing, rather than forging, the true plight of the poor. Riis' other strategy, "raiding" darkened interiors with newly invented flash photography, produced images of "victims" that needed no manipulation. [105] They naturally responded to the invasive explosion of magnesium with vacant or bewildered looks. These violent flashes forcibly generated the shocked, helpless gazes that plied for the reader's sympathy.

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[101] Bonnie Yochelson. *Jacob A. Riis: Revealing New York's Other Half* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 12-13.
[102] Ibid., 14.
[103] Ibid., 189.
[104] Ibid., 164.
[105] Ibid., 14-15.

A passage from Riis's 1892 *Children of the Poor* suggests that Riis deliberately avoided capturing mutual and playful interactions with the poor. In trying to photograph a line of children waiting for a free Thanksgiving dinner, Riis recounted how "each one of the forlorn host had been hugging his particular place for an hour, shivering in the cold."[106] However, once aware of Riis' camera, the children swarmed the photographer, "striking attitudes on the curb, squatting in the mud in alleged picturesque repose, and shoving and pushing in a wild struggle to get into the most prominent position." Although Riis attempted to help reform the line, the children no longer assumed destitute anonymity. Riis cited this determination to be "took" as "always the most formidable bar to success" in portraying their plight.

In contrast, this brash need of poor children to perform for the camera characterized Outcault's comic renditions of lower-class children. Outcault's cartoon published on March 15, 1896, "The War Scare in Hogan's Alley" suggests how directly and literally Outcault's cartoons worked to unravel the paternalist constructs of Riis' images.[107] A year prior to Outcault's "War Scare," A.D. Fisk created a wood engraving after Jacob Riis' "Drilling the Gang, Mulberry Street" for *Century* magazine over a year before Outcault's cartoon. Close similarities between Outcault's cartoon and the wood engraving suggest Outcault remade Riis' "gang" for his parody. Both Riis' and Outcault's images included thirteen boys aligned in single file with heels together. For "Drilling the Gang," Riis arranged a group of boys into an organized drill team, illustrating the reformative potential of military-style summer camps. Riis' wood engraving was

[106] Riis, *The Children*, 39.
[107] R. F. Outcault. "The War Scare in Hogan's Alley." *New York World*, March 15, 1896. San Francisco Academy of Comic Art Collection, The Ohio State University Cartoon Research Library. CGA.SFS58-3-3. https://hdl.handle.net/1811/f150495a-8d15-4225-812a-2f1c42ecb85c (Accessed May 31, 2021)

as much a study in discipline as an analysis of the uneven growth spurts and ethnic features of the Mulberry Street boys. Their straight-backed military stance highlighted their physiognomic inferiority, a worrying sign of truancy, while reassuring its healthy rectification through urban programing. An invisible camp drill sergeant supposedly controled their motions off camera.

Outcault nullified these reassurances by replacing the implied adult sergeant with a juvenile soldier in flamboyant pose. The cartoon line up also amplified its threat by exaggerating the ethnic diversity of the crowd. Showing his knowledge of racial shorthand, Outcault included a beanpole Swede, a chiseled-faced German, a stunted cross-eyed Irish boy, and African American with exaggerated lips. Racist caricatures served as stand-alone jokes in 19th century cartooning practices, placing Outcault's image in line with other disturbingly derogatory cartoons. Yet in Yellow Kid comics it can be difficult to untangle whether the cartoonist is directly ridiculing his lower-class subjects or attacking conservative dialogues about ethnic minorities.

The unusual range of ethnicities on display here and the nod to Riis suggests that the comic's satirical target focused the social phobias propagated by photojournalism.[108] A small fisticuffs scene of two bald toddlers in nightshirts pointed to this meta-critical stance. The duking toddlers were nearly identical in physiognomy and almost interchangeable, excepting the braided pigtail and slippers that signifies one as Chinese. Here Outcault violated the protocols for displaying two ethnic caricatures in combat, which nearly always pivoted on their physical difference. Outcault's amplification of ethnic difference here can be put in context

[108] Cartoons combined ethnic characters in their comics for humorous effect. Interactions between Irish and African American stereotypes were a stock favorite. However, rarely did the cartoons pit together such a diverse range of ethnicities, as this made the ethnic punchlines too unwieldy.

with literary historian Gavin Jones' analysis of dialect literature in *Strange Talk*. Jones demonstrates how certain American authors wielded "Newyorkese" dialect, typically a device to castigate and romanticize foreign cultures, as a disruptive weapon that "assaulted the naïve, patronizing values that sanctioned dominant interpretations of how the "other half" lived" and represent the "complex ambivalence of ethnic assimilation."[109] Jones analyzed these literary practices against Riis' call for an "Americanization" based on the homogenous acquisition of English and Old World values. The ethnic stereotyping Outcault flaunted in his seemingly unifying call to arms similarly floated the provocative idea that "Americanization was not simply a progression into a well-defined and fixed culture," but rather "the Americanization of the immigrant altered the very notion of Americanness."[110]

A deeper dive into the symbolism of "The War Scare in Hogan's Alley" reveals how Outcault's comic interlaced a complex critique of contemporary events. Bill Blackbeard and Steve Carper have identified that the boys of Hogan's Alley are organizing in response to Britain's release on March 5 of the "Venezuela Blue Book." [111] This document advocated Britain's position in the Venezuelan border dispute and was largely decried for inaccuracies by the American press. An allegorical lithograph published in *Judge* a month previously on February 5, 1896, forthrightly defended the United States' position in this debate. In *Judge*'s cartoon, a defiant Uncle Sam defended the frightened, diminutive characters labelled "Venezuela" and "Nicaragua" against highly decorated European powers. Uncle Sam stands

[109] Gavin Jones, *Strange Talk: the Politics of Dialect Literature in Gilded Age America* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999), 136.
[110] Ibid., 139.
[111] Blackbeard, *R. F. Outcault's Yellow Kid*, 37-38.

before a clear-cut sign proclaiming "No Trespass. America for Americans. Uncle Sam". In Outcault's image, the boys held placards pronouncing "Down wit Ingland" and "Down wit Spane" essentially voicing the same message as the *Judge* cartoon. However, in Outcault's image, the text was confused, misinformed, and reactionary. One placard read "We don't know Venezuela but we are wit him troo tick & troo tin all right." Their response was also violent. An apartment window displaying the sign "Hurrah for old England" had been destroyed by projectiles. The incoherent pronouncements paired with military zeal suggested an uneducated, knee-jerk patriotism.

Newspaper editorial cartoons newspaper frequently positioned lower-class commentators as both common-sense mouthpieces and pejorative comic-relief. In a tradition dating back to British caricaturist George Cruikshank, impoverished individuals were often positioned to the side current events to comment on political injustice, engineered as the author's Greek chorus. The same characters might deliver pun-driven, inarticulate comments in heavy dialect, emphasizing their stupidity and lower-class addictions to alcohol and sloth.[112] Outcault's tenement crew recalled these cartooning techniques. However, their juvenile status and the sense of play and performance indicated that these are not heartfelt opinions, but a raw parroting of the incoherent debates the children would have overheard. In the foreground, the Yellow Kid character epitomized this combination of irreverence, ridiculousness, and pantomime play by looking at the viewer with an open mouth smile and shirt labeled "artillery" while attempting a fancy march forward. The cartoon did not so much critique the political

[112] See for example the cartoon "New View of the Excise Excitement" in the *New York Evening World*, July 5, 1895, 5.

event as the emotional overreaction it generated. The competing, overlapping signs and photojournalistic format indicted urban print as a guilty contributor.

Such inarticulate critiques constantly verged on idiocy, making them difficult to pin down. At the same time, the misspelled placards simultaneously delivered subtle political critiques. Outcault's cartoon echoed the placard in *Judge* that reads "No Trespass. America for Americans. Uncle Sam" with a similar, but more ambiguous placard pronouncing "America for Americans (or anybody else)". In contrast to *Judge*, this sign casted doubt on the United States' altruistic interest in protecting American soil from European colonialism. One sign read "Why don't England turn de X rays onto der Monroe Doctoring an dey kin see wot's in it." Citing both the popular craze for X Ray technology and the Monroe Doctrine's stance against European colonialism in the Americas, the sign confronted Britain's challenge.[113] These waffling standpoints, swinging from nonsense to cheeky wisdom, were visually complemented by the boys' spastic movements and uneven physiognomies. Neither the written commentaries nor the physical play of the figures cohered into a coherent, definable stance.

Lack of contemporary reactions to these cartoons hampers any clear assessment about how these critiques were consumed. In contrast to the color lithographs of comic weeklies, Outcault's cartoons were not discussed and contemplated for their political views by periodicals. However, an 1897 scientific paper titled "Psychology of Tickling, Laughing, and the

[113] Blogger Steve Carper writes about this comic and its relationship to Wilhem Röntgen's invention of X-rays in "X-rays and the Yellow Kid," Flying Cars and Food Pills, accessed March 28, 2021, https://www.flyingcarsandfoodpills.com/x-rays-and-the-yellow-kid.

Comic" sheds further light on the appeal of these juvenile pundits.[114] Publishing at the peak of the Yellow Kid craze in the *American Journal of Psychology*, authors George Stanley Hall and Arthur Alliń tried to map the psychological impulses that generated different categories of humor. Their findings were pooled from questionnaires that recorded the opinions of about 700 participants.[115] Many of the questions targeted children's laughter, revealing the influence of their concurrent work in child studies. Upon analyses, Hall and Alliń defined a number of comic categories, including a section titled "Laughter at the Naïve and Unconscious." The authors cited their "copious" returns under this category which almost exclusively addressed "the innocent blunders of children."[116] Mistakes like confusing the meaning of similar words, imitations, and "clever interpretations of the real as contrasted with the conventional motives of human conduct" were especially prevalent in Yellow Kid and other newspaper comics. Hall and Alliń credited this laughter to "a strong and deep instinctive desire to know human nature."[117] According to the authors, children provided ideal subjects for such laughter as they exhibited fundamental human nature unsullied by the "accessory traits" of adult consciousness.

Hall and Alliń's questionnaire did not assign all forms of humor such noble motives. Satire, a branch of caricature defined as laughing at the victim, received scathing critique because of its ability to destroy sympathy and evoke contempt and aversion.[118] More poignantly, Hall and Alliń specified that satire "comes into power very much later in life and at a much more advanced stage of culture and civilization . . . the laugh it evokes is bitter because

[114] G. Stanley Hall and Arthur Alliń, "The Psychology of Tickling, Laughing, and the Comic," *The American Journal of Psychology* 9, No. 1 (Oct. 1897): 1 – 41.
[115] Claimed by the authors in Ibid., 1.
[116] Ibid., 32.
[117] Idem.
[118] Ibid., 26.

the scorn and contempt are merited."[119] This description accorded not only with the polished look of magazine political cartoons, but their self-proclaimed superiority over other cartoons. Although Hall and Alliń justified that satire against deserving subjects sprung from a wise and developed culture, the authors excoriated the satirical laugh. According to Hall and Alliń, a sarcastic laugh was hardly possible for innocent children and, among the older jaded population, even risked health defects because the laughter was "prone to rankle and fester in the soul."[120] Particularly mean or vicious cartoons in *Puck* or *Judge* received similar criticisms from journalists, hinting at fatigue with the political finger wagging of the humor magazines.

Hogan's Alley unhinged political satire from this acerbic brand of wit and reformulated it through a laughter perceived as more empathetic and, according to Hall and Alliń, growing in popularity. Free of sophisticated society, without adult supervision, and prone to compulsory self-expression, poor children presented a potentially unmarred lens for weighing the political climate. Key to Outcault's formula was the Victorian concept of childhood innocence combined with the innate "savage" stage of juvenile development. By developing and naming characters, Outcault morphed his impoverished "types" into individuals, complicating their status as the anonymous poor. Thus, the juvenile antics were tuned to appeal to the reader's fundamental "human nature" (Hall and Alliń's term) rather than his or her education or political stance.

Hogan's Alley's juvenile humor succeeded best as a political critique when the readers recognized the discombobulation and confusion of the rebelling children in their own urban experiences. For instance, in "The Residents of Hogan's Alley Visit Coney Island" children

[119] Idem.
[120] Idem.

tumbled out of the baskets of hot air balloons. With strings snapping and flailing, all these balloons were branded with urgent, boastful ad campaigns. If one identified with the hurdling children, the comic moved beyond a slice of farce toward a metaphor for dishonest branding and the fallout that ensues. This final section examines the critical work the Yellow Kid himself performed to open these direct, reciprocal reads and function as an avatar for perceiving the city.

THE YELLOW KID AS MASK AND MIRROR

In January of 1896, the Yellow Kid, now clad in his iconic yellow nightshirt, made an official and innocuous debut by looking at the viewer in "Golf – The Great Society Sport as Played in Hogan's Alley."[121] Pointing toward a running dog, his narrative function was ambiguous and arguably unnecessary. Demarcated by large ears and a clean-shaven scalp, this figure assumed the primary interactive role within the comic's physical slapstick. He made eye contact with the reader and eventually spoke directly to his audience via dialog scrawled across his nightshirt. The Yellow Kid's function and appeal can be perplexing because his actions and dialog typically do little to advance character development or cohere the narrative. Rather, the

[121] R. F. Outcault. "Golf – The Great Society Sport as Played in Hogan's Alley." *New York World*, January 5, 1896. San Francisco Academy of Comic Art Collection, The Ohio State University Cartoon Research Library.
CGA.SFS58-1-1. https://hdl.handle.net/1811/1b5622d3-33cc-4ed7-8f5d-150b9a929524 (Accessed May 31, 2021).

interactive appeal of this character seemed hinged to the fact that he brazenly attempted repartee with the reader.[122]

His ambiguity was key to igniting an empathetic reaction from the reader toward the comic's orchestrated slapstick. The term "empathy" was coined shortly after the Yellow Kid was discontinued from the Sunday supplement, although the concept of empathy as a subbranch of sympathy had become a philosophical topic of interest by the 18th century.[123] Originally generated for art theory, "empathy" defined an involuntary neuro-physical response to aesthetic matter, a concept that gradually became extended to intrapersonal relationships. As Theodor Lipps formulated this concept ("Einfühlung" in German) in the early 20th century, he reflected on how contact with a 'laughing face' inadvertently stimulated "the viewer to feel gay and free and happy."[124] Philosopher Douglas Chismar explains that empathy differs from sympathy because an empathetic response can lack agreement with its recipient and be free of any impulse toward social action.[125] Frequently laughing, sometimes expressing terror or despair, the Yellow Kid likewise prompted the reader to empathize and become vicariously disoriented in the urban chaos without probing for charitable help. [126]

The Yellow Kid was not the only outwardly gazing cartoon character. *Puck*'s leading cherub would also occasionally look out toward the viewer with a sly, knowing glance. This

[122] Kerry Soper emphasizes that eye contact would have functioned as an important vehicle for inviting "reader identification." "Swarthy Ape," 277.
[123] See L. H. Edwards, "A brief conceptual history of Einfühlung: 18th-century Germany to post World War II U.S. psychology," *History of Psychology* 16, no. 4 (2013): 269-281.
[124] Ibid., 260.
[125] See Douglas Chismar, "Empathy and sympathy: The important difference," *The Journal of Value Inquiry* 22 (1988): 257 – 266.
[126] See Singer, *Melodrama and Modernity*, 59 – 90.

confirmed a privileged complicity between Puck and viewer, both standing outside the slapstick and understanding the cartoon's political intentions. In contrast, the Yellow Kid confronts the viewer with a gap-toothed, open mouthed grin. His incessant laughter could be triggered by the surrounding slapstick, by the viewer, or an act of hysteria. Jennifer Greenhill's study of humor and art in late nineteenth century America positions laughter as a topic of national importance, harboring both the power to corral consensus as well as reshuffle social order.[127] In the comic weekly, laughter accorded to these roles by directing the reader where and how to laugh. In the Yellow Kid, historian Lisa Yaszek identifies laughter as a fluid symbol evoking "joy, sympathy, relief, or aggression" depending on the meaning one constructs from the assemblage of actions and text.[128]

The Yellow Kid's elusive dialog enhanced this fluidity. To begin, the Yellow Kid's habit of "speaking" to his audience via illiterate messages inscribed on his nightshirt positioned his dialogue in between various methods of print communication. The hand traced lettering smacks of urban graffiti or a hastily drawn missive. The lettered nightshirt was also visually reminiscent of advertising sandwich boards, positioning the Yellow Kid as a salesman. His use of clever double entendre reminded the audience that it is not the kid at all, but the artist who spoke in code to the reader through written signs.

Although the dialog is rarely necessary to the comic's story, it often enhanced the sensation of the Yellow Kid's physical experience. In Outcault's multi-paneled comics, the Yellow Kid often began the comic by setting out his intentions and expectations to the reader,

[127] Jennifer A. Greenhill, *Playing It Straight: Art and Humor in the Gilded Age* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2012), 44-45.
[128] Yaszek, "Them Damn Pictures," 30.

as in “The Yellow Kid’s New Phonograph Clock” or “The Yellow Kid Goes Hunting Becomes Dead Game Sport.” In strips such as “The Yellow Kid Loses Some of His Yellow” or “A Three-Cornered Fight in McFadden Flats,” he addressed the viewer in a panic as ensuing slapstick thwarted his expectations. In “The Yellow Kid Wrestles with the Tobacco Habit” or “The Yellow Kid Makes a Century Record,” he chatted to the reader in the final panel and reflected on his experience.

Outcault occasionally combined the more common subtitling technique and even proto-word balloons with the Yellow Kid’s shirt dialog, thus disrupting the self-contained glass walls of cartooning. A comparison between these various types of communication demonstrates how Outcault positioned various forms of text to enhance the Yellow Kid’s interactive potential. In one such comic titled “A few things the versatile yellow kid might do for a living,” eight of the ten panels include hand-written dialog combined with subtitled texts, which were almost interchangeable in terms of general content and function.[129] For instance, when Yellow Kid attempted a career as a harpist, the subtitle read “I tink I could give parlor entertainments fer de ‘400’ or play fer de Patriarchs’ ball” while his shirt read “I am goin te serenade me steady.” Both the shirt dialog and subtitles included the Yellow Kid’s signature broken accent, poor grammar, and occasional word play, yet subtle differences existed. Subtitles were already well ingrained in the cartoonist’s practice as a place for expository comments and word play, and were often written by someone other than the artist. In contrast, the limited space of the shirt directly embedded text in the performing body of the Yellow Kid, which accented and shifted

[129] R. F. Outcault. “A Few Things the Versatile Yellow Kid Might Do For a Living.” *New York Journal*, November 22, 1896. San Francisco Academy of Comic Art Collection, The Ohio State University Cartoon Research Library. CGA.SFS59-2-4. https://hdl.handle.net/1811/531e86ff-960a-4c5c-a5fd-89676151d37b (Accessed May 31, 2021).

potential reads of the Yellow Kid's grinning forward face. When the shirt dialog is casual and personal, the Yellow Kid's grin read as joyful naivete. If the text is sly with canny critique, the smile read more as mischievousness and cunning. Meanwhile, floating text (a "balloon-less" word balloon) only appeared once in the "harpist" panel. In the Yellow Kid, word balloons performed almost exclusively as dialog that contributed to the soundscape. With subtitles performing as authorial exposition and word balloons as part of the audial stage, the shirt dialog read as the Yellow Kid's interior mental dialog, trumpeted in sandwich board fashion to the viewer.

Somehow the newspaper's diverse populace associated themselves with such a specifically Irish and impoverished caricature. Hans Belting's *Face and Mask: A Double History* suggests how Outcault achieved this. Belting understands face and mask comprising a single theme with fluid boundaries. Belting explains that the boundary between face and mask become ambiguous "wherever the vivid interaction between gaze and facial expression is disturbed or interrupted".[130] To illustrate his point, Belting describes a wearer of a man-made mask who looks on with living eyes, fixing us with an unreadable gaze which "acquires an uncanny force that renders us powerless."

The Yellow Kid fixed the viewer with a similar face/mask amalgam. His impossibly forward-facing ears and tendency to face the viewer straight-on emphasized his head as a flat shape rather than a full volume.[131] His open, unflappable smile, when repeated week after

[130] Hans Belting, *Face and Mask: A Double History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 6-7.
[131] Christina Meyer also refers to the Yellow Kid's "flat" quality (though more in terms of his character development) and thus his portability. These qualities support her arguments as to why he functioned

week, echoed the frozen, expressive countenances of Greek theatre masks. Meanwhile the empty circle eyes and clean-shaven scalp channeled the eerie, smooth shells of Venetian masks. Kerry Soper's study of ethnic humor in the comic strips resonates with Belting's meditation on face and mask. As Soper describes, the ethnic caricature can disarm its function as "a marker of foundational identity" and instead "become a mask to be worn lightly ambivalently, or ironically" to damage entrenched hierarchies.[132] Thus the Yellow Kid potentially operated as both a site for self-projection and an eerie master of ceremonies over the urban sphere. His masklike performance drew attention to the role of the living face (a supposed locus for authenticity) as a mask (a disingenuous matrix), a concept that Belting equates with the fate of the face in modern mass media. The Yellow Kid's indeterminable status between authenticity and advertising was complemented by the nightdress dialog, which performed simultaneously as interior thought and sign board.

The ambiguous age of the Yellow Kid also contributed to the Yellow Kid's liminal status. In an article, Outcault defined his creation as a "type of small boyhood, in the halcyon heyday of existence." The Yellow Kid first emerged as a miniature bystander, typically too young to engage in the physical camp of the older juveniles. In Outcault's words, "He never grows up . . . or, if he does, he immediately reincarnates himself in his old form and goes through the same programme again." However, through his appearances Outcault implied growth, giving the Yellow Kid a "new piece" sewed to the rising hem of his nightshirt and equipping him with increasingly gangly and garish features. Yet he never grew back his hair or upgraded to

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effectively as a serial figure that could be invested with multiple meanings. Meyer, *Producing Mass Entertainment*, 13.

[132] Soper, "Swarthy Ape," 262

trousers. As an odd conglomerate of babyish accessories and adult garishness, the Yellow Kid, even more so than his companions, existed as a character of indeterminable age.[133] As an avatar to be occupied, the Yellow Kid wavered between victim and curator of the city's chaos.

A final analysis of Outcault's "A Wild Political Fight in Hogan's Alley – Silver Against Gold" published on August 2, 1896 demonstrates how the Yellow Kid comics wielded juvenile horseplay and the reciprocal gaze to overturn traditions of political cartooning.[134] Leading up to the presidential election of 1896, *Puck* magazine liberally satirized the Democratic nominee William Jennings Bryan while also holding Republican William McKinley's campaign to task.[135] Cartoons targeted the central debate over whether to maintain the gold standard or switch to a bimetallic standard that backed U.S. currency with silver. With an allegorical approach to political humor, *Puck* lampooned "Free silver" in the guise of a jabberwocky, a bottle of rum, and deflated bike tire.[136] By contrast, Outcault's cartoon ridiculed primarily the effect of political fervor on the populace rather than the campaign itself.

The Hogan's Alley rally featured exclusively juvenile campaigners littered with its typically perilous slapstick. Flying bricks, children cowering from a barking dog, and a boy tossing a cat from a roof accentuated the physical chaos without forwarding any ordering narrative or agenda. However, a building clock arranged and labeled as the time "16 to 1" (the

[133] For more on the adult-child status of the Yellow Kid, see also Meyer, *Producing Mass Entertainment*, 85 and Soper, "Swarthy Ape," 277.
[134] R. F. Outcault. "A Wild Political Fight in Hogan's Alley – Silver Against Gold." *New York World*, August 2, 1896. San Francisco Academy of Comic Art Collection, The Ohio State University Cartoon Research Library. CGA.SFS57-2-1. https://hdl.handle.net/1811/7c0b67ca-e5cb-47ce-ba0b-51cb60920bdd (Accessed May 31, 2021).
[135] Kahn and West, *What Fools*, 43.
[136] "The Free Silver Jaberwock," *Puck*, July 29, 1896.

rate of silver to gold) echoed the Democratic slogan and underscored the central currency issue. Rally signs for both candidates choked the scene and paired political alignments with ridiculous justifications. The "Barber's Sound Money Club" endorsed McKinley because "silverites all wears whiskers wich is bad fer de barbers". The "Tailors McKinley Club" played upon Ryan's platform for the impoverished American by saying "Dem hayseeds all wears slob close anyhow." Outcault summarized the mood with boys blowing nine horns under a sign labeled "McKinley Quiet Corner Club."

The Yellow Kid characteristically took a central foreground position on a raised platform as a campaign speaker. With gleeful fervor, the Yellow Kid lunged forward, looking directly at the reader, with his nightshirt proclaiming "Fer O'Bryan" and, in smaller text, "At last I am in ter politics". The Yellow Kid appeared to engage in politics merely as an urban rite of passage and a mistaken alignment between the candidate and his Irish heritage. However, he extended forward an uncharacteristic diamond ring, signaling political influence and corruption.[137] This began to construct a deeper political critique of recent headlining news. Roughly two weeks prior to Outcault's cartoon on July 20, 1896, the *New York Times* announced, "Tammany to Endorse Bryan." The Tammany Society was an influential political organization in New York City that typically controlled Democratic nominations. It also notably assisted incoming Irish immigrants, particularly with scaling up the political ladder. Tammany's endorsement of Democratic nominee Bryan shocked supporters as McKinley's Gold Standard Platform stood to benefit big business. A *Puck* cover by F. Opper published close to the election ridiculed this

[137] Bill Blackbeard identifies political corruption as the reigning theme in this comic. He points out the signage at the left above the "Campaign Head-quarters" declaring "votes will be bought an sold at regular market price" as signaling voter fraud. *R. F. Outcault's Yellow Kid*, 47.

decision by depicting a weeping Tammany Tiger who bemoans with double entendre "They're all goin' to git Prosperity, an' I'm goin to git left!" In contrast, Outcault's Hogan's Alley constructed a more timely and subtle critique. The Yellow Kid's newfound wealth and Irish endorsement aped the influence of Tammany Hall. His mock imitation portrayed Tammany's baffling decision as a product of thoughtless political alignment and corruption.[138] In this image, the entire uproarious Irish ghetto potentially mimicked and ridiculed the fallout and political hysteria following this decision. Unlike *Puck*, Outcault's image expressed the hysteria, confusion, and suspicions of incompetence that characterized contemporary headlines and New York's political climate.

CONCLUSION

Later cartoons and publications delivered similar self-reflexive cultural critiques, though often with more obvious devices than the Yellow Kid. Following the end of Yellow Kid cartoons in 1898, Outcault published "Kelly's Kids". These cartoons depicted a diverse group of lower-class children wreaking havoc on their environment but tended to deliver more transparent parodies of New York's public programming. Nicholson Baker's and Margaret Brentano's catalog of the *New York World* includes several articles that lampooned contemporary headlines with obviously exaggerated editorials and bombastic illustrations. In July of 1906, a

[138] The Yellow Kid's pinky ring and oratory stance closely mirrored the position of the Tammany Tiger in a *Puck* cover by Louis Dalrymple published almost exactly 4 years later when Bryan once again faced off against McKinley. See "He shouts for Bryan, but this is the way he will vote," *Puck*, July 25, 1900. Bill Blackbeard identifies the Yellow Kid's "new piece" sewed to his nightshirt as part of his sell out, but Outcault indicates the "new piece" was added to indicate the Yellow Kid's growth. *Blackbeard*, *R. F. Outcault*, 47 and Outcault, "How the Yellow Kid was born," 13.

seductively illustrated article titled "Scientists Now Know Positively That There Are Thirsty People on Mars" deliberately misinterpreted recent scientific theories positing the existence of canals on Mars. While the Mars article used lighthearted jest, a 1911 report title "Col. Edward H. Green Tells the Secret of Happiness" used deriding cartoons to tease its enormously wealthy subject and his pretentious apothegms. By the early 20th century, the satirical cartooning devices associated with the juvenile pundit had become new journalism's distinguishing signature.

Color Sunday comics first became popular in the "yellow" journals, popular newspapers with an infamous reputation for their liberal use of sensational graphics, lurid headlines, and a tendency to dramatize reports at the expense of fact. During the 1890's, Sunday comics became lumped indiscriminately with seedy journalistic practices, and conservative newspapers lamented their degraded humor. In 1896 the *Morning Oregonian* characterized the Sunday supplement as desperate marketing ploy, describing it as a "great desert of words, frivolity, and too often sensation . . . laying waste to its oases of thought and information."[139] An editorial by the *New York Sun* was less polite, claiming that "there is about as much demand for more serio-comic supplements. . . as there is for more fleas in Italy," describing such marketing maneuvers as ranging "from mere inanity to the limits of obscene enterprise."[140] On March 17, 1897, S. D. Ehrhart's cover for *Puck* resoundingly condemned yellow journals and their Sunday supplements. The image depicted two upper class children reading the "sensational papers" with headlines featuring "how to poison a whole city" and "daily scandal monger". In the

[139] "A Step in Newspaper Evolution," *Morning Oregonian*, Sunday, September 13, 1896, 4.
[140] Reported in "Notes on New Journalism," *The Milwaukee Sentinel*, Sunday, October 25, 1896, 16.

background, a poster with a pink showgirl advertised the "Sunday Slop Bucket" while a Dime Novel Writer looked on pondering "And they used to say that my books were bad for young people's morals!" The association is condemning as, during the 1880's and 1890's, reports frequently accredited violent urban murders to minds eroded by dime novels and their unreserved gore.[141]

Under attack for indulgence, profanity, and corruption of youth, comic strips of the early 1900's relocated their mischief to middle-class suburbia and harnessed slapstick to a disciplinary moral.[142] Although intended for a diverse adult audience, the wild slapstick comics featuring juvenile characters and unlabored by witty symbolism were also appealing to children. Moving into the 1900's, Hearst and Pulitzer tamed the radical layouts of their pre-1900's humor sections. These new limitations pressured comic strip males into creating moral exemplars for children. Thus, they no longer had the same flexibility to serve as empathetic urbanites. However, the connection between the juvenile male body and contemporary American experience was cemented by the turn of the century. This emerged in the proliferation of juvenile male bodies as subjects for critique and derision in the comic weeklies. This new climate also forced newspaper comic artists to reconsider the meaning and function of their juveniles within the censured Sunday supplement.

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[141] See for example an 1889 report of violent murders that attributed the tragedy of a murder to "the outgrowth of a mind depraved by dime-novel literature". "Weltering in their blood," *The Daily Inter Ocean*, Sunday, February 17, 1889, 8.

[142] For more on the "cleaning up" of the comics, see Brian Walker, "Disrespecting the Comics," in *Society is Nix: Gleeful Anarchy at the Dawn of the American Comic Strip*, ed. Peter Maresca (Sunday Press Books, 2013), 12. See also Gordon, *Comic Strips*, 41-42 and Saguisag, *Incorrigibles and Innocents*, 86-88.



Fig. 2.1 Frederick Burr Opper. "Puck's pyrotechnics – Fourth-of-July fireworks free to all." *Puck*, July 5, 1882. From the Library of Congress online catalog. https://lccn.loc.gov/2012647221 (Accessed May 31, 2021)

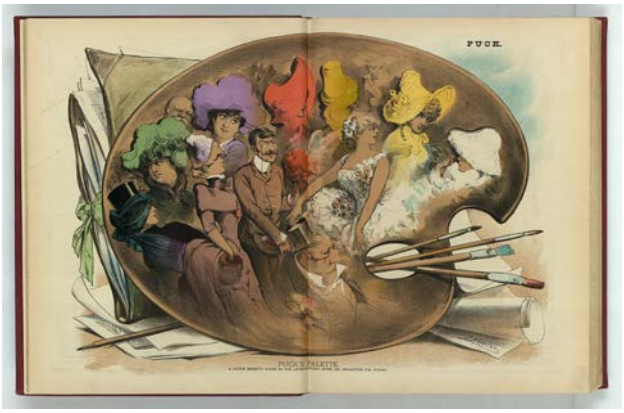


Fig. 2.2 Joseph Keppler. "Puck's Pallete." *Puck*, September 9, 1885. From the Library of Congress online catalog https://lccn.loc.gov/2011660542 (Accessed May 31, 2021)

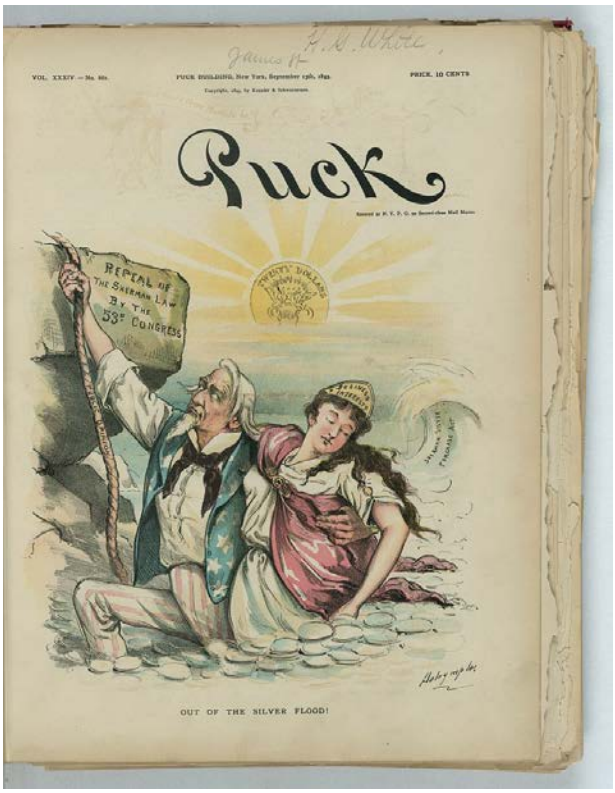
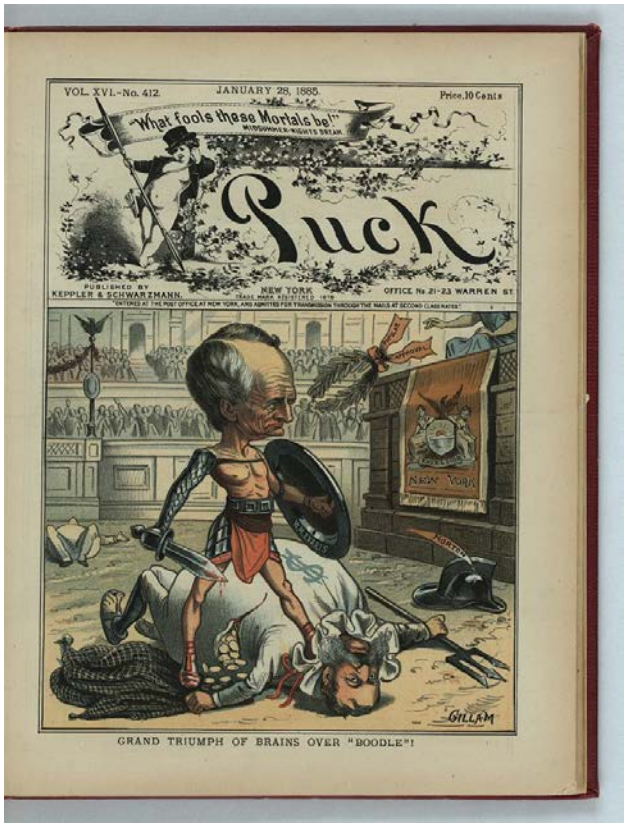


Fig. 2.3 Louis Dalrymple, "Out of the Silver Flood!," *Puck*, September 13, 1893, From the Library of Congress online catalog https://lccn.loc.gov/2012648766 (Accessed May 31, 2021)





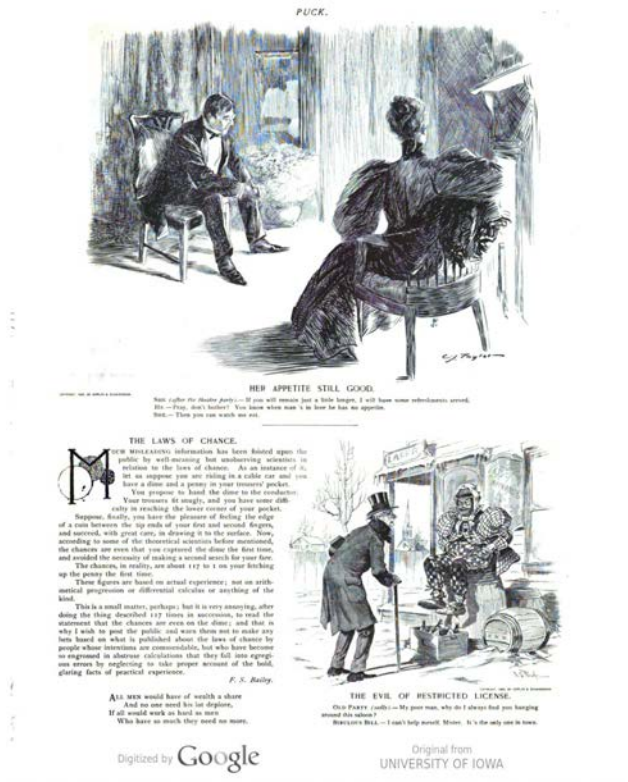


Fig. 2.4 Bernhard Gillam. "Grand Triumph of Brains." *Puck*, January 25, 1885. From Library of Congress https://lccn.loc.gov/2011661815 (Accessed May 31, 2021)

Fig. 2.5 Frank Marion Hutchin. "An Old Fable with New Application." *Puck*, May 23, 1894. From Library of Congress. https://lccn.loc.gov/2012648726 (Accessed May 31, 2021)

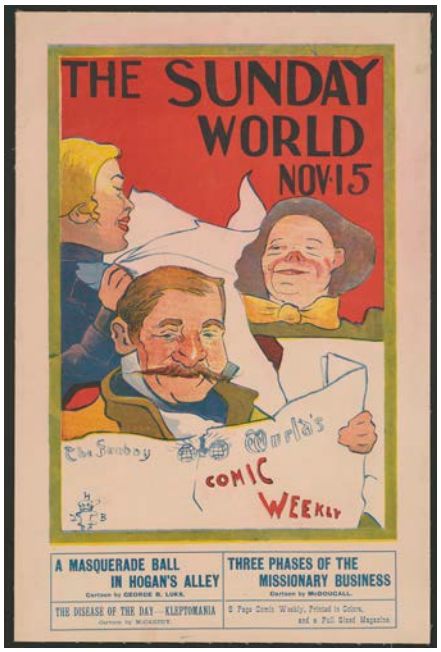
Fig. 2.6 *Puck*, February 5, 1896, p. 3 Courtesy Hathitrust. Original from University of Iowa. https://hdl.handle.net/2027/iau.31858045536426 (Accessed May 31, 2021)



Fig. 2.7 "The New York Sunday World." 1895. From Library of Congress. https://lccn.loc.gov/2015648015 (Accessed May 31, 2021)



Fig. 2.8 "The Sunday World Sept. 27th," 1896. From Library of Congress. https://lccn.loc.gov/2015648006 (Accessed May 31, 2021)



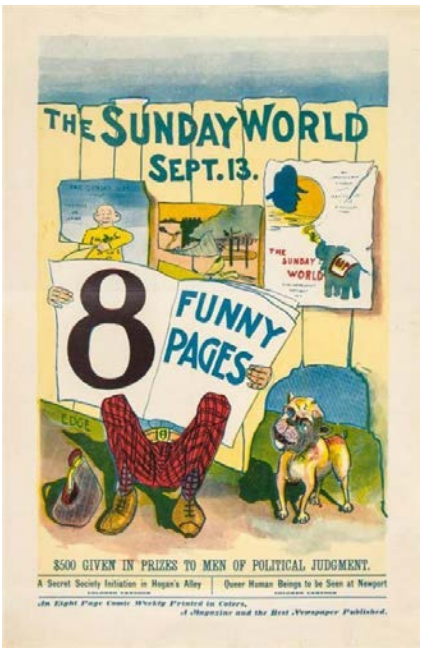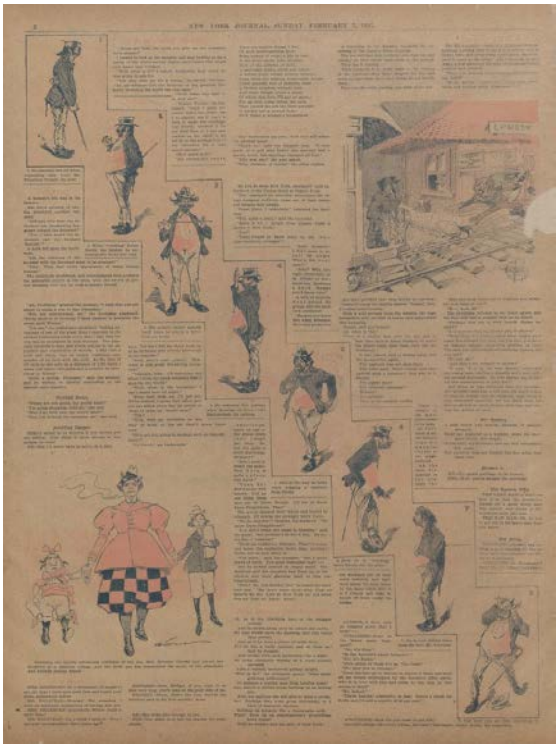
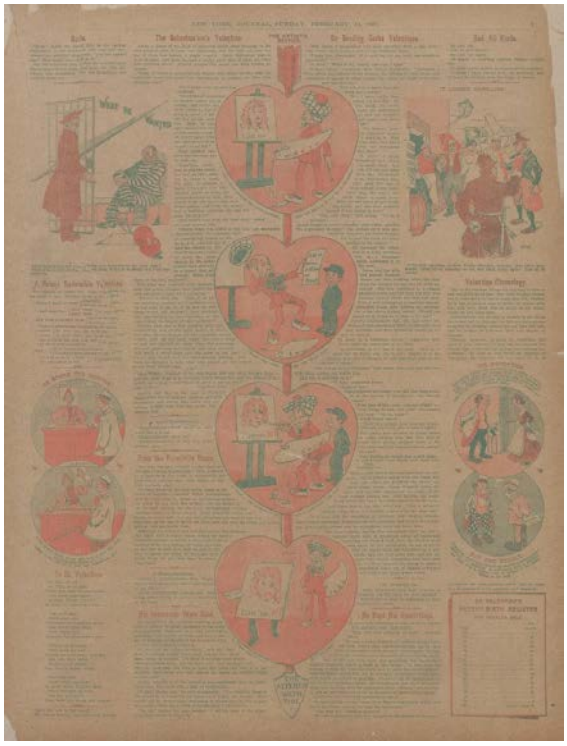


Fig. 2.9 "The Sunday World Sept. 13" and "The Sunday World Nov. 15." 1896. From Library of Congress. https://lccn.loc.gov/2015648010 https://lccn.loc.gov/2018647559 (Accessed May 31, 2021)





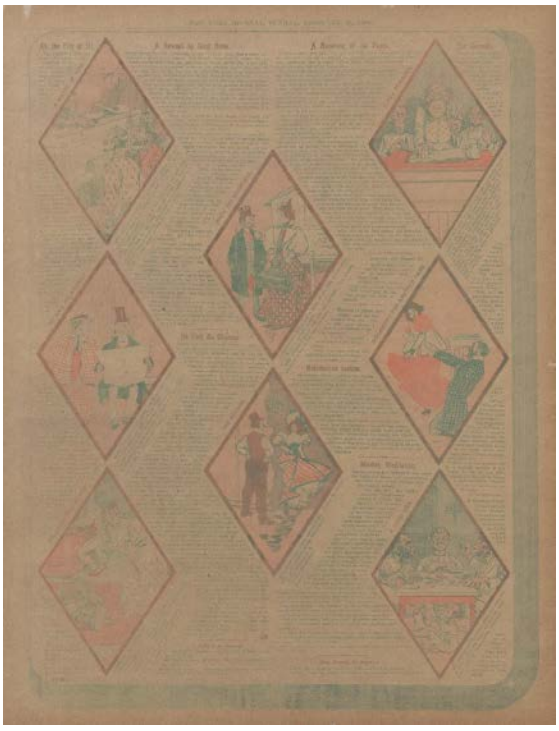


Fig. 2.10 *The New York Journal.* February 7, 1897, p. 2. From Library of Congress https://lccn.loc.gov/sn84024350 (Accessed May 31, 2021)

Fig. 2.11 *The New York Journal.* February 14, 1897, p. 7. From Library of Congress. https://lccn.loc.gov/sn84024350 (Accessed May 31, 2021)

Fig. 2.12 *The New York Journal.* February 21, 1897. From Library of Congress https://lccn.loc.gov/sn84024350 (Accessed May 31, 2021)

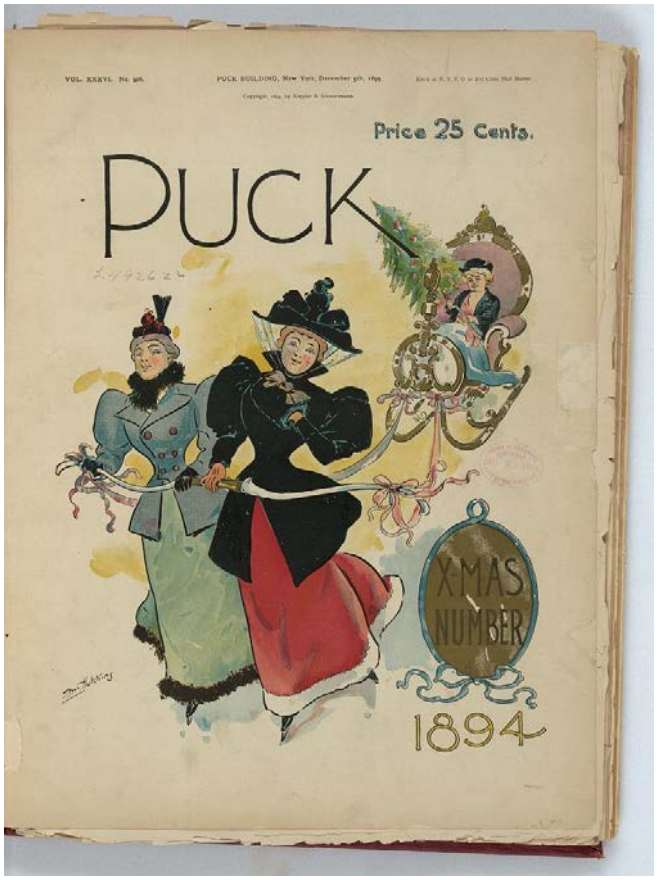


Fig. 2.13 Frank Marion Hutchins. "Puck Christmas number." *Puck*, December 5, 1894. From Library of Congress. https://lccn.loc.gov/2012648679 (Accessed May 31, 2021)



Fig. 2.14 Archie Gunn and R. F. Outcault. "New York Journal's Colored Comic Supplement," 1896. From Library of Congress. https://lccn.loc.gov/93504523 (Accessed May 31, 2021)

Chapter 3

THE MIDDLE-CLASS JUVENILE AS CULTURAL IDIOT: BUSTER BROWN

On May 4, 1902, the *New York Herald* debuted the comic strip *Buster Brown*, featuring Richard F. Outcault's legendary mischief-maker. Unlike Outcault's preceding serials, which focused on characters from tenement slums and included maligned racial stereotypes, Buster Brown was white and middle-class. Yet Buster Brown followed in the footsteps of Outcault's "Yellow Kid" by accruing an immediate fandom.[1] For over nearly two decades, the paneled comic staged a predictable narrative of escalating chaos following the poor decisions and incurable naughtiness of its smartly dressed title character. The comic's capstone panels typically featured Buster receiving an emphatic spanking and then subsequently penning his "resolution". Presented as a poster glued directly to the wall and penned by hand, the document almost always began "Resolved!" and then delivered an often inarticulate, pun-laden reflection on his mishaps.

Scholars link Buster's universal commercial appeal and his sweeping likability to the comic's adherence to conservative values. The comic's conventional storyline and white middle-class setting suggest an edifying function: the entertainment factor of Buster's joyful disobedience was contained and rectified by a sobering consequence. However, close examination of the sequence of panels and capstone panels belies this logic. Buster Brown typically inverted rather than epitomized polite or rectifying comedic models. This created a puzzling contradiction.

[1] Ian Gordon has thoroughly documented the licensing of Buster's image to sell commercial products. See Ian Gordon's "Comic Strips, National Culture, and Marketing: The Breadth of Form" in *Comic Strips and Consumer Culture: 1890 – 1945* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1998), 3-58.

Buster Brown's commercial success could be commensurate with a performance that gleefully flouted, rather than kowtowed to, conservative pressures. Furthermore, Buster Brown's elite class status changed the empathetic relationship, now well established in American comics, that linked the reader's modern experience to the violently assaulted comic youth.

REFORM IN COMICS AND BUSTER BROWN

Outcault introduced Buster Brown just as prominent newspapers across the nation began to overhaul the structure of their Sunday comic supplements.[2] Within the first few years of the 20th century, newspapers reformatted their comic supplement in response to attacks against their corrosive influence on children's morals.[3] The titles, mastheads, and content of these comic sections were reconstructed to present a tight, tidy section designed for consumption by young children. The *New York Tribune* titled its three-page comic section "Little Men and Little Women" and, like many newspapers, tucked the children's activities safely at the very back of the Sunday supplement. Frivolous farces became paired with more edifying activities. In 1903 the *Chicago Tribune* followed its comics section with "Uncle Richard's chats with his Boys". This feature offered moralizing stories in a reoccurring segment, "The concatenated order of reformed bad boys," where fictional voices recounted their transition from lazy pranksters into upright miniature citizens. Do-it-yourself craft instructions, like how to build a dollhouse for

[2] See Ibid., 41-42, 44.

[3] Ralph D. Suiter discusses various amendments made to the comic supplement section in response to pressures in "'Improvement' as an Alternate Model to Suppression" in "'Vulgarizing American Children': Navigating Respectability and Commercial Appeal in Early Newspaper Comics" (PhD diss., George Mason University, 2006): 95-102. For more on criticism and reform in comics, see Brian Walker, "Disrespecting the Comics," in *Society is Nix: Gleeful Anarchy at the Dawn of the American Comic Strip*, ed. Peter Maresca (Palo Alto: Sunday Press Books, 2013), 12. See also Katherine Roeder, *Wide Awake in Slumberland: Fantasy, Mass Culture, and Modernism in the Art of Winsor McCay* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2014), 59.

little sister, promised to guide boyish restlessness into productive, family-bonding activities. Pages favored interactive play by printing full color figures and settings children could cut out to fashion their own cowboy corral, schoolhouse or circus. Articles introduced physically challenging parlor games that assured minimal mess and noise. Rebus puzzles, textual cyphers, visual brainteasers, and even word equations featuring comic strip characters elicited participation by offering prizes to children who submitted winning answers.

As a visual type, Buster Brown accorded beautifully to these new pressures for comic strip characters to embody the impish offspring of middle-class families. He sports Dutch boy bangs, smart clothes, even occasionally the outmoded Little Lord Fauntleroy suit. Outcault's rendering of Buster could change dramatically even in a single strip from a more elegant, sleek-profiled youth to a clumsily sketched garish boy. However, Outcault veered away from his brash ethnic caricatures for Buster by giving him a dainty Victorian nose and huge, round eyes, which he often turns skyward in angelic innocence. Buster Brown followed the same visual protocols that governed the appearance of children both in advertisements and in many of the revamped comic segments. Rosy cheeked children sold a nostalgic promise of childhood purity. In her research of depictions of rural children, Sarah Burns has shown wholesome images of childhood naughtiness stemmed from a concept that children acquired a magical asylum from the evils of the adult world.[4] By echoing this rural glow and boisterousness, brownstone-bound children in elegant attire could also brandish this natural state of grace. Accompanied throughout all his pranks by his best friend pit-bull terrier Tige, Buster Brown visually embodied an ideal blend of innocence and wholesome naughtiness.

[4] See Sarah Burns, "Barefoot Boys and Other Country Children: Sentiment and Ideology in Nineteenth Century American Art, *The American Art Journal*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (1988): 24 – 50.

By 1904 Buster Brown imagery had not only flooded the American market but even began branding European products.[5] The *Chicago Tribune* boasted of Buster Brown's commercial success as a signature aspect of American culture: "Here in America Buster Brown has become a fad and fashion in business. First there were Buster Brown books, primers, toys, cards, and games of all kinds; now the stores are selling Buster Brown shoes, stockings, shirts, pajamas, caps, sweaters, and twenty other articles as necessary as bread and meat . . . "[6] In his comics, Outcault poked fun at the Buster Brown mania while simultaneously licensing his character and reaping its profits. The March 14, 1904, "Buster Brown Goes to the Matinee" features a somewhat befuddled Buster visiting a stage production of himself and Tige. By December 17, 1905, "Buster Brown: Merry Christmas" shows Buster so overwhelmed with Buster Brown themed gifts that he checks himself into a "nervous prostration hospital".

It may seem contradictory that an incurable mischief maker could proudly serve as the commercial face of American products. Historian Lara Saguisag ascribes Buster's popularity to his accordance with the genteel, family-oriented values of polite Progressive Era society. Her analysis suggests that the Brown's family domestic discordance actually encouraged "democratic, intimate, and loving relationships between family members" that were "more suitable for addressing the challenges of modernization and industrialization."[7] Historian Ian Gordon demonstrates that advertisers helped engineer this association by selecting excerpts from Buster Brown's "resolutions" that emphasized ethical practices and Christian thinking.[8] Such misappropriations suggested Buster concluded his mischief with wise remorse, an opinion

[5] R. F. Outcault, "Buster Brown is becoming a fad," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 10, 1904, pg. 52.
[6] R. F. Outcault, "Buster Brown's European Trip," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 12, 1904, p. 29.
[7] Saguisag, *Incorrigibles and Innocents*, 85.
[8] Gordon, *Comic Strips*, 54.

echoed by contemporaneous editorials applauding Buster's wisdom.[9] Ian Gordon also emphasizes that Buster Brown could serve as "a figure open to different and simultaneous interpretations that translated into diverse market appeal."[10] Such an analysis grants Buster Brown the same potential "polysemic" personality as Outcault's Yellow Kid. Buster's popularity inarguably led advertisers to liberally recycle and reappropriate his image. However, these explanations of Buster's popularity brush aside the shocking upheavals Buster Brown made to comic strip conventions and the attacks Buster's actions regularly posed against white middle class stability.

BUSTER BROWN BREAKS THE COMIC STRIP FORMULA

To begin, Buster Brown comics violated cartoon protocols governing the portrayal of well-off white children. Rude brownstone brats frequently featured as comic fare in late 19th century humor magazines. However, they typically appeared with the same grace and elegant illustration style of other upper-class one-liner panels. In 1894 *Judge's Library* ran a year-long series where each issue targeted a specific American character. The May issue number 62 dedicated to "Our Kids" shows how child-based humor was ingrained as an established comedic trope. Slapstick panels that featured children's bodies hurling into space, screaming, or being whipped were typically reserved for lower-class children. Their lanky, convulsing bodies and gawky faces effectively dramatized the chaos. In contrast, young upper-class boys typically sported soft features and elegant poses. Their humor is not bodily, but instead derived from

[9] For instance, see "Buster Brown True to Nature: Old and young alike enjoy his innocent fun and remember moral lessons," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, October 1, 1905: B8.
[10] Gordon, *Comic Strips*, 55.

their clever retorts to primarily upper-class women and mothers (Fig. 3.1). Although often sporting effeminizing curls and Little Lord Fauntleroy suits, their ability to disarm and even embarrass their female supervisors asserted potential masculine control. Literary scholar Anna Wilson's research on the Fauntleroy suit phenomenon in literature analyzes how rebellion against the suit and effeminizing control meant escape from the "unnatural workings-over" of a female-dominated domestic sphere.[11] While lower class children were both instigators and recipients of modern chaos, upper class white children displayed relative poise and dominance.

Comics involving upper class children occasionally referenced spankings or physical naughtiness, but the actual act was rarely shown. In *Judge's Library*, a young sailor-suited boy gazed at a giant hand-shaped sign advertising a glove shop and commented to his mother "We children have lots to be thankful for" because "S'pose you'd had a hand like that just after you caught me in th' jam-closet yesterday?" (Fig. 3.2) In contrast, Buster's physical punishments were on blatant public display in the comic panel. Buster's interactions with his mother (the dominant antagonist in Buster's narratives) were relatively free of the witty repartee that might give Buster the comedic upper hand. This overturned traditions that kept witty upper-class cartoons separate from bodily slapstick panels. It also aligned Buster Brown with a sketch comedy device well established by newspaper comic strips: the pranking / spanking narrative.

For most Sunday strips, spanking marked a satisfactory end to juvenile mischief.[12] For example, a 1902 comic "Johnny's Valentine" by A. D. Reed followed a schoolboy who

[11] Anna Wilson. "Little Lord Fauntleroy: The Darling of Mothers and the Abomination of a Generation." *American Literary History,* Vol. 8, No. 2 (Summer 1996): 254.
[12] Roeder, *Wide Awake*, 20.

accidentally submitted a rude caricature of his schoolteacher directly to its subject.[13] The comic emphasized the schoolboy's smug arrogance and self-congratulatory gloating even in the penultimate panel when all but the truant realized the mistake. The inevitable spanking was condoned and enjoyed by the lad's schoolmates who cackle at his punishment. This predictable pattern of mischief and punishment drove Dirk's Katzenjammer Kids to comic strip frame. Debuted in 1897, the Katzenjammer Kids adhered to its winning formula for over half a century of production.[14] The 1902 *The Katzenjammers Celebrate Christmas and Happy Hooligan Helps* predictably began with a prank.[15] As the adults prepared to entertain the children with a Santa actor, the naughty brothers slipped a fire extinguisher into Santa's bag. The two brothers congratulated each other on a prank well played and waltz as chaos engulfs the figures. In the final panel, their fat stalwart German mother soundly spanked one child as the other cries. The howling mouths of the youngsters are exaggerated into round circles. Surrounding word bubbles from adults and even onlooking children endorsed their punishment by musing "Them youngsters ought to be marooned," "They ought to be jailed," and even a condescending "I'm sorry for those kids".

Although working the same genre of comedy, Buster Brown's spanking did not carry the lighthearted overtones of the Katzenjammer kids. In Katzenjammer kids, light cartoon action

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[13] A. D. Reed. "Johnny's Valentine." *Philadelphia Press*, February 2, 1902. San Francisco Academy of Comic Art Collection, The Ohio State University, Billy Ireland Cartoon Library and Museum. CGA.SFS47-12-2. https://hdl.handle.net/1811/1c826ecc-8932-48f6-b046-afd06ea6a80d (Accessed May 31, 2021).

[14] David Gerstein, "History – Dot's Der Cheese! A Katzenjammer Appreciation" in *Society is Nix: Gleeful Anarchy at the Dawn of the American Comic Strip*, ed. Peter Maresca (Palo Alto: Sunday Press Books, 2013), 18. See also Saguisag, *Incorrigibles and Innocents*, 43.

[15] Rudolph Dirks and Frederick Burr Opper. "The Katzenjammers Celebrate Christmas and Happy Hooligan Helps." *San Francisco Examiner*, December 7, 1902. San Francisco Academy of Comic Art Collection, The Ohio State University, Billy Ireland Cartoon Library and Museum. CGA.SFS77-6-1. https://hdl.handle.net/1811/556c3e39-e5f5-4130-8663-1876ea5f8408 (Accessed May 31, 2021)

lines described the momentum of the swatting switch or its contact. In Buster Brown, action lines emphasized the force of the blow and highlighted the violence of contact. While penning his resolutions, lines radiated from Buster's rump or he was shown with a pillow tied to his backside to soothe the pain.[16] Furthermore, Buster's stylish mother often appeared enraged, indicating she beat him out of anger or frustration. In an early comic from 1902 titled "Buster Brown's experience at the dentist," Mrs. Brown frowned and bulged her eyes as she spanked not only Buster, but even the family dog Tige. By contrast, the Katzenjammer's Ma often talked while she spanked and focused on instilling discipline, however futile the physical act.

Historian Richard Brodhead's research on corporal discipline shows how, by the antebellum period, physical correction began being characterized as an "old world" disciplinary model.[17] Domestic manuals explained how behavioral correction could instead be persuaded through the family's emotional bond, granted the child had developed a sense of allegiance to the family.[18] Such old world solutions fitted within Katzenjammer's gaudy German ethnic stereotypes, but chafed against the familial bond expected of Buster Brown's privileged household. Newspaper reports of the early 20th century indicate spanking was still considered an accepted and necessary technique for corralling some behavior. However, articles also covered legal debates over the allowance of spanking in schools and even the introduction of a

[16] See for instance R. F. Outcault. "Buster Brown Just Puts a Live Lobster in Pa's Bed." *The St. Louis Republic*, May 29, 1904. San Francisco Academy of Comic Art Collection, The Ohio State University, Billy Ireland Cartoon Library and Museum. CGA.SFS3-5-5. https://hdl.handle.net/1811/3406b180-669b-435e-bc46-83e85c9f7994 (Accessed May 31, 2021).
[17] Richard H. Brodhead, "Sparing the Rod: Discipline and Fiction in Antebellum America," *Representations*, No. 21 (Winter 1988): 67-96.
[18] Ibid., 72.

"spanking machine" that would mechanically guarantee light force.[19] This suggested that intense pain was a concern, which raises questions how Buster Brown's uncharacteristically violent spank functioned as a comedic device.

Despite the rectifying spank, comic scholars point out Katzenjammer style serial comics in truth celebrated and condoned the boys' pranking. Lisa Yaszek defines the central gag as "working-class immigrant versus middle-class American, child versus adult" in which the immigrant family, wishing to assimilate with middle-class respectability, attempted to insert decorum in the home.[20] This both promoted "traditional American values of discipline and self control" while also questioning those values and celebrating the Other's values "whether that Other is child or supposedly child-like immigrant."[21] Lara Saguisag agrees that the Katzenjammer kids perform a distinctly American version of boyhood, acting as a symbol of "independence, vigor, and resourcefulness."[22] Both Yaszek and Saguisag assert that the punishment panel is typically the least entertaining and most easily overlooked.

Buster Brown is a tougher fit for this self-affirming American model. To begin with, Buster Brown comics place more emphasis on the anticipation, experience, and after-effects of the spank. While Buster screamed "Help! Murder!" during a beating, he also seemed to have accepted beatings as part of his development. In the off screen beating featured in the 1904 "Buster Brown Kidnapped," the flurry of cries was followed by a "thanks Ma" and "you're welcome" (from Ma) exchange. This mutual cooperation was also captured in "He acquires a

[19] See "A Spanking Machine," *The Daily Pioneer*, September 17, 1903, 1.
[20] Lisa Yaszek, "'Them Damn Pictures': Americanization and the Comic Strip in the Progressive Era," *Journal of American Studies* 28, No. 1 (Apr. 1994): 36
[21] Ibid., 37.
[22] Saguisag, *Incorrigibles and Innocents*, 46.

pet monkey" where Buster admitted, "Ma I feel the old mischief . . . You'd better give me a licking" and the reposed mother replied, "All right buster, get me a club". In another title panel, Buster visited the druggist on an errand to buy their "best spanking brush" but reassured the clerk he kept a board in his pants. The trick did not work as an inset circle later in the comic showed that Ma stripped him naked for his beating. Buster verbally reflected on the spanking practice with inconsistent responses. In one comic, he resentfully remarked, "Ma is cruel woman. She wears birds on her hats – a women who will wear a poor little bird that was brutally murdered has no heart. She don't need it."[23] Yet later that year when he uncharacteristically escaped a spank, he commented about his mother, "She says she will never be impatient with me again. What in the world will I do without a licking? I will be lonesome. I hope she'll give me a go occasionally to keep in a practice."[24]

These varied, contradictory reactions confused the reformatory function of the spank that swings between futility and excess. Buster's parents unevenly applied discipline, brutally chastising innocent mishaps and then sometimes letting outrageous waywardness fly. The only certainty is that Buster's violent punishment depended on the whims and agility of the enforcers. By the early 20th century child-rearing was deliberated as a social responsibility, opening parenting as a subject for scientific study and for new consumer products.[25] American educators and social theorists began focusing on successful methods for rearing the next generation, closely analyzing behavioral outcomes against tactics. A number of newspaper

[23] R. F. Outcault, "Buster Brown gets another joke on the Doctor," 1903.
[24] R. F. Outcault, "Buster Brown plays another little innocent trick on his Ma," 1903.
[25] Katherine Roeder discusses this phenomenon in relationship to Winsor McCay's exploration of inept parenting in Hungry Henrietta in *Wide Awake*, 41 and recommends for more information Ann Hulbert, *Raising America: Experts, Parents, and a Century of Advice About Children* (New York: Alert A. Knopf, 2003).

articles warned about allowing parenting and disciplinary structures to be directed by anger or vanity.[26] Rather than placating to upper class morality, Outcault's strip appears to critique and satirize it.

Like the Katzenjammer kids, supporting characters in Buster Brown reacted to and commented on the spanking. However, in Buster the side commentaries were almost never pro-punishment. Tige whole-heartedly laughed when Buster injured himself, but his reaction to spanking is more often one of horror or deadpan acceptance. In the 1903 "Buster Brown at the Soda Water Fountain," Tige even protested, "Ma it was an accident" and at the end mused that Buster "is a patient little chap". House staff rendered with stereotypically lower-class or Irish features also disapproved of Ma's beatings. A 1904 strip titled "Buster Brown and his faithful friend Tige" depicted the maid helping Ma restrain an upside Buster as Ma paddled his behind. The distressed maid rolled her eyes skyward saying, "Poor little scamp." In the 1904 strip "He helps his Mama with her tea party," both maid and Tige listened with horrified faces outside Buster's bedroom door as they hear "Biff, bing, zow, never again Ma, stop Ma!"

The sympathetic reactions expressed by animals and the lower-class could be read as signposts toward their uncultured tastes and less evolved status. Afterall, Buster Brown's behavior encapsulated the chaos reformers were citing as a corruptive influence. However, Outcault arguably used them to evoke sympathy from the reader for Buster's plight. In Buster Brown, pro-beating commentaries were only delivered by irascible disciplinarians that were typically villainized by comics. This included institutional figures such as policemen,

[26] See "Vanity of Vanities is Parentage," *Chicago Tribune*, August 13, 1905, 17 and "Epigrams of a Child Trainer," *Chicago Tribune*, December 5, 1909, 57. "Epigrams of a Child Trainer" specifically advises against the "acid of the rod".

dogcatchers, doctors, and teachers. In addition, Ma almost always reacted to Buster with violence while other lower-class characters simply laugh at Buster's blunders, particularly when he became the comic victim. Such was the case in the 1902 comic "Buster Brown helps the new cook to bake a cake" where Buster soaked himself in cake batter. The cook, whose work was now ruined, responded first in shock but then in gleeful belly laughter. In contrast, Ma immediately grabbed Buster and resorted to beating, to which Buster responded in his resolution "Won't anybody sympathize with a poor little boy?"

In addition, Ma never punished Buster when his pranks toppled only the working staff. In "Buster Brown Photographer" published May 8, 1904, Ma delightedly cuddled Buster in the final panel after he rigged a camera to explode soot on the face of their Irish-featured cook and maid.[27] He hugged her back saying "Ma, if you had seen Delia when that fire cracker went off you'd know it was worth it." While Saguisag claims such interactions depicted Ma's maternal fondness and commitment to her son, they simultaneously exposed her hypocrisy and racial discrimination when managing discipline. Lara Saguisag suggests the cartoon may have aimed at combatting Delia's pretentiousness (as Delia sat for a photographic portrait sitting in the earlier panels) and thus reestablished white middle class dominance.[28] However, when the cartoon aired, Irish nationalists had finished a wave of vigorous protests against the depiction of Irish stereotypes in the theatrical production of *McFadden's Row of Flats* and in 1907 would stage further theater riots against the Russell Brother's vaudeville act "The Irish Servant

[27] R. F. Outcault. "Buster Brown Photographer." 1904. San Francisco Academy of Comic Art Collection, The Ohio State University, Billy Ireland Cartoon Library and Museum. CGA.SFS98-7. https://hdl.handle.net/1811/791cc254-723a-490c-8d96-5a45aa569c48 (Accessed May 31, 2021)
[28] Saguisag, *Incorrigibles and Innocents*, 95-96.

Girls".[29] Ethnic stereotyping and pranking was broadly accepted, especially in the comics, but recent protests were at least beginning to question white complacency with such blatant ethnic shaming.

Buster further complicated the Katzenjammer-style celebration of American boyhood by his racial and class status. Pranking that destabilized unpopular youth-sapping figures, such as immigrant parents or classroom teachers, delivered gleeful antiauthoritarianism. Artists typically switched their tactics if the authoritarians came from the respectable Anglo-Saxon class. In "Foxy Grandpa," the two middle-class twin brothers were weekly disarmed and outwitted by their Grandfather.[30] Although they were physically punished by becoming the victim of their own practical joke, Grandpa never raised a hand and overall appeared bemused by their mischief. He emulated the parenting advice dispensed in contemporary articles that advocated a gentle, sympathetic approach that resisted strongarming children's choices.[31] Even the working-class title character in William Steinigan's "The Bad Boy that Made Bill a Better Boy" never humiliated his parents. Here, would-be miscreant Bill was rectified by his own boyish fantasies. After contemplating the distasteful habit of gambling, his own over-active imagination transformed the temptation into a nightmare. Upon awakening, he resolved never to pursue that behavior and become a "better boy".

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[29] Alison Kibler. *Irish, Jewish, and African American Struggles over Race and Representation, 1890 – 1930* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 51-59.

[30] See for instance Carl E. Schultze. "Foxy Grandpa Duck Shooting." September 22, 1901. San Francisco Academy of Comic Art Collection, The Ohio State University, Billy Ireland Cartoon Library and Museum. CGA.AC.I5.155.
https://hdl.handle.net/1811/d87765be-8ce7-4512-a4cc-476db0b5d8f5 (Accessed May 31, 2021).

[31] Saguisag's discussion of the grandfather in Winsor McCay's "Hungry Henrietta" runs along a similar interpretation. This character also masqueraded as the "doddering fool". Though not as wily as Foxy Grandpa, Saguisag asserts that "the strip insists that he is fount of reason and experience" giving his granddaughter "the freedom to feed and fulfill her own desires." *Incorrigibles and Innocents*, 157.

Outcault adopted the opposite tactic for Buster, especially since much of the strip's guffaws came from Buster Brown's ability to upset his Gibson girl style mother. Buster's Ma was a fashionably dressed woman with a dainty Victorian features and voluminous hair, yet Buster's upsets were able to shatter this visage and transform her into a shrieking caricature or slapstick acrobat. To chase Buster, Ma often ran at a 45-degree angle, and she struggled to deliver emphatic spanks in her tightly corseted dress. In "Buster Brown at great south bay," where Buster set a feisty lobster in Ma's wash bucket, Ma threw herself into an upside handstand upon being pinched. In the 1906 "And the blow nearly killed poor Mamma," Buster's parlor games resulted in the household staff welcoming a visiting minister while dressed in circus garb. Realizing the embarrassment, Ma grabbed her face and convulsed into an impossible backbend. Ma's ability to transform her elegant Victorian profile into a bug-eyed, gaping mouth caricature not only drove the strip's humor; it also shattered the impenetrable superiority and unflappability of the higher classes.

This humor at the expense of upper-class decorum appeared central as Buster's family home became increasingly well to do and chic through the strip's run. Early strips from 1902 depict Buster as decidedly middle class. In the 1902 "Buster Brown and Pore Lil Mose," Buster entered his family home from what looked like a hallway and the interiors were sparsely furnished. Yet the space lacked the signature cracked plaster and busted upholstery of working-class tenements. Buster sported the disheveled hair and crumpled sailor suit of other typical middle-class schoolroom boys. However, by 1903, Buster welcomes guests up brownstone steps and the household boasted at least an Irish maid and cook.[32] Readers would

[32] See R. F. Outcault, "Buster Brown gives a surprise party for himself," 1903.

enjoy watching his smoothly coiffed hair and pressed sailor suit become destroyed by the end of the strip, either by self-induced calamity or a rough spanking. While historians typically identify Buster as middle-class, Outcault incorporated symbols and illustrative styles into his comic, primarily to demolish them through the course of the cartoon.

BUSTER AND MIDDLE-CLASS CHILD REARING

Scholars try to locate Buster's misdemeanors, which might otherwise seem repulsive to white middle class readers, within the Progressive Era discourse of family values and childhood citizenship. In his book *Commercializing Childhood*, Paul B. Ringel discusses how "genteel" Americans (namely those from white middle class families) perceived the nation's families as in a state of crisis. Industrialization and urbanization began removing the family's role as "a unit of economic production" while increased school enrollment pushed children further from parental control.[33] Discussions of white Anglo-Saxon child-rearing differed from the fears expressed by this same social class over immigrant procreation, placing Buster Brown within a different cultural debate than Katzenjammer kids. President Theodore Roosevelt's controversial 1903 letter, published as a book preface, admonished wealthy Anglo-Saxon citizens who delayed marriage or precautioned against children in order to "live one's life purely according to one's own desires." [34] He co-opted the term "race suicide" not only to warn against the presumed declining birthrate amongst whites compared to the increasing numbers

[33] Paul B. Ringel, *Commercializing Childhood: Children's Magazines, Urban Gentility, and the Ideal of the Child Consumer in the United States, 1823-1918* (Boston: University of Massachusetts, 2015), 175.
[34] This letter was published in "Deplored by the President: Letter Condemning Shirking of Parenthood Used as Preface to a Book." *The Washington Post*, Feb 12, 1903, 1.

of laboring immigrants.[35] Roosevelt also insisted that "strong racial qualities," such as courage and resolution, need to be practiced lest they atrophy. In 1905 he reemphasized the urgency of race suicide in a speech titled "On American Motherhood" delivered to the National Congress of Mothers. Roosevelt's race suicide question sparked a maelstrom of polarized debate in papers across the nation. Suffragists in particular adamantly protested against equating a woman's worth with her procreating powers. Political cartoonists rose to meet the emotional turmoil, falling on both sides of the argument. The debate reveals how procreation and child-rearing held a central place in the discussion of America's future, placing a contentious spotlight on the wealthy Anglo-Saxon family unit.[36] The identity and responsibilities this family owed to American society was frequently caught in a furious tug of war.

In 19th and early 20th century dialogs, generating proper Anglo-Saxons depended not only on correct genetics, but also correct upbringing. Like family fertility, the subject of family discipline was riddled by deep rifts. In 1889, J. T. Trowbridge published a worrying assessment of *The American Boy.*[37] Specifically referencing "the young Caucasian," he argued that the freedom and expansion offered by American life had a tendency to slide into indulgent excess. He criticized child-rearing in wealthier classes, remarking that the child's "impertinence is laughed at, and the perversity that should be brought to terms by firm measures, is soothed with sweetmeats, coaxed with candies." A 1900 article by E. E. Kellog titled "The Education of

[35] Gail Bederman covers Theodore Roosevelt's use of Edward A. Ross' term "race suicide" and how it played into his reformative programs to boost American masculinity, and thus Anglo-Saxon dominance in American society. See *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), 200-206.
[36] Leroy G. Dorsey analyzes Theodore Roosevelt's prioritizing of female procreation in "Managing Women's Equality: Theodore Roosevelt, the Frontier Myth, and the Modern Woman," *Rhetoric and Public Affairs*, Vol. 16, No. 3 (Fall 2013): 423 – 456.
[37] J. T. Trowbridge. "The American Boy," *The North American Review* 148, no. 387 (February 1889): 217.

Appetite," directly connected indulgence through treats to abetting lower instincts: "Children allowed to eat at all times, to overeat, to eat without need, and simply because they enjoy the taste, being thus taught self-gratification rather than self-control, are thereby placed in strong bonds under the dominion of their lower natures."[38] Winsor McCay's "Hungry Henrietta" mocked this phenomenon in 1908. His comic, published in 27 installments, followed Henrietta from infancy through childhood as her fretting is constantly quelled with treats. As Jeer Herr described, Henrietta was at the mercy of her overprotective family who transformed her into a "nervous nelly" and aided an addictive eating habit. As she grew overweight, the family turns away with disappointment.[39]

Martha Banta's work on cartoons in *Life* magazine show how the coddled children of the privileged exemplified a more sinister threat than their rowdy lower-class counterparts.[40] Unchecked, their perverse instincts would continue into adulthood, seeping eventually into public life and even national affairs. Cartoonists frequently mocked enfeebled political constituents and policies by dressing them in upper class nursery wear. Unlike their lower-class counterparts, upper class children were identified as babyish, ineffectual, and subject to humiliating reprimands by schoolteachers and nursemaids. A 1903 *Puck* cover depicted William Jennings Bryan in a juvenile cap riding a hobby horse (Fig. 3.3). His target, Grover Cleveland, appeared as an adult and simply walks away from the futile change. In an even more unflattering 1909 comic, "Trimming the pampered darling" (Fig. 3.4), President Taft trimmed a

[38] E. E. Kellog, "The Education of Appetite," *Sandow's Magazine of Physical Culture* 4 (1900): 81-84.
[39] Jeer Herr, "Hungry Henrietta" in *Little Sammy Sneeze by Winsor McCay*, ed. Peter Maresca (Palo Alto: Sunday Press Books, 2007).
[40] See Martha Banta's chapter "War in the Nursery" in *Barbaric Intercourse: Caricature and the Culture of Conduct*, 1841 – 1936 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 295-338.

mountain of excessive golden curls from a screaming child labelled "Hold-up Profits". In contrast street urchin bodies were mostly absent as an allegorical device. When they appear, they typically exerted defiance and resistance, especially to over-domineering political powers. Case in point is *Puck's* 1897 cover "You Dirty Boy!" which depicted Theodore Roosevelt, dressed as a dowdy matriarch, scrubbing a stripped and resistant juvenile boy labeled "Flim-Flam Finance" with "Honesty Soap".[41]

In this context, Buster's brazen mischievousness presented a relieving counter-model to the over coddled upper-class child. A 1905 *Chicago Tribune* article titled "Buster Brown: True to nature" argued that the incurably naughty Buster is "never mean" and that "his temper is always good, and he is manly and frank".[42] Buster Brown's naughtiness matched George Stanley Hall's formula for successful juvenile development.[43] To guarantee manly development, Hall asserted that juveniles between ages 8 and 12 showed an increase in vitality and naturally veer toward life outside the home. A 1904 advertisement for the Buster Brown Club stated, "every home which has a small child between the ages of 6 and 12 has a 'Buster Brown'," slotting Buster directly into this over-active stage of development.[44] Hall warned that the prepubescent instinct for savagery must be given a viable outlet. Without this

[41] The cartoon directly quotes Pears Soap's iconic advertisement, which in turn was based on Italian artist Giovanni Focardi's marble statue from his allegedly eye-witness experience of the event in "a grimy, smoky, Lancashire town." The repetition and popularity of the advertisement speaks to the popularity of the resistant juvenile street urchin. "You Dirty Boy," Wiener Museum of Decorative Arts, March 23, 2002, https://www.wmoda.com/you-dirty-boy/.
[42] "Buster Brown True to Nature: Old and Young Alike Enjoy His Innocent Fun and Remember Moral Lessons," *Chicago Daily Tribune, October 1, 1905*, pg. B8.
[43] George Stanley Hall, *Adolescence: its psychology and its relations to physiology, anthropology, sociology, sex, crime, religion, and education* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1904), ix.
[44] *Chicago Tribune*, February 14, 1904, 63.

development, juveniles did not develop the moral stamina necessary to repress truant instincts. Even worse, repressed savage instincts could resurface in adulthood in perverse forms.[45]

In concert with Hall's theories, newspaper articles often applauded Outcault for its "truthful" representation of childhood. This indicated exhausted parents everywhere commiserated with Buster's pranking as a phase, but not a failing. Even Buster's ability to take brutal beatings signified manly resilience. An 1894 *Judge Library* cartoon illustrated the lower class "Tommy Flats" scoffing at the upper class "Alvares Brownstone's" sobs after receiving a spanking (Fig. 3.5). Accepting spanking as a universal boyhood condition, Tommy Flats scoffed, "I don't cry when my mammy licks me."[46] Despite his screaming, Buster bounced back from beatings pretty quickly. In the early 1900's, magazines advertised photographic prints of a young boy with a pillow tied around his bottom as a sentimental relic of a childhood that was both naughty and remorseful.[47]

However, like many conservative reservations about Anglo-Saxon American development, boyhood fun-seeking was not universally applauded. Trowbridge's critique of the *American Boy* bemoans the boy's lack of reverence, which threatened to deform his character: "Deference to superiors, respect for parents, veneration for years and wisdom, these are qualities of which he knows little or cares less. It is a radical defect; not simply a source of annoyance to others, but a flaw in his moral constitution."[48] Yet others saw this "heedless levity, which spares nothing

[45] Hall, *Adolescence*, x.
[46] *Judge*, no. 62, 1894.
[47] See the advertisement "Charming Child studies for the Nursery and Mother's Room" published by the Judge Company. These regularly ran in the introductory pages of *Judge* in 1909.
[48] Trowbridge, *American Boy*, 224.

sacred or profane" as a signature national character trait.[49] Writing on his irreverent students at Columbia College in 1894, Prof. Hjalmar Hjorth Boyesen reasoned that this plague of jocularity stemmed from America's all-leveling democracy. The nation's democratic spirit and easier circumstances destroyed "the sense of reverence which hedges certain subjects with sanctity, guarding them against the shafts of wit." Although Prof. Boyesen called American humor a "national virus," he also admired it, observing that "humor is a form of mentality which demands a greater complexity of brain and greater expenditure of cerebral force than a mere unvarnished statement of fact."[50] Prof. Boyesen's assessment vacillated between frustration and approbation, ending on two conclusions: humorous irreverence was America's unifying character trait and this trait was the mark of youthful nation that had not yet entered its "higher evolutions."[51] This connection between boyish clowning and nationhood revealed a deeper, driving anxiety: America itself was perceived in terms of human development at the cusp of a national adolescence. Perceived through the lens of new psychological theories, this volatile shaping period would define America's cultural character and hence its global status.

Historian Kent Baxter's research shows how the introduction of adolescence as a psychological concept was deeply intertwined with early 20th century anxieties about nationhood. As he summarizes, "the invention of adolescence is the invention of ourselves."[52] George Stanley Hall's seminal 1900 text *Adolescence* nearly said as much too. His concept of pre-adulthood stemmed from Darwinist evolutionary theories and anticipated continued

[49] Hjalmar Hjorth Boyesen. "The Plague of Jocularity," *The North American Review*, Vol. 161, No. 468 (Nov. 1895): 529.
[50] Ibid., 530.
[51] Ibid., 535.
[52] Kent Baxter, *The Modern Age: Turn-of-the-Century American Culture and the Invention of Adolescence* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2008), 20.

change in the species. He described man as "not a permanent type but an organism in a very active stage of evolution toward a more permanent form." [53] Between infancy and adulthood, the individual recapitulated the evolution of the species.[54] Juvenile development corresponded to a pygmy state when prehistoric human fought for survival. However, adolescence constituted a "new birth" where "higher and more completely human" traits emerge.[55] Adolescence was only acquired by racial stocks that can claim a period of civilized progress in their histories. Furthermore, successful passage through adolescence could awaken an evolutionary leap as Hall asserted "there are powers in the soul that slumber like the sleepers in myth."[56] Hall even mused "perhaps other racial stocks than ours will later advance the kingdom of man as far beyond our present standpoint as it now is above that of the lowest savage or even animals." [57] Yet this successful adolescence demanded that all pre-adolescent stages ripen at the appropriate time to maintain steady muscular and cerebral growth. The upbringing of the Anglo-Saxon juvenile carried with it a potential for a newly evolved race, nourished specifically by America's fertile climate.

"RESOLVED!"

Through his juvenile Anglo-Saxon status, Buster Brown carried the potential not only to represent the middle class, but nationhood itself. Outcault directly plucked at this raw nerve with a device that separated Buster Brown from all other strips: his resolutions. Buster's

[53] Hall, *Adolescence*, vii.
[54] Hall describes this phenomenon in relation to juvenile development in *Adolescence*, viii-x.
[55] Ibid., xiii.
[56] Ibid., viii.
[57] Idem.

violent spanks did not normally conclude the action. Rather they arrived in the penultimate panel while the final panel was reserved for a contrite, resistant, or befuddled Buster to pen his "resolution". The nature of a serial comic is that mischief resumed predictably again the following week. Juvenile mischief served a perfect subject for comic strips because, according to experts, it was psychologically inevitable. However, a character that routinely violated his own resolutions suggested something more destabilizing and worrisome.

Buster's "resolutions" had little to do with the comic's content itself and, over 100 years later, often seem indecipherable. Richard Marschall describes Buster's "large pasteboard bit of penance" as ranging between sarcastic, religious, and moralistic.[58] Marschall asserts that Buster's resolutions, despite their cheeky tone, subscribed to preferences for more genteel, respectable comedy in the comics. Upon closer reading, the resolutions were much more destabilizing. They were filled with misunderstandings and nonsense, especially about current affairs and moral lessons. This mocked not only Buster Brown's idiocy but also parental and institutional failure.

Issued on Sundays, the resolutions often parrot Christian maxims reminiscent of a Sunday school lecture, yet Buster's twist subverted their uplifting meanings. One resolution rambled, "People usually deserve what they get. They only have themselves to blame. Say! Honest virtue is its own reward," but then concluded, "Try it. I don't."[59] Another resolution began, "Seek and ye shall find," and then continued, "You must seek and you can find most anything

[58] Richard Marschall, "Buster Brown: The Bad Boy Who Made Good" in *Buster Brown: A Complete Compilation*, 1906, ed. Bill Blackbeard (Westport: Hyperiod Press, 1977), ix.
[59] R. F. Outcault, "Buster Brown Plays a Prank on the Ash Man," 1903. Reprinted in *An Anthology of Buster Brown Comics, R. F. Outcault* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2009).

you want and a whole lot of things you don't want."[60] At times Buster simply gave up, penning in 1904, "Resolved! That I will quit making resolutions. If we don't make them, we can't break them," and even a more irreverent, "When I think I'm going to make a hit its always the time Ma makes one. I don't care. I mean to be happy whatever else betide, how's that?"[61] Buster's resolutions touched on hot cultural movements or political topics, especially in the strips' first few years, but delivered his critiques in babbling non-sequiturs with child-like innocence, constantly stepping between folly and truth. Sometimes he used the billboard to publicly denounce his parents. One reads "Resolved! That when I get to be a parents [sic] I will never strike a child of mine. I will never lose my temper, not I. Only egotistical pinheads lose their tempers."[62] Another resolution reflecting on President's Day mused, "Resolved! That George Washington was a good father to his country. He never beat it or sent it to bed without its supper."[63] Mirroring back what sounded like principles issued by his parents, Buster even resolved, "I believe my mission is to reform my parents. They are only selfish, bless their hearts."[64] The insolence and inanity not only undermined any potential reformatory value to these resolutions. They also questioned for whom the resolutions were.

Recycling his winning formula from the Yellow Kid, Outcault depicted Buster as writing directly to the reader. His resolutions were glued to the wall and poster size. They appeared as publicly posted advertisements similar to how Yellow Kid's shirt mimicked human sandwich

[60] R. F. Outcault, "Buster Brown and Tige," 1906. Reprinted in *Buster Brown: A Complete Compilation*, 2-3.
[61] R. F. Outcault, "Buster Brown: His Dog Tige Has a Guest," 1903 and "Buster Brown Puts on Girl's Clothes," 1903. Reprinted in *Buster Brown: Early Strips in Full Color by R. F. Outcault* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1974).
[62] R. F. Outcault, "Buster EXTRA Buster Kidnapped," reprinted in *An Anthology of Buster Brown Comics*.
[63] R. F. Outcault, "Buster Brown and a Pair of Roller Skates," reprinted in *An Anthology of Buster Brown Comics*.
[64] R. F. Outcault, "Buster Brown Plays Another Little Innocent Trick on his Ma," 1903.

boards. Significantly, both characters resorted to "print culture," not just verbal commentary, by whatever meager means available to proclaim their disenfranchised voice. Like Yellow Kid, Buster frequently turned toward the reader when he was not actively writing. These similarities suggest Outcault was prompting a direct identification between the reader's experiences and Buster's discombobulating life. While the comic was seemingly directed at children, the confusing nature of the resolutions, which often depend on knowledge of current events and public policies, points to an adult reader. For example, the 1903 comic "Buster Brown just practices on his violin" followed Buster from a failed violin lesson to an attempt to earn cash as a musical blind beggar on the street. While his resolution quipped about follies and vices of music and money, it has no direct connection to the narrative's events. At the end, Buster delivered a veiled critique of President Roosevelt, musing, "Music hath charms to sooth the savage beast. There is a certain president who needs a little music. Maybe he would quit killing things." Rather than using the resolution to conclude the action, Outcault took this opportunity to level a swift and unrelated political dig at Theodore Roosevelt's campaign for the 1904 presidential election. Murat Halstead's 1902 biography of Roosevelt reinforced the president's popular reputation as a big game hunter. Buster's comment deflated the resilient manliness this persona was designed to convey by nonchalantly characterizing the President as a blood-thirsty "savage beast" in need of soothing.

If a resolution was particularly babbling or irresolute, the bullterrier Tige would also turn to the reader, alternating between looks of disbelief, gleefulness, or scorn. This triad of interactions created an intricate and fluctuating relationship between the reader, Tige, and Buster. The reader was invited to empathize with Buster's frustration, smiling at his innocent

maxims. However, the reader could also potentially connect with Tige and cringe at Buster's flawed logic. This triangular relationship between Buster, Tige, and reader differed from the fixed gaze established by Outcault's previous headlining character, Yellow Kid. The Yellow Kid's fixed gaze prompted the reader's identification with the Yellow Kid's plight, positioning the Yellow Kid as an avatar for navigating the perils of the city. The relationship between Buster Brown and Tige questioned and critiqued Buster's desirability as an avatar, especially when Buster's most cringeworthy moments struck deeply at the cultural debates concerning Anglo-Saxon juvenile development and racial advancement.

The 1903 "Buster Brown Visits the zoo" constructed one of Outcault's more legible and pointed political critiques.[65] Encountering a stork at the zoo, Buster asked the bird to bring him a baby sister. Upon the baby's arrival, his Ma rejected the addition and sends the stork around the neighborhood until the stork mandates the "applicant" (Buster) accepts the delivery. Buster indecipherably exclaimed "at last I am parents [sic]" and then began his resolution "Resolved that I now understand the great gravity of this race suicide question." Here Buster referenced Teddy Roosevelt's infamous plea for wealthy Anglo-Saxon Americans to breed and keep pace with reproducing immigrants.

Historian Gail Bederman analyzes how Roosevelt's resolution to prevent race suicide stoked heated debates among the newspapers and magazines.[66] As per usual, comic weekly magazines visually construed their opinions. A color lithograph from *Puck* endorsed Roosevelt's

[65] R. F. Outcault. "Buster Brown visits the zoo and talks to the stork." 1903. San Francisco Academy of Comic Art Collection, The Ohio State University, Billy Ireland Cartoon Library and Museum. CGA.SFS32-1-4. https://hdl.handle.net/1811/1f78a15e-3443-40d4-912c-ae152f8ef412 (Accessed May 31, 2021)/
[66] Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 202-203.

critique of the upper classes by depicting childless, insipid upper-class women babying pet dogs while a tenement mother reached for the stork bundles amid frolicking, plump-faced children (Fig. 3.6). Outcault's critique, by contrast, was more subtle and askew. Buster asserted his political support of the Race Suicide question with nonsense aphorisms and quotes pulled from children's poems. His final line, "I am going to feed this baby on the milk of human kindness," revealed his inability to separate poetic allegory from reality. He parroted the structure of the arguments that had repeatedly been published in the press but stripped meaning. The comic satirized Buster's inability to construct a cohesive opinion or informed argument. By this device, Outcault also satirized the entire race suicide debate and its Anglo-Saxon proponents, suggesting that those in the debate lack similar coherence and judgment.

Outcault's critiques extended to the popular print culture itself and its infiltration by buzzwords, moral rectifiers, and social engineers. One of the most condemning and hilarious aspects of Buster was his earnest attempt to rectify his behavior by consulting social theorists and psychologists. Title panels showed Buster equipped with ambitious tomes. These carried the names of social Darwinist authors such as Herbert Spencer, named specific books like Ralph Waldo Emerson's *Conduct of Life*, or made fun of this heady library with pun-laden label such as "Different Effects of Different Causes by Nat U. Law". Impossible to educate, Buster simply lifted excerpts out of context to support his own convoluted opinions. In one resolution poster, Buster meditated, "Emerson says, 'The great will not condescend to take anything seriously.' That makes me feel great."[67] Here, Buster pulled from high culture to self-affirm his frivolity in a layered pun. His conclusions distorted and upset critical edicts urging youth to drop frivolity

[67] Idem.

and respect higher culture. In the 1903 "Buster Brown puts on girl's clothes," Buster concluded his cross-dressing misadventure with, "Herbert Spencer says 'Life is perfect adjustment to one's environment' Drummon says, 'Happiness is perfect harmony with one's correspondences'. That's me, all except my bad judgment about picking the wrong things to do." Buster utilized academic resources to artificially uphold his flawed judgement rather than to advance his thinking. At the same time, condemningly, Buster's presentations loosely mimicked the tutorial-style structure of editorials and opinion pieces that promised cures to societal evils.

SPANK AS SHOCK

Considering the resolution's unique and often isolated humorous function, the spank was a crucial device for sharply dividing the realm of slapstick from Buster's elusive wordplay. The shock of the spank was embedded in what Ben Singer defined as a modern visual culture that duplicates the "shocks and jolts" of post-industrial living.[68] The violent spank can also be understood through Tom Gunning's analysis of early film's aesthetic of astonishment.[69] Tom Gunning describes how the experience of early cinema constructed an active, respondent viewer who was simultaneously aware of film's mechanical illusions while experiencing astonishment. Gunning defines the pleasures of early cinema as "complicated" by creating an excitement bordering on terror. Anticipation of Buster's spanking similarly teased at terror by creating a sudden rift in the crescendo of slapstick. Buster's escapades predictably followed a

[68] See Ben Singer's "Sensationalism and Urban Modernity" in *Melodrama and Modernity: Early Sensational Cinema and its Context* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 59-99.
[69] See Tom Gunning, "An Aesthetic of Astonishment: Early Film and the (In)Credulous Spectator," *Art and Text* 34 (Spring 1989). Reprinted in *Viewing Positions: Ways of Seeing Film,* Linda Williams, ed. (New Brunswick: Rutledge University Press, 1995), 114-133.

pleasurable arc of escalating chaos, but the conclusive spank did not so much climax the chaos as bring it to an abrupt end that recategorized cartoon violence as vengeful rather than playful. This rift in the comic action and narrative potentially cast slapstick as play and spanking as retribution, a dynamic ripe to be interpreted as a metaphor for social control and rebellion.

Early 20th century psychologist George Stanley Hall warned against the debilitating effects of shock. In an article analyzing the connection between wit and intellectual shock, he contended that extreme shock leads to neuro-psychic disintegration and breaks up coherence in brains, particularly those "of great plasticity or convulsibility."[70] With this understanding, perhaps Buster's delusional reasoning was the result of his violent punishment, symbolic of cultural and political shocks. For Buster Brown, spanking and self-induced calamity seemed to produce a fractured state of mind, evidenced by Buster's seemingly non-sensical resolutions. This enabled the reader to apply different modes of reading and interpretation to the comic. The spank was also a metaphor. Shock can induce idiocy but also a flexible logic that allowed a reader to disentangle nonsense from fact: the key to combatting the aggressive pressures of the modern condition is humor.

Outcault said as much in an untitled comic published February 2, 1904 that followed Buster as he sled with his signature lack of control. As Buster prepared to launch, a street companion yelled "Hey Buster, you can't go there, you'll git arrested". The boy's meaning became clear as Buster began barreling through those same powerful individuals his antics so often targeted: a doctor holding a book titled "science and health," a "new thought" enthusiast, even two shady businessmen that Buster named as a "friend of pa's" go flying. Blows with the sled visualized

[70] G. Stanley Hall and Arthur Alliń. "The Psychology of Tickling, Laughing, and the Comic." *The American Journal of Psychology*. Vol. 9, No. 1 (Oct. 1897), 27.

the critical blows Outcault delivered weekly in his comic. Buster engineered his own punishment by careening into a brick building that ironically yells, "Stop". In the final panel, with a black eye and on crutches, Buster asserted, "it was worth it!" Though he talked about himself under the pretense of a moral lecture, his resolution about having "a good fast run" and "but look at me now" actually seemed to target the powerful public figures he just careened past. In other words, Buster's resolution appeared to frame all social pundits, including himself, as enjoying a crazed game that eventually spins out of control. But Buster continued "So let us smile at our experience and get ready for the next calamity." Directed empathically at the reader, this line acknowledged the modern experience of shocks and jolts, prescribing humor as a means for survival.

It seems contradictory that such a radical cartoon could win commercial approbation as comic supplements were taking a conservative turn. However, the initial conservatism of comic supplements in the early 20th century was not consistent or wholesale. Comics historian Brian Walker notes that, despite the massive cull of funny pages at the turn of the century, most comic supplements were reinstated by 1915.[71] In 1902 the *Chicago Tribune* suspended incorrigible characters like "Alice," an immigrant girl that pulled pranks on her oafish mother but rarely received a spank. However, by 1904 her comics reappeared with the same unrepenting love for mischief. Comics historian Kerry Soper emphasizes how comics, as a low-

[71] Brian Walker, "Disrespecting the Comics," in *Society is Nix: Gleeful Anarchy at the Dawn of the American Comic Strip*, ed. Peter Maresca (Sunday Press Books, 2013), 12.

brow art form, could "evade the control of the cultural guardians" and, by escaping close scrutiny, explore alternative world views in plain sight.[72]

The comics were not the only outlet for adults to indulge in juvenile play. In 1903, the same year Buster Brown was first broadly syndicated across the nation, Fred Thompson opened Luna Park on Coney Island. This phenomenally successful pleasure ground invited adults to indulge in child-like fantasies.[73] Historian Woody Register analyzes how Thompson's model operated as a youthful elixir specifically targeting the modern middle-class white-collar worker, whom Thompson diagnosed as longing more for play and freedom than for the Victorian incentives of riches and prominence.[74] Thompson embodied how the persona of the "boy-capitalist" gained increasing popularity as an entrepreneurial model as Thompson "urged contemporaries to join him in full-scale rebellion against the enfeebling prudence, restraint, and solemnity of growing up."[75] Fred Thompson epitomized how indulging in one's own rebellious desires and outrageous fantasies could generate explosive commercial cultures, resulting in financial success as well as prolonged childhood.[76] Despite the condemnation of the comic supplement,

[72] Kerry Soper, "From Swarthy Ape to Sympathetic Everyman and Subversive Trickster: The Development of Irish Caricature in American Comic Strips between 1890 and 1920," *Journal of American Studies* 39, no. 2 (August 2005), 274.
[73] For a history of Fred Thompson and Luna Park, see the chapter "Life is only a merry-go-round" in Woody Register, *The Kid of Coney Island: Fred Thompson and the Rise of American Amusements* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 85-143.
[74] Ibid., 87.
[75] Ibid., 14.
[76] Renditions of the Gilded Age man as unapologetic consumer, rather than model citizen, engendered a variety of visual alternates to traditional Victorian masculinities. One of the most prominent examples is illustrator J. C. Leyendecker's Arrow Collar man whom historians analyze as a queer representation of Gilded Age manhood. See Dan Guadagnolo, "'A Superb Example of the Common Man': J.C. Leyendecker and the Staging of Male Consumer Desire in American Commercial Illustration, 1907-1937," *American Studies* 58, no. 4 (2020), 5-32.

Buster Brown's juvenile exuberance launched into a mass market that increasingly sought boyhood frivolity for purchase.

Oddly, Buster's often incendiary cultural and political critiques were not addressed in the many editorials about Buster Brown. Indeed, some of Buster Brown's contemporary advocates delivered descriptions of the comic that seem in complete contradiction with its contents. In 1905, *The Chicago Tribune* applauded Buster in an article titled "Buster Brown True to Nature: Old and young alike enjoy his innocent fun and remember moral lesson".[77] The author presented Buster as a "natural mischievous, intelligent and brave little boy" whose great good "lies in his educational benefit to children." Buster even promised a salutary effect on grown men who might remember their boyhood waywardness when "pain and disappointment sobbed itself to rest upon a mother's bosom," a consoling image that never appeared in Buster. Describing Outcault as both a "humorist and philosopher," the article identified these comics as children's literature, aiding the "mental and moral cultivation" of the child and thus "the future greatness of this country". As Lara Saguisag points out, such articles and so-called reader letters are difficult to verify as they may simply be editorial plants meant to uphold subscriptions.[78] Other endorsements were positively bizarre. The editorial "Find Philosophy in Buster Brown: New thought students say he is an unconscious teacher of occult truths" claimed that Buster Brown inadvertently preached Christian Science morals.[79] The article failed to mention how Buster comics frequently directly ridiculed the New Thought movement.

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[77] "Buster Brown True to Nature: Old and Young Alike Enjoy His Innocent Fun and Remember Moral Lessons," Chicago Daily Tribune, October 1, 1905, pg. B8.
[78] Saguisag, *Incorrigibles and Innocents*, 112.
[79] "Find Philosophy in Buster Brown: New Thought Students Say He Is an Unconscious Teacher of Occult Truths," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 10, 1904, D5.

Unfortunately, Outcault himself adopted a "hands-off" parenting technique when discussing his creation. Outcault accompanied stage plays of Buster Brown, lecturing on the character's origins and even performing drawings live. However, Outcault seemingly never addressed his authorial intentions, instead speaking about Buster as an independent identity. Comics historian Bill Blackbeard comments this stance was typically of comic strip cartoonists, who positioned themselves more as entertainers rather than pundits.[80] Thus, as a commercial entity, Buster became easily inhabited, transformed, and manipulated. As an editorial subject, personifications of Buster were varied and often unrecognizable. As such, he successfully embodied the critiques that are interwoven throughout his narratives.

Buster's work as a comic strip character exposed the inconsistencies and caprices of print culture via play and juvenile irreverence. Like Yellow Kid, Buster Brown toppled print culture's impenetrable maxims and social hypocrisies by stripping away their curtain of pseudo-logic and scientific reasoning. With Buster, readers could escape the social mandates exercised by authorities as high as the President wielding humor as a its democratically leveling weapon. Buster ushered in this potential with the savage, uncontrollable physique of a juvenile. The reprimanding slap at the end of the comic did not reign in his thirst for chaos, but rather jostled together conclusions that ultimately pointed to the hypocrisies and inferiority complexes behind Victorian social concepts. However, it would be the malleable and volatile body of the developing adolescent that captured the attention of the later Progressive years.

[80] Bill Blackbeard, *R. F. Outcault's The Yellow Kid: A Centennial Celebration of the Kid Who Started the Comics* (Massachusetts: Kitchen Sink Press, 1995), 18, 134-135.



ACCOUNTING FOR ITS SMALLNESS.
TOMMY (*surprised at the small size of his egg*)—"Mamma, I think the chicken was learning to lay."

Fig. 3.1 "Accounting for its smallness." *Judge*, May 1894. Courtesy Hathitrust. Original from University of Michigan. https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015084609414 (Accessed May 31, 2021)



A MATTER OF CONGRATULATION.
BENNY—"We children have lots to be thankful for, don't we, mamma?"
MRS. RODMAN—"Yes, dear; but what made you think of that?"
BENNY—"S'pose you'd had a hand like that just after you caught me in th' jam-closet yesterday?"

Fig. 3.2 "A Matter of Congratulation." *Judge,* May 1894. Courtesy Hathitrust. Original from University of Michigan. https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015084609414 (Accessed May 31, 2021)

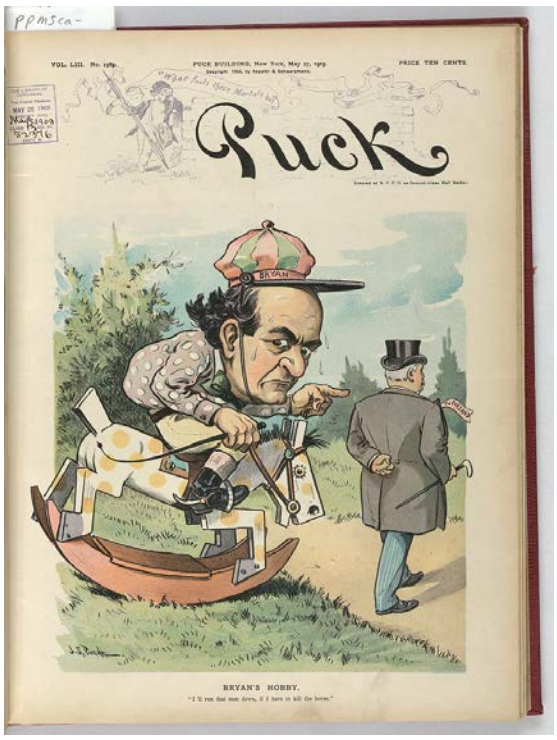


Fig. 3.3 J.S. Pughe. "Bryan's hobby." *Puck,* March 27, 1903. From Library of Congress. https://lccn.loc.gov/2010652268 (Accessed May 31, 2021)



Fig. 3.4 "Trimming the Pampered Darling." *Puck*, April 7, 1909. From Library of Congress. https://lccn.loc.gov/99400247 (Accessed May 31, 2021)

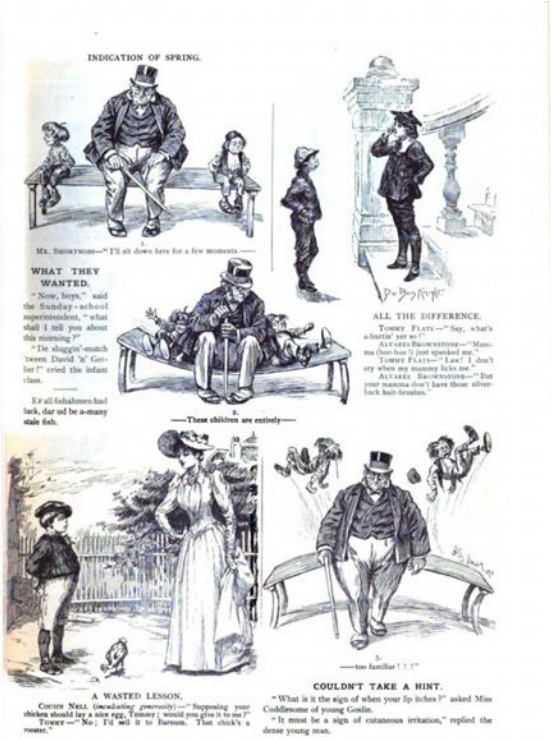


Fig. 3.5 *Judge.* May 1894. Courtesy Hathitrust. Original from University of Michigan. https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015084609414 (Accessed May 31, 2021)



Fig. 3.6 S. D. Ehrhart. "Concerning race suicide." *Puck*, April 1, 1903.
From Library of Congress. https://lccn.loc.gov/2010652241 (Accessed May 31, 2021)

Chapter 4

THE ADOLESCENT BODY IN THE AMERICAN IMAGINATION, PAINTING, AND PRINT

As Buster Brown was hitting its heyday in the early 20th century, George Bellows sent shockwaves through the Fine Arts by channeling Yellow Kid-style childhood antics into paint. In Bellows' career-launching 1907 painting *Forty-Two Kids* (Fig. 4.1), a swarm of naked boys diving and roughhousing off a pier recalled Outcault's chaos-filled compositions from nearly a decade earlier. Like the street rats of Hogan's Alley, the children in Bellows' painting maneuvered their spidery limbs with unabashed bravado and dramatic bends, accentuating their nubile potential. Contemporary reviews paired Bellows' image of Lower East Side life not just with "humor", but "actuality", "humanity", and plain "truth."[1] Such accolades suggest how much Outcault's vision of rowdy tenement boyhood had penetrated the cultural consciousness. [2]

Like his fellow Ashcan School artists, Bellows explored the ennobling genre of portraiture for capturing lower class children. In these more concentrated physiognomic studies, Bellows betrayed an almost morbid fascination with youthful gawky development. In *Frankie the Organ Boy* from 1907 and *Paddy Flannigan* from 1908, each figure held his body in a

[1] Marianne Doezama, "Tenement Life: Cliff Dwellers, 1906 – 1913" in *George Bellows* (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 2012), 49.

[2] Rebecca Zurier has shown the power and legibility of Bellows' paintings of tenement children were driven by their recognizable relationship to comics. For Zurier's formal analysis of how Bellows' painting echoed Outcault's approach to the body and the potential meanings of his urban vernacular, see Rebecca Zurier, "The Cartoonist's Vision (Part 2): Bellows, Luks, and Urban Difference" in *Picturing the City: Urban Vision and the AshCan School*. (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2006), particularly 213-235.

precarious balance, as the sitter hunched and splayed order to successfully stabilize their inelegant pose. Their instability recalled the cast of elastic, spastic juveniles that continued to perform slapstick for humor magazines and newspapers. They were familiar caricatures brought to life in oils. However, by translating the deft penstrokes of cartooning into meaty, slapping paint, Bellows emboldened the stereotypical immigrant caricature with an undeniable corporeality.[3] Like many of Bellows' figures, *Paddy Flannigan*'s juvenile arrogance appeared to be just breaking onto the stage of adolescence, exacerbating the body's social threats.[4] Bodily vulgarity had stretched past the "savage" juvenile stage, stirring up worrying indications for adulthood.

Adolescent development permeated images produced in Fine Arts and comics between the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. George Stanley Hall's concept of adolescence aligned with and complicated the canon of physical types already circulating in early 20th century visual culture. Artists deployed the physical markers of adolescence to play upon both fears over and hopes for the masculine development of America's next generation. The adolescent as a visual type was forged between multiple visual mediums. Hall's concept of adolescence filtered through broad trends seen in comics, the Fine Arts, and the broader image culture that presented male bodies for viewing pleasure. Comics played a large role as

[3] For more on the physicality of Bellows' paint, its golem-like metamorphosis of pen and ink ethnic caricatures, and its variant meanings, see Zurier, *Picturing the City*, 226 and Jane Myers, "'The Most Searching Place in the World': Bellows' Portraiture" in *The Paintings of Bellows* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, 1992), 185.

[4] Jane Myers describes how the figure of *Paddy Flannigan* indicates a new developmental stage through the flush of pubescence and sexual awareness: "The veiled look created by the boy's half-closed eyes and his slight smile baring prominent teeth exude an impudent and disarming sexual overtness, underscored by the threadbare shirt that slips from his shoulders. "Bellows' Portraiture", 185.

adolescent physiques were frequently presented in cartoons as humorous deformities. These caricatures presented a foil to new masculine ideals aggrandized in the mass media by photography, printed images, and even living theatrical displays. On the high cultural stage of painting, the more idiosyncratic adolescent physique began carving out its own cultural niche.

Pinpointing subjects that fall cleanly within Hall's window for adolescence (starting approximately at age twelve or fourteen and lasting until age twenty-four) can be tricky.[5] In the Fine Arts, bodies sometimes echoed Greek models by displaying peak condition musculature through all stages of life. On the flipside, in comics males of all ages presented as the comically puny, the unduly long-limbed, or a ungainly hybrid of the two. To deal with this challenge, I will cast a wide net between juvenile development and adulthood for my subjects. I will identify when and where adolescent bodies appear and also look for how markers of adolescence riddled young and mature bodies as unstable signifiers of masculine development.

FORMULATING THE ADOLESCENT AS A VISUAL TYPE

George Stanley Hall's 1904 two volume work *Adolescence* isolated adolescent studies as a unique scientific and scholarly field within human psychology.[6] His preface made it clear that

[5] George Stanley Hall describes the window for adolescence as occurring between the ages fourteen to twenty-four (*Adolescence: Its Psychology and its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion and Education, Volume 1* (D. Appleton and Company: New York, 1904), xix. The starting age of fourteen is a reoccurring focus of in his extensive charts of growth spikes for height, weight, girth, bone development, muscular development, pubic hair and other anatomy. He also argues "the child can not reason according to adult standards until fourteen, the age at which Aristotle would begin the education of reason." (111). However, he also refers to the age between twelve and fourteen as the "early years of puberty" (435) and the "savage" phase of juvenile development as reaching its end point at age twelve (ix). As my study considers anxieties hovering over the initiation of adolescence, I include figures that appear to veer toward the younger spectrum (twelve years old) of Hall's definitions.

[6] Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, "G. Stanley Hall's Adolescence: Brilliance and Nonsense." *History of Psychology* 9, no. 3, (2006): 186.

his study was not purely academic but rather aimed at "helping humanity on to a higher stage."[7] Hall's tome closely analyzed each antecedent stage toward adulthood, describing how these recapitulated the evolutionary history of the human species.[8] As discussed in Chapter 3, an unavoidable phase of pre-adolescent "savagery" stimulated necessary latent strengths and protective provider instincts. When puberty emerged around 12 years old, individuals experienced a "second birth" where physical, intellectual, and imaginative faculties became hyper malleable.[9] On the path toward adulthood, Hall postulated that children advanced from a juvenile savage love of nature toward an adolescent awakening of individuality, soul, and "humanistic learning of culture."[10]

Reinforcing his recapitulation theory, Hall asserted that this "higher" stage was only achievable by highly civilized races who rehearsed their ancestral renaissances in adolescence.[11] Furthermore, he prescribed the pliant adolescent imagination both a steady dose of humanism ("art, legends, romance, idealization") and the leisure to absorb it.[12] In his research on the 20th century "invention" of adolescence, Kent Baxter stipulates that Hall specified a structured, productive leisure and warned against modern maladies of idling and

[7] Hall, *Adolescence*, xviii. For a summary of Hall's recapitulation theory, its potential for improving the human species, and how it manifested in early 20th century culture, see Kent Baxter. *The Modern Age: Turn-of-the-century American culture and the Invention of Adolescence* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2008), 48-50.
[8] Hall, *Adolescence*, vi.
[9] Ibid., 48.
[10] Baxter, *The Modern Age*, 44.
[11] Hall, *Adolescence*, xviii. Hall's Darwinian model of boyhood was built on preceding theorists and philosophers dating back into the 19th century. Although this was a popular model, evolutionary models were not the only methods for understanding boyhood. For a discussion of these models, see Baxter, *The Modern Age*, 48 – 49.
[12] Hall, *Adolescence*, xvii.

passive stimuli.[13] Following his Darwinian narrative to its logical conclusion, successful adolescence opened a potentially new, unwritten evolutionary chapter for those humans equipped to afford it. This is when higher faculties and psychic regulators, such as logic and reasoning, manifested. Successfully developed in optimal conditions, Hall's adolescent would naturally gravitate from those self-absorbed juvenile instincts, so characteristic of modern American business and culture, toward altruistic thinking.[14] Asserting that "man is not a permanent type but an organism in a very active stage of evolution", Hall imagined that his work could inform social reforms that would help stimulate a new evolutionary chapter.[15] In Hall's words, "If regeneration is ever to lift us to a higher plane, the adolescent nisus will be its mainspring."[16]

Physically, Hall demarcated adolescence from pre-adolescence by increased bodily plasticity.[17] He warned how puberty's asymmetrical development could cause "exaggerated flexibility" and "abnormal positions."[18] Hall described a body struggling to balance a new quantity of "motor energy", which habitually misfired through the body's "wrong aggregates."[19] Under Hall's model, these sudden growth pains were necessary for sparking messages throughout the body to stimulate further growth and maturity. In late 19th century comic panels, these characteristics were also the signatures of slapstick humor. In the comics,

[13] Baxter, *The Modern Age*, 51.
[14] Idem.
[15] Hall, *Adolescence*, vii.
[16] Ibid, 324. For an in-depth description of Hall's concept of this "second birth" and the creation of the Super man, see Gail Bederman, "Performing Manhood: Approaching the 'Super-man' through the Racially Mutable Adolescent Boy" in *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880 – 1917* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 101-110.
[17] Hall, *Adolescence*, 127.
[18] Ibid., 88.
[19] Ibid., 164.

sinewy physiques and bodily spasms did not typically define a stage of development but rather typified the neurotic, spastic comic body conditioned by the modern city (see Chapter 2). Moving into the early 20th century, these hallmark lanky physiques became gradually harnessed to concepts of male adolescence. In this transition, the attenuated body brought with it threatening associations with delinquency, neurosis, and deterioration, now grafted onto the prototypical adolescent body. However, the nubile physique was also an enduring one, capable of absorbing the shocks of modern life without breaking: the spastic adolescent body could also symbolize resilience and independence.

The plastic potential and absorptive power rendered adolescent bodies hypersensitive and thus extremely vulnerable. While Hall asserted a juvenile can develop successfully despite a harsh environment, unfavorable conditions may inhibit later adolescent growth. This danger was amplified by modern-industrialization, prematurely triggering adolescence before its recipients were prepared. Urban environments were faulted as being both suffocating and over-stimulating, triggering a "leakage of vital energy" through a glut of "passive stimuli."[20] This "urbanized hot-house life" could onset nervous strain, turning the wasteful, awkward mannerisms of adolescence into permanent character traits.[21] In comics and illustration, mature male bodies still marked by adolescent traits were haunted by these warnings, indicating an incomplete metamorphosis into manhood. Yet, as seen in Woody Register's research on Fred Thompson of Coney Island, entrepreneurs in the entertainment business

[20] Ibid., xv.
[21] Ibid., xi.

invited consumers to revisit this halfway house between manhood and boyhood. Channeling one's inner child thus also acted as a tonic against modern and industrialized pleasures.[22]

Kent Baxter shows how the psychological "invention" of adolescence was largely influenced by school reforms.[23] The twentieth century saw growing high school enrollments that increasingly isolated teenagers as a unique social group, independent from adult and childhood spheres. In turn, education played an important role in successful adolescence for Hall. Access to education privileged the intellectually enlightened families who could prioritize a humanistic education over baseline survival or the "leech-like" demands of American business.[24] Yet for Hall, the relationship between adolescence and education was both crucial and fraught. He tracked the epidemic of "national invalidism" to what he termed, "demon of education."[25] Hall charged educators with many crimes, including "juvenile serfdom", "degenerate pedagogy", and maladies of over-precision.[26] These critiques permeated through cartoons that satirized the modern school as a wasteland for masculine virility.

As remedy, Hall insisted muscular development must accompany brain development. Following the popular Victorian ethos, he formulated muscles as "organs of the mind," equating muscle culture with brain building.[27] *Adolescence* cross-referenced Greek culture to assert its claim that "the best body implied the best mind."[28] Under these terms, muscular development

[22] Woody Register. *The Kid of Coney Island: Fred Thompson and the Rise of American Amusements* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001),16.
[23] Baxter, *Modern Age*, 26-27.
[24] Hall, *Adolescence*, xvi.
[25] Ibid., 243.
[26] See Hall, *Adolescence*, xii ("degenerate pedagogy") and 243 ("juvenile serfdom")
[27] Ibid., 204.
[28] Idem.

assured masculine virility while also conditioning the moral factors needed to tame savage instincts and succeed in Victorian society. For example, under Hall's reasoning, good sportsmanship put morals to work which could distinguish (and thus validate) pugilism from its more savage branch of prize-fighting.[29] For Hall, rhythmic gymnastics not only cultivated muscles, but also conditioned bodies for the rhythmic tedium of future professions.[30] A wealth of scholarship on Victorian culture shows how Hall's equation between muscle and mind had long been embedded in nineteenth century America.[31] The nineteenth century obsession with the physical manifestation of cerebral characteristics, as practiced in phrenology and eugenics, helped to scientifically validate the visual links made between physical attributes and the moral compass.[32]

[29] Ibid., 218. Robert Haywood has written how this distinction between boxing and prize-fighting, in order to validate the sport, occupied Americans, including President Theodore Roosevelt. Robert Haywood, "George Bellows' 'Stag at Sharkey's': Boxing, Violence, and Male Identity," *Smithsonian Studies in American Art* 2, no. 2 (Spring, 1988): 7.

[30] Hall, *Adolescence*, 207.

[31] For more on the connection between muscles and morals in Victorian America, see Roberta J. Park, "Healthy, Moral, and Strong: Educational Views of Exercise and Athletics in Nineteenth-Century America", in *Fitness in American Culture: Images of Health, Sport, and the Body, 1830-1940*, ed. K. Grover, (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1989), 123-168. Kimmelman addresses the emergence of gym culture and the importance of demonstrating morality through musculature in late nineteenth century America in his *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 94-95.

[32] For an analysis of European and American practices of anthropologically determining ideal proportions of the male body, see Anthea Callen's chapter "Size Matters: The Measurement of Man and Ideals of the Labouring Body" in *Looking at Men: Art, Anatomy, and the Modern Male Body* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), 140-183. For practices of phrenology in nineteenth century America and how they influenced the production of bodies in the visual arts, see Charles Colbert, *A Measure of Perfection: Phrenology and the Fine Arts of America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

Hall's study thus presented a contradictory image of adolescence.[33] Adolescent growth was uneven, excessive, and difficult to control. Yet Hall's recommended course of action prescribed a smooth, conditioned transition into masculine adulthood. However uncharacteristic of adolescence itself, this would provide reassurance of a strong, leading Anglo-Saxon progeny. This minimal margin of error was, according to Mark C. Carnes, typical of the extreme pressures placed on manhood throughout the Victorian era.[34] In Victorian visual culture, fine art similarly had to walk a narrow tightrope of masculine definitions, applicable to bodies ranging from juvenility through to adulthood. On the flipside, the sardonic medium of cartoon bodies reveled in depicting bodies that fell outside masculine decorum.

THE ADOLESCENT BODY AND THE MASCULINE IDEAL

In the Fine Arts, the concept of adolescence made an uncomfortable fit with reigning Neoclassical ideologies about the male form and its associations with universal truths. Fine Art academies reinforced homage to masculine physiques through a figure-based curriculum. Rigorous copies from plaster casts of Greek and Renaissance statues fueled not only Neo-classical revivalists but also artists constructing figures for Romantic and realist traditions. Anthea Callen describes how classical models presented the "well-toned youthful ephebe", "mature gladiatorial warrior", and "massive Herculean form" for idolization.[35] However, the

[33] Kent Baxter also notes Hall's contradictions over how the adolescent is expected to acquire new "traits." He connects Hall's discussion of "which traits are proper and which are not" to how adolescence was conceived in part as a remedy to modern social threats. Baxter, *Modern Age*, 52.
[34] Mark C. Carnes and Clyde Griffen, ed., *Meanings for Manhood: Constructions of Masculinity in Victorian America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 11-12.
[35] Callen, *Looking at Men*, 14.

Neo-classical crisis in post-Revolutionary France established a preference for the two latter, more developed forms. Dissection courses for art students couched and legitimized the humanist examination of male nudes within a scientific context.[36] Artists themselves, wary of art's association with effeminacy, described the process of mastering anatomy as an arduous physical task, comparable to manual labor.[37] This created a self-affirming masculine feedback system in which artists emulated Greek muscular strength through their very acts of analysis, composition, and creation.

Idolization of the Greek athletic body in America grew in tandem with a late nineteenth century national health craze which permeated its visual culture.[38] Kimmelman paraphrases the athletics craze by tracking the etymological shift from the term "manhood" to "masculinity." Whereas the earlier concept of "manhood" referenced an inner, radiating experience of autonomy and strength (in opposition to childhood), the latter term "masculinity" required a constant performance proved through physical characteristics.[39] Callen demonstrates how a proliferation of nude or partially nude images of men through art, photography, and illustration powered this new market economy.[40] Advertisements,

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[36] Callen's work on anatomical lectures and dissection demonstrations of the nineteenth century demonstrates this complex relationship. See her chapter "The Body and Difference: Artistic Anatomy and the beau idéal" and her research on Thomas Eakins' incorporation of anatomical lectures at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in *Looking at Men*, 28-63 and 75-77.

[37] Randall C. Griffin, "Thomas Eakins' Construction of the Male Body, or 'Men Get to Know Each Other across the Space of Time'," *Oxford Art Journal* 18, No. 2 (1995): 73.

[38] Kimmelman, *Manhood*, 93-94.

[39] Ibid., 89

[40] The relationship between masculine ideals developed between Fine Art academies and popular culture is spread throughout Callen's work *Looking at Men*. For a summary of this phenomenon, see Callen, *Looking at Men*, 20. While much of Callen's study focuses on the art and medical academies of Britain and France, American painters and images feature heavily in her discussion as contributing to a broader, transatlantic dialog about masculinity.

engravings, and small-scale replicas demonstrate a move toward more athletically active classical statues. The *Borghese Gladiator* or *The Wrestlers (or Pankration)* became preferred models over the lithe, posing *Apollo Belvedere.*[41] Sarah Burns' study of Winslow Homer demonstrated how Homer's outdoor dramas similarly subscribed to "manly health" through exemplars of muscular bodies engaged in outdoor physical exertion.[42] Homer's 1886 *Undertow* (Fig. 4.2) fashioned Greek heroism from a local rescue by equipping the male figures with rock hard muscles and sharp, angular movements.[43] Fortified by courage and independence, such deliberate and active constructions of manhood promised to successfully combat modern dangers, including enfeeblement through sedentary intellectual work. Such conceptions rescued the American ideology of self-reliance and work ethic from representations of the neurasthenic body characterizing white-collar work within industrial capitalism. [44] At the same time, as Melissa Dabakis' research in *Visualizing Labor in American Sculpture* demonstrates, visions of the muscular laboring body became increasingly riddled with tensions as unions and labor movements "provoked fissures into the once seamless ideology of the work ethic."[45] The "nobility and morality previously associated with productive labor" grew more hypothetical and in search of new vessels.

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[41] Ibid., 68 – 70.
[42] Sarah Burns, "Revitalizing the 'Painted-Out' North: Winslow Homer, Manly Health, and New England Regionalism in Turn-of-the-Century America," *American Art* 9, no. 2 (Summer, 1995): 26-31.
[43] Michael Hatt, "*Muscles, morals, mind: the male body in Thomas Eakins' Salutat*" in *The Body Imaged: The Human Form and Visual Culture since the Renaissance*, eds. Kathleen Adler and Marcia Pointon, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 57-69.
[44] For a description of neurasthenia and George Stanley Hall, see especially Gail Bederman, "Neurasthenia defines the paradox of the white man's body and "civilization"" in *Manliness and Civilization*, 84-88.
[45] Melissa Dabakis, *Visualizing Labor in American Sculpture: Monuments, Manliness, and the Work Ethic, 1880-1935* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 29.

Art criticism closely policed expressions of the male body, often with opaque tactics. When abject physiques appeared in painting, they were often censured by critics who nitpicked about the painting's technical failures or refused to comment altogether. Approbation of approved physiques was delivered more directly, waxing on about successful bodies' various meanings. Bared ephebic physiques indicative of youthful adolescence did appear in painting. However, Callen's work *Looking at Men* examines how ephebic physiques complicated the already unstable guidelines for men looking at men, particularly in opening opportunities for the homoerotic gaze.[46] Kimmelman's discussion of the increasingly public gay subcultures in late nineteenth century America explores how homosexuals were visually defined against heterosexuals less by an innate sexual preference and more by effeminate actions and characteristics.[47]

Adolescent male bodies (particularly those with soft sensuality) veered dangerously close to Victorian constructions of the homosexual body. Yet representations of adolescents in painting and sculpture largely avoided this dilemma by yoking their subjects to Neo-Classical themes of innocence and pre-historic Arcadia. Even Thomas Eakins, notorious for his disconcertingly objective eye, could explore the juvenile nude without reprimand if couched within a classical setting. His 1883 *Arcadia* (Fig. 4.3) renders a mixed company of nude juveniles. Based off of photographs, the soft, sinewy, even gender-bending adolescent and juvenile anatomies presented by Eakins arguably moved away from polished classical

[46] Callen, *Looking at Men*, 70-72.
[47] Kimmelman, *Manhood*, 73-75, 91.

idealism.[48] However, the exclusively youthful company and Arcadian theme lent these bodies a sense of virtue and purity.

Cut loose from its classical meanings, the display of nude ephebic physiques for aesthetic display threatened Victorian decorum. Thomas Eakins's most brazen exploration of the modern male nude in paint, the 1884-85 work *Swimming* (Fig. 4.4) caused a notably close-lipped controversy. Following his own advice to his students, Eakins believed that Ancient Greece's classical idealism was inspired by close contemplation of that society's living, breathing bodies, not by inventing artificial types.[49] Thus, as in many of his paintings, the models for *Swimming* were Eakins's own students who posed in multiple preparatory photographs.[50] Historians compare Eakins's *Swimming* to the successful 1869 French work by Jean-Frederic Bazille *Summer Scene* as setting the precedent for presenting the 19th century male body as a classical subject for aesthetic contemplation.[51] However, Eakin's work departed from this predecessor in several unnerving ways. In addition to the removal of bathing costumes, Eakins's men displayed bodies in distinct phases of maturation, ranging from fully developed adulthood to sprouting adolescence. While many of the figures displayed active or narrative poses, Eakins crowned the composition with a figure in wide-stance, passive contrapposto. Significantly, this figure displayed a distinctly adolescent physique with wiry

[48] Martin Berger, *Man Made: Thomas Eakins and the Construction of Gilded Age Manhood* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000), 97-98.
[49] Griffin, "Eakins' Construction of the Male Body," 71.
[50] For a discussion Thomas Eakin's photographs of male nudes, see John Esten, *Thomas Eakins: The Absolute Male* (New York: Universe Publishing, 2002).
[51] Griffin, "Eakins' Construction of the Male Body," 74. See also Richard R. Brettell, "Thomas Eakins and the Male Nude in French Vanguard Painting, 1850-1890" in *Thomas Eakins and the Swimming Picture*, eds. Doreen Bolger and Sarah Cash (Fort Worth: Amon Carter Museum, 1996), 80-97.

limbs, bony back, and soft buttocks (for a more complete analysis of this painting, see *Epilogue*).

Eakins only exhibited this painting twice during his lifetime, each time meeting with strained critical silence.[52] *Swimming's* commissioner, Edward Hornor Coates, intended to place it in the Pennsylvania Academy's collection but requested to exchange Eakins' painting for a different piece "more acceptable for the purpose which I have always had in view." His letter was cordial, even slightly apologetic, insisting that the rejection should not indicate a depreciation of the work.[53] It is difficult to pinpoint precisely what offended as contemporary reviewers would not say directly.[54] Eakin's presentation of near nude featherweight boxer Billy Smith in *Salutat* met with similarly strained criticism. Historians have unpacked how Smith's svelte physique and gratuitous presentation of his buttocks violated standards of masculinity.[55] Furthermore, this work (like many in Eakin's oeuvre) incorporated the captivated homosocial

[52] Griffin, "Eakins' Construction of the Male Body," 78. See also Doreen Bolger, "'Kindly Relations': Edward Hornor Coates and Swimming" in *Thomas Eakins and the Swimming Picture*, eds. Doreen Bolger and Sarah Cash (Fort Worth: Amon Carter Museum, 1996), 43.

[53] "The present canvas is to me admirable in many ways but I am inclined to believe that some of the pictures you have are even more representative, and it has been suggested would be perhaps more acceptable for the purpose which I have always had in view. You must not suppose from this that I depreciate the present work—such is not the case." Letter from Edward H. Coates to Thomas Eakins, dated November 27, 1885, Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, quoted in Bolger, "Kindly Relations," 44. Bolger's chapter provides an in-depth discussion of Edward H. Coates and his professional relationship with Thomas Eakins, concluding the exact motivation for the rejection can only be surmised. The painting remained in the care of Eakins's wife, Mrs. Susan Eakins, until its sale to the Fort Worth Art Association in 1925.

[54] Marc Simpson, "Swimming Through Time: An Introduction" and Kathleen A. Foster, "The Making and Meaning of *Swimming*" in *Thomas Eakins and the Swimming Picture*, eds. Doreen Bolger and Sarah Cash (Fort Worth: Amon Carter Museum, 1996), 3-4, 25-27.

[55] See Michael Hatt, "Muscles, Morals, Mind," 62-69. The anomaly of *Salutat*'s nude, slender physique is also addressed by Martin Berger, who considers why Eakins' specifically opted to portray featherweight champion Billy Smith and not a heavy weight champion. See Berger, *Man Made*, 116-117.

male gaze, specifically presenting the champion for male contemplation.[56] Yet contemporary reviews of *Salutat* avoid this sensitive subject, delivering largely technical critiques.[57] In contrast, Eakins's gothic display of surgical progress in the 1875 *The Gross Clinic* generated extremely theatrical reviews over its stomach-churning subject. Early reviews often warned those of faint heart to "turn away!" whereas, by the early 20th century, critics praised Eakin's masculine fortitude in depicting such a harrowing subject.[58] Clearly shocking the public with anti-classical aesthetics could draw a crowd and generate excitement, but this only worked within specific guidelines of presenting the male body.

In contrast, the enraptured gaze was not a problem for Herculean physiques. At the turn of the century, this phenomenon had its most histrionic display in strongman performer Eugen Sandow (Fig. 4.5). At a time when the validity of nudity in art was being questioned, Sandow's near naked displays of physique and strength won outstanding approval.[59] Sandow's physique was the American answer to the unattainable Greek archetype. John F. Kasson recounts how in 1893 the leading figure in physical education, Dudley A. Sargent, officially

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[56] Michael Hatt explores the voyeuristic and homoerotic potential of the gazes in the homosocial space created by the surrounding audience (Hatt "Muscles, Morals, Mind", 63-64). Martin Berger discusses how Eakins employs the homosocial gazes here to present new, albeit uneasy, models of self-made manhood, working against dominant ideologies that used the Herculean physique to exhibit worldly, domineering success (Berger, *Man Made*, 116-121).

[57] One review of *Salutat*'s 1899 exhibition at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts focuses on technical errors with the space ("the audience is too obtrusive") and lighting. It says little of the boxer himself, other than describing Eakins' anatomical "style" as "always coarse, never beautiful, but often true." Mitschka, "Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts Exhibition as Seen and Heard," *The Art Collector* 9, no. 7 (February 1, 1899): 102.

[58] See Kathleen A. Foster, "The Gross Clinic in Philadelphia and New York, 1875-79" in *An Eakins Masterpiece Restored: Seeing "The Gross Clinic" Anew* (New Haven: Yale University Press 2012), 71-82.

[59] John F. Kasson's work on Sandow shows how reviewers did not always accept Sandow as an image of perfection unquestioningly, some calling his body "abnormal" and "decadent." John F. Kasson, *Houdini, Tarzan, and the Perfect Man: The White Male Body and the Challenge of Modernity in America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001), 29.

dubbed Eugene Sandow "the perfect man."[60] Sargent backed his superlatives about Sandow's beauty, gentlemanliness, and feats of strength with meticulous physical measurements. These statistics emulated Classical aesthetics in its focus on harmonious relationships between parts while putting to work scientific, objective judgement.[61] As in art, this magical symbiosis helped legitimize and permit the unhampered aesthetic gaze on the nude male body.

Kasson demonstrates how Sandow's performance of the hypermasculine was riddled with ambiguities.[62] The ubiquitous circulation of Sandow's body in pictorial journalism and collectible postcards as well as on stage merged his personification of universal beauty with purchasable commodity. He posed for photographs mimicking ancient sculptures yet honed the vaudevillian's talent for shocking, comical showmanship to titillate the audience. On stage he performed backflips with barbells, lifted baskets weighted with human volunteers, and even created a "human bridge" which climaxed with three ponies supported by his arched body.[63] Private viewings of Sandow as living display particularly blurred his status as asexual icon and virile fetish. Newspaper reports recorded Sandow encouraging viewers of both genders to feel the hardness of his muscles, equating the shock of touch (flesh becomes stone) with the visual shock of his barbell stunts.[64]

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[60] Kasson, *Houdini, Tarzan, and the Perfect Man*, 39-46

[61] Ibid, 33. See also Callen's analysis of how 19th century anatomists and artists used meticulous measurements, a practice derived from Classical canons, to define bodily perfection (Callen, *Looking at Men*, 148-151). David Chapman's study of Sandow records the debate over Sandow as an embodiment of Greek art. Following Sandow's American debut in 1893, a reviewer for the *New York Herald* compared Sandow's anatomy to *Discobolus* and *Fighting Gladiator*, yet other reviewers challenged whether Sandow represented a balanced, aesthetic model of perfect anatomy. See David L. Chapman, *Sandow the Magnificent: Eugene Sandow and the Beginnings of Bodybuilding* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 49 & 79.

[62] Kasson, *Houdini, Tarzan, and the Perfect Man*, 29.

[63] Ibid., 28.

[64] Chapman, *Sandow the* Magnificent, 74-75.

This Victorian endorsement of the Herculean body consequently problematized gazing at non-Sandows, a visual dilemma that began almost immediately upon Sandow's Vaudevillian debut in 1893.[65] Sandow's performance followed a decade-long running farce starring Henry Dixey in the title role *Adonis*. *Adonis* reversed the Pygmalion story, presenting a sculptress who fashions her ideal man. The sketch's popularity hinged on Dixey's supreme pantomime and athletic control in his guise as a white, marble statue coming to life.[66] The sketch also succeeded because of its bawdy humor when a cast of aggressive, man-hungry females pursued the fleeing Adonis.[67] Kasson describes how the impact of Sandow's performance hinged on the contrast to *Adonis*: "Then it was Sandow's turn. When the curtain rose again, Sandow, clad only in a loincloth and Roman sandals, had assumed the statue's pose in Dixey's stead – and the contrast made the audience gasp."[68] Devoid of narrative, Sandow's act generated breathless suspense and applause through the literally incredible demonstrations of muscular strength.

Kasson recounts the shock expressed by contemporary reviews, which venerated Sandow's unprecedented "forest of muscles" at the expense of Dixey's more lithe physique.[69] Editorial reviews asserted that Sandow's appearance instantaneously redefined manhood for America. Despite the tone of these reviews, Dixey's drop from a "well-made gentleman" to a "wretched, scrawny creature" in reviewers' eyes did not occur just after the shock of Sandow.[70]

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[65] Kasson, *Houdini, Tarzan, and the Perfect Man*, 23-30.
[66] Kasson describes how Dixey's creation inversed Victorian expectations of gendered roles and teased at anxieties about male dominance. Ibid., 24.
[67] Kasson discusses how three principle female characters were modelled on "burlesques of stock characters of melodrama," Ibid., 25.
[68] Ibid., 27.
[69] Quoted from a review (Idem.).
[70] A review by the *New York World* quoted in Chapman, *Sandow*, 49.

A cartoon from *Judge* published on September 10, 1892 confirms how the thickened "slugger" physique had already deposed the more esthete tennis player. Even in 1884, Dixey's presentation as a sculpture with passive pose and effete, ambiguously outdated costume was already out of step with American definitions of masculinity. The Adonis's ability to hide from female pursuers by dressing up as village maid demonstrates the malleability and fallibility of Dixey's masculinity. Photos of Dixey's metamorphosis as Adonis shows how expertly he could switch from disinterested, classical grace to cartoony spasms. The pleasure of the performance evidently hinged on Dixey upsetting the audience's aesthetic gaze for a comical one. Cross-eyed with tongue sticking out, it is questionable how much Dixey ever seriously represented the modern "Adonis."

Most condemning is the play's emphasis that *Adonis* constitutes a female construction of manly beauty to trigger unidealized feminine desire. By contrast, Sandow's body, presented as a classical (near) nude, emerged as an unabashed emblem of masculine bodily aesthetics. It presented a construction of male beauty by men, promising a universal – rather than a fashionable or purely feminine – ideal.[71] The shock and awe ascribed to the audience is crucial. It aligned with the concept of the sublime, an aesthetic philosophy developed in the late 18th century that continued to drive art through the late 19th century. The sublime's focus on overpowering the audience with an aesthetic experience bridging on terror promised to save art from its anesthetizing dependence on beauty. Nineteenth century American landscape

[71] Some reviewers contested Sandow's title as the "perfect man." Significantly, David Chapman's account records these dissents coming from artists (a "feminine" class by Victorian standards) and a female reviewer. Miss Evelyn Comstock did consent Sandow's body could be elevated to art, but only if one preferred the "Farnese Hercules" over the more graceful "Apollo Belvedere." Quoted in Chapman, *Sandow*, 79.

artists had put this concept to work by recreating the American landscape into a rugged picturesque while figurative artists like Homer had begun mapping this concept onto the male physique.[72] Couched in beauty, the erotic could easily degrade to decadence and decay. However, linked to the sublime, erotic presentations became tethered to civic duty and social advancement.

Audience reactions to Sandow were also symptomatic of Tom Gunning's concept of the aesthetics of astonishment used to describe early cinema of the 1890's. Gunning argues that the pleasure of shock in late nineteenth century entertainment lay in its potential to jolt an audience into an immediate, shared present moment.[73] Furthermore, art historian Wendy Bellion shows how pre-cinematic audiences had sought out illusionistic entertainments that forged pleasure between the grating contradiction of what the eye observed and the brain understood.[74] Touching muscle that felt like stone and staring at an unattainable Hercules who simultaneously advertised his body as an achievable goal all jarred this relationship between seeing and believing. Like Coney Island's entertainments, shock and awe temporarily suspended testy boundaries and elicited delight as viewing pleasures waded toward forbidden territories.[75]

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[72] For more on the sublime in American landscape painting, see Andrew Wilton and Tim Barringer, *American Sublime: Landscape Painting in the United States 1820 – 1880* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002). For more on Homer's representation of manly outdoor exertion, see Sarah Burns, "Revitalizing the 'Painted-Out'."

[73] Tom Gunning, "An Aesthetic of Astonishment: Early Film and the (In)credulous Spectator." *In Viewing Positions, ways of seeing film*, ed. Linda Williams (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 114-133.

[74] Wendy Bellion, *Citizen Spectator: Art, Illusion, and Visual Perception in Early National America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011).

[75] See Ben Singer's "Sensationalism and Urban Modernity" in *Melodrama and Modernity: Early Sensational Cinema and its Context* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 91-99.

One of the most potent ambiguities lay in the medium and distribution of Sandow's nude or near nude body. Although often referencing the Fine Arts and promising to fulfill classical standards, Sandow's body rarely appeared in painting or sculpture. Like many strongmen, he rented his physique out as an artist's model early in his career in Europe.[76] However, during the peak of his career in America, his physique circulated primarily in photographs and theatrical performances. A live cast, not a sculpture, recorded Sandow's physique and the British Natural History Museum, not the National Gallery, preserved this cast as an anthropological specimen.[77] In a way, this treatment of Sandow fulfilled Eakins' insistence that the ancient Greeks forged their classical ideals by examining living, contemporary bodies with their culture's most modern methods.

The fluidity of Sandow's physique between mediums further pushed his invasive power as an image. Hans Belting's groundbreaking work *The Anthropology of Images* unweaves the impact of images from their encasement in pictures: "The more attention we pay to the medium and its navigating force, the less we concentrate on the image it carries. Conversely, the less we take notice of a medium's presence, the more we are captured by the image, until it seems to us that the latter exists by itself."[78] Consumed internally through imagination, images inhabit the mind and intermingle with the brain's own image production.[79] Pervading multiple media as an image, Sandow's Herculean body could penetrate the late nineteenth imagination,

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[76] David Walker, *The Perfect Man: The Muscular Life and Times of Eugene Sandow, Victorian Strongman* (Brighton: Victorian Secrets Limited, 2011), 29-30.
[77] A second cast was placed on display in B. F. Keith's vaudeville theater in Boston. Kasson, *Houdini, Tarzan, and the Perfect Man*, 54.
[78] Hans Belting, *The Anthropology of Images: Picture, Medium, Body* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 16.
[79] Ibid., 10.

demanding material fulfillment not just through pictures but through the material bodies of the male populace. This suggests one reason why Sandow's nude presentation succeeded where Eakins' nudes could not. Netted within the conservative rules of fine art, critics could simultaneously reject and avoid Eakin's presentations of the male nude by excoriating the painting for technical defects. As a pervasive image, Sandow's body, and those of emulators, circulated rapidly, forging new milestones for contemporary masculinity.

A sprouting adolescent body would seemingly have no hope in a culture of Herculean worship. Yet a David among the Goliaths did emerge at exactly the same time as Sandow's American debut. Thomas Hovenden's painting *Breaking Home Ties* (Fig. 4.6) won the proverbial popular vote during its 1893 exhibition at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, despite criticism for being out of step with contemporary trends in painting.[80] It triggered an outpouring of emotional responses and contemplation over the Americanness of Hovenden's scene.[81] The 1890 work featured a country household where a stark-faced son bids his family farewell. Most reporters assumed the country boy was departing the family farm to make his living in the city despite no narrative evidence.[82] Though referred to as a "boy" or "lad" in 19th century reviews, current historians have referred the central character as an adolescent, and with good reason.[83] The boy stood taller than his mother, reaching the stature of the two other

[80] Anne Gregory Terhune, *Thomas Hovenden: His Life and Art* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 154 & 165.
[81] Lacey Baradel performs an in-depth examination of reviews, letters sent to the artist, and personal reactions to *Breaking Home Ties* in "Mobility for the Masses: The Reception of Thomas Hovenden's Breaking Home Ties," *Archives of American Art Journal* 51, no. 1 (Spring 2017): 4-23.
[82] Ibid., 8.
[83] Lacey Baradel refers to the figure twice as an "adolescent" ("Mobility for the Masses," 6 & 17). Sarah Burns introduces him as a "gawky, adolescent son" in *Inventing the Modern Artist: Art and Culture in Gilded Age America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 300.

adult men, but sported a lankier physique. The boy was unwhiskered, with a more delicate jawline than his mother's, and his removed hat revealed boyishly curly hair. Most telling, Hovenden's use of a profile view highlighted the boy's swelling Adam's apple. His appearance may have been gawky even by contemporary standards as the painting's reproductions tended to soften the awkward traces of manhood and strengthen babyish vestiges of youth.[84]

Historians have closely investigated how *Breaking Home Ties* served as a lightning rod for contesting views of American culture. Sarah Burns examines how *Breaking Home Ties*' popular appraisal soared just as its critical appraisal waned, following a critical shift in favor of Impressionism and formalist, cosmopolitan aesthetics.[85] Burns defines *Breaking Home Ties* as "a public forum where the turf wars between populist aesthetics and cultural plutocracy played themselves out."[86] Lacey Baradel ties the audience's affective response before the painting to cultural theme of mobility.[87] Audience members responded to the work's connection of spatial, economic, and social mobility, all important to the concept of national progress. Hovenden's choice and presentation of the adolescent body super charged these reactions.

Contemporary testimonies reveal this painting captivated not just female sentiment but male accolades. Specifically, men identified themselves with the departing adolescent, often with intensely personal and emotional reactions.[88] Newspapers recounted how the painting's male audience could not suppress tears, wistful gazes, and pangs of nostalgia before the

[84] See the reproduction of *Breaking Home Ties* created after the photogravure by C. Klackner published in Hubert Howe Bancroft's 1893 *The Book of the Fair*. Printed in Baradel, "Mobility for the Masses," 7.
[85] Burns, *Inventing the Modern Artist*, 301.
[86] Ibid., 311
[87] This theme is embedded throughout Baradel's article "Mobility for the Masses."
[88] Ibid., 7.

painting. Lacey Baradel's analysis of these reports verifies this surprisingly broad-based phenomenon.[89] Reported breakdowns occurred in countryfolk and sophisticated urbanites alike, whether they just recently left their own family farms or they had always been city-dwellers. Furthermore, the outpouring of sentiment appears genuine. The affectations were recorded not only in mawkish press stories but also by private letters written to the artist. According to Baradel, Hovenden even had this therapeutic function in mind, as he responded to one piece of fan-mail, "I did think that to many a young man the picture could do nothing but good."[90]

Despite the relative absence of adolescents from painting, American men seemed primed to identify themselves and nationhood with the pubescent figure. Several reviews envisioned how Hovenden's adolescent would eventually transition successfully to manhood. A 1891 review by the *Philadelphia Evening Telegraph* imagined:

> "We know he is going to do well. The American boy always does well. Thousands like this one are going out from home every day to make homes for themselves, to create new conditions, to acquires property, to marry well and establish another family, to become good citizens and valued members of new communities, to develop that estate of American manhood which is the strength of the strongest nation in the world to-day."[91]

Verifying the importance of "American manhood" for nationhood, a review in the *Chicago Inter-Ocean* described the picture as "an object lesson worth a dozen of the Declaration of Independence."[92] Hovenden included many reassuring attributes. The country home implied the adolescent enjoyed a vigorous juvenile development complete with physical exercise and

[89] Ibid., 13-14.
[90] Quoted in Ibid., 12.
[91] Ibid., 10.
[92] Quoted in Burns, *Inventing the Modern Artist*, 302.

exposure to trade. The departure itself reassured he would have an opportunity to intersect with high culture just at the point he was mentally primed for it. Even the cold resilience to his mother's final goodbye shows he was not weakened by an overly feminine upbringing. Indeed, journalists enjoyed imagining the boy's suppressed pain. The emotional breakdowns reportedly triggered by the painting seemed to be largely by men who, having reached success, could sympathetically release their own mothballed feelings.[93]

Viewers reputedly responded to the work as a living image, projecting lavishly on the characters' inner emotions, histories, and futures. This chaffed against trends in American art criticism which, by 1893, had become more receptive to Impressionism and its focus on the physical relationship between paint and vision.[94] The tightly rendered *Breaking Home Ties* received lackluster reviews by art critics, reprimanded as "trite" and "overwrought." Yet Sarah Burns shows how the painting was applauded for qualities outside the academy, such as being "full of truth", having a "soul", and being "honestly and wholesomely American."[95] Most interestingly, it seemed to be the distinctive gawkiness in the boy's physique that triggered such responses to his "Americaness." The *Philadelphia Press* performed a close physiognomic assessment, showing how out of step Hovenden's image was with conventions of manliness:

> "The artist has, no doubt with purpose, avoided vesting him with any conquering-hero attributes. He hasn't the square jaw of determined energy, nor the set mouth of a masterful disposition, nor the piercing eye of high ambition . . . "[96]

[93] Baradel, "Mobility for the Masses," 13-14.
[94] For a full discussion of how Hovenden's painting represented for America "the public forum where the turf wars between populist aesthetics and cultural plutocracy played themselves out," see Sarah Burns' chapter "Populist Versus Plutocratic Aesthetics" in *Inventing the Modern Artist*, especially 327.
[95] Ibid., 303-304.
[96] Quoted in Ibid., 304.

Yet Hovenden's youth was not the only reassuringly un-masculine adolescent on the national stage. Adolescence as a precarious, fragile state was also part of the biographical testimonies made by "manly" heroes Eugene Sandow and Theodore Roosevelt. Both Sandow and Roosevelt exaggerated their sickly, feeble conditions as children and recorded how salvation came through dogged determination and physical work.[97]

These testimonies promoted the ideology of "Self-Made" manhood which had eclipsed competing masculine ideologies by the end of the nineteenth century. As Michael Kimmel demonstrates in *Manhood in America*, self-made manhood, a quite literal physiological manhood, formalized moral and physical development into a measurable quality and American civic duty.[98] Pulling liberally from evolutionary theory, social alarmists predicted that the lower-class bodies would physically eclipse the white Anglo-Saxon Protestant race in stamina and virility, supplanting the established populace with a degenerate new social order. Hall was equally passionate about racial degeneration, a threat he lay squarely at the door of "the progressive failure of youth to develop normally and to maximal maturity and sanity."[99] As Gail Bederman demonstrates, fears about Anglo-Saxon extinction were exacerbated by sedentary white-collar jobs with shrinking access to the corporate ladder.[100]

Hovenden's work presented a peculiar formula in which the incompleteness of the adolescent body was distinctly "honest" and American in its promising rawness. In *Breaking Home Ties*, American adolescence is an anticipatory state, where manhood is made and not

[97] Kasson, *The Perfect Man*, 5-6 and 36-38.
[98] See "The Birth of the Self-Made Man" in Michael Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).
[99] Hall, *Adolescence*, 324.
[100] Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*, 12-15.

inherited. The *Philadelphia Press* article that analyzed the adolescent's lack of manly attributes concluded on a uplifting note about the boy's character: " . . . he is just a good, honest, faithful, right-minded, pure-souled lad, with a great lump in his throat, trying his best not to break down and cry like a baby while parting from his mother."[101] Viewers seemed to experience reassurance and pleasure from the adolescent's avoidance of the physiognomic canon, which increased rather than threatened projections about his success.

ADOLESCENCE IN THE COMICS

While Hovenden's adolescent was winning popular sympathy, in the 1890's comics began exploring adolescence for humorous effects, using some of these very same qualities that appear in Hovenden's painting to parody growing pains. Prior to the 20th century, cartoons rarely featured characters that were not decidedly children or adults. In Yellow Kid comics, immigrant children sported a range of malformed physiques with prematurely roughened features that sometimes suggested adolescence (see Chapter 2). However, these characters typically behaved in ways that would presume a juvenile age or younger in the cartoons. Even the few characters that are arguably entering adolescence because of their height typically performed in popular comics as "boys" by playing schoolhouse pranks or bawling at punishments (see "An Account of the Affair" in *Judge,* November 8, 1890 and "In times of peace prepare for war" in *Judge*, July 23, 1892).

Jewish ethnic cartoons were a notable exception, and frequently featured sons entering adolescence. For instance, in *Judge*'s "Lavishness Checked" a sprouting Jewish son nervously

[101] Quoted in Terhune, *Thomas Hovenden*, 157.

learned his father's trade.[102] The son's gangly physique implied this youth will mature into a caricature, like his father, rather than a smooth-lined Victorian gentleman. In fact, many Jewish cartoons focus on interactions between swarthy Jewish fathers and obedient sons with peculiarly adult features, recalling the adolescent's uneven development. Unlike other ethnic cartoons, which wallowed in domestic discord or social foibles, Jewish cartoons targeted Jewish fathers passing on the family business. The subject of rearing a child for business acumen, a target of manly development, would become a primary sight for contemplating adolescence. It also indicates how the adolescent operated as an unsettling talisman for manhood.

Ignominious signs of adolescence were rarer in images of upper-class Anglo-Saxon youths and young men before 1900. These figures tended to emulate the idealized portrayals found in advertisements, even when their text ridiculed their subjects. However, there were exceptions. In "A Brother's Crime", a pudgy cheeked adolescent donned a top hat and gloves for a stroll, musing "It's wonderful how much older and responsible I feel."[103] Meanwhile his younger brother, leaning out of the brownstone window, attached a sign to the top hat encouraging other boys to "take a shot" at the hat. In "Straight", a boy studying geography curled his upper lip and sat with rigid pretension. Rather than the cherub youth, this boy appeared repugnant in his airs.[104] Caricature checks each character's premature pretensions. Moving into the new century, cartoonists used caricature more regularly to excoriate youths who inherited rather than earned their status.

[102] *Judge*, May 13, 1893, 298.
[103] *Judge*, Christmas 1890.
[104] *Judge*, September 24, 1892, 200.

By the early 20th century, misbehaving youths had become a sanctioned, even conservative gag not just for Sunday supplements, but also for the interleafed black and white paneled comics that peppered humor mags and other illustrated periodicals. In numerous comics, humor pivoted on lopsided encounters as sheltered brownstone boys attempted to participate in the hardened juvenile street culture. Readers had ingrained expectations of how these two youthful archetypes would behave. The "nice little boy" was an effeminate product of an overly static and comfortable upper-class existence. This impaired his ability to navigate modern society with independence. In contrast, the forced independence of the neglected working-class child or "tough little boy" allowed him to dominate the streets at his peril, often getting injured or nearly killed by modern machines. A cartoon from *Puck* illustrated these expectations by showing "how the nice little boy crosses" and "how the tough little boy crosses."[105] The sheltered "Ethelbert" hesitated to enter the deserted street, overcrowded by his parents who warn about a pushcart in the far distance. Gazing out of the panel, the street urchin has brought deathly traffic to a screeching halt and confidently challenged the presumedly higher class reader's approbation with "T'ink I don't know my way home?"

These cartoons were instantly recognizable, typically using the same physiognomic archetypes dating from the 1880's. As seen in *Judge*'s "Ignominious Rescue", the aquiline features, ringlet curls, and pretentious clothes of the nice boy signify not only his class but also his racial distance from the impoverished simian-featured street urchin.[106] However, the two boys were nearly indistinguishable when both emerged from the harbor drenched and

[105] *Puck*, July 30, 1913.
[106] *Judge*, October 18, 1890, 19.

wretched. Moving into the 20th century, illustrators progressively grafted a distinct physical body type onto each boy. In *Puck*'s 1913 "Anti-Climax of a Crime", the shorter, infantile body of the upper-class male youth contrasts abruptly against the taller, spindly body of the street urchin. [107] This anatomical distinction belies the two distinct threats each body presented: the sprouting immigrant body threatened to reach unchecked manhood prematurely while the privileged Anglo-Saxon threatened to miss puberty entirely.

In the cartooned lower-class body, accelerated adulthood was triggered by self-reliant and defiant behavior, a violation against the protocols of protected childhood innocence. In the cartooned upper-class body, unsettling man-boy hybrids failed to initiate puberty as their manly success has been inherited rather than earned. *Puck*'s New Year's cover for 1914 (Fig. 4.7) bluntly conveyed fears over the inefficacy of the upper-class's next generation with this anatomy. Seated in a stylish parlor, Uncle Sam stared apprehensively at his juvenile-bodied host. Dressed as a gentleman with oiled hair, arrow-collar, and smoking jacket, a dandyish man-boy gestured to two decanters labelled "hope" and "fear" saying "Have something on me, old man! What'll it be!" This symbol of America's future presented an unnerving hybrid of money-fueled prominence and status-propped arrogance, all rewards reaped by self-made men of the past generation. Moreover, it followed Hall's premonition that equated the future of the upper-class race, and hence American nationhood, with the successful maturation of its youth.

When used in association with upper-class boys, the lanky physique retained its references to malnourishment. However, in upper-class bodies this condition stemmed from

[107] This cartoon reverses the boyhood trope, showing how ingrained the expectations were that the hardened street boy (here taunted as a "big shrimp") would terrorize upper class youth. *Puck*, September 3, 1913.

physical rather than financial impoverishment. Sickly, scrappy bodies evidenced boyhood withered away in polite parlor rooms or under schoolmasters. *Judge*'s "The Uncertainties of Education" demonstrated Hall's warnings about suppressing the juvenile's innate and necessary savagery.[108] The cartoon illustrated the eight different tutors lavished on a middle-class son who ends up as a race-track barker. Hall predicted that juvenile rebellion allowed the child penchant for savagery to be expressed and, hence, later controlled so he might "be immune to them in maturer years." If suppressed, truant instincts could "crop out in menacing forms later" and become impossible to regulate.[109] This is evidenced in the cartoon by little boy's spindle physique, evoking Hall's description of the "flabby, undeveloped, anemic, easy-living city youth."[110] Signs of emerging adulthood, seen in the boy's cheeks and elongated feet, chaffed against the infantilizing velveteen suit, evidence of a mother's domineering and feminizing influence.[111]

Left unchecked in the upper-classes, degenerate juvenile and adolescent development could lead to an adult abomination, epitomized by the "dude."[112] An enormously popular character from the 1880's through to the early 20th century, dudes originated as an ethnic caricature of the over-cultured Englishman. Despite his upper-class status, the dude became equated with other societal and immigrant plagues. *Life*'s cover from May 24, 1900 poses the dude as a national scourge alongside urbanized African Americans, alcohol guzzling Irish, and

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[108] *Judge*, January 7, 1893, backcover
[109] Hall, *Adolescence*, x.
[110] Ibid., 173.
[111] Anna Wilson. "Little Lord Fauntleroy: The Darling of Mothers and the Abomination of a Generation." *American Literary History,* Vol. 8, No. 2 (Summer 1996): 232-258.
[112] Jo Barraclough Paoletti, "Ridicule and Role Models as Factors in American Men's Fashion Change, 1880-1910", *Costume* 19, no. 1 (1985): 129.

gypsy immigrants.[113] Unlike his companions, the dude was marked by an inability to achieve manhood, forever locked in an atrophied adolescence. Like the boy in "The Uncertainties of Education", adult dudes donned slight physiques, hunched shoulders, encumbering fashions, and receding chins with jowly cheeks. In "At the Leonine Drama", a theatrical performer compares the dude's visage to a lamb.[114] Dudes stared out of half-closed eyes reminiscent of a condescending gaze, but, accompanied by a slack open mouth, also implied mental impairment.[115] The dude was also marked by infantile behaviors. His English dialect had a nursery school twang, exchanging "w's" for "r's" and he habitually sucked on the head of his silver cane. Despite operating in high society, he seemed oblivious to its rules and was often being ridiculed by fashionable debutantes.[116]

The dude was the unnatural product of Europe, where excessive civilization withered and decayed the genetic promise of the Anglo-Saxon race.[117] The dude's admonishment matched his threat. As a *Puck* centerfold cartoon by Charles Jay Taylor illustrates, English upper-classmen threatened to steal America's blossom of millionaires' daughters with the promise of gentrified titles.[118] The cartoon "Some of the women Cholly looked at / And the only woman who looked at Cholly" confirms the dude's lustful, predatory gaze, but also his status as a subject of female disgust.[119] Dudes were often depicted whining about America as a

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[113] William Walker, "The International Cakewalk," *Life*, May 24, 1900.
[114] *Judge*, December 20, 1890, 204.
[115] See "Two souls without a single thought", *Judge*, December 17, 1892, 435.
[116] See "Not Very Flattering", *Judge*, August 27, 1892, 135.
[117] Martha Banta discusses the effeminized presentation of the English and Anglophobia in *Barbaric Intercourse: Caricature and the Culture of Conduct*, 1841-1936 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), 130-134.
[118] *Puck*, December 18, 1895.
[119] *Judge*, November 26, 1892, 419.

foreign country. In an 1890 cartoon from *Judge*, a lisping dude complains, "I am weahwy of Amewica. The lowah classes are so deucedly incompwehensible."[120] Yet Anglophilic trends in America's high society meant the dude could soon became an invasive native species. Cartoons like "The Conundrum: Which is the Englishman?" suggest the American upper-class were becoming indistinguishable from English snobbery.[121] On the cover of *Judge* June 10, 1893, two American-born strutting dudes revealed their foreignness by expressing relief upon hearing the news of the arrival of English Dukes:

> Cholly Snob (of the 400) – "Deah boy, this is indeed some amelioration of our misfawtune in being born in Amerwica."
> Arthur Dudley (of the 150) – "Yass; and if the deaw English Pwince would only come ovah, I could – aw-die happy, don't you know."

Caricatures of the dude took pains to emphasize his position as a universal, not just American, subject of ridicule, similar to the position Little Lord Fauntleroy types would take at the turn of the century. In "A Recognition", a multi-paneled comic followed an ape who discovers a Judge humor mag and, opening, bursts out laughing.[122] The magazine falls open to a labeled picture of a "dude", showing how dudes are recognized even across species as laughable. A *Judge* cover from November 8, 1890 wielded the character of the dude to attack Ward McAllister, self-appointed authority on New York high society and inventor of the "400" (Fig. 4.8). Presented as "Snobbish Society's Schoolmaster", the ass-eared McAllister presented a young dude on a platform as the quintessential gentleman. Uncle Sam, portrayed as a student, rocked back in his chair and pounds his fists in gut-wrenching laughter. Even for 19th

[120] *Judge*, December 27, 1890, 221.
[121] *Judge*, August 20, 1892
[122] *Judge*, December 13, 1890, 187.

century magazines, the censure here was heavy handed, presented as a guide for scorning anglophile pretensions.

Even prior to Sandow's American entrance, humor magazines took cathartic pleasure in placing dudes at the mercy of Herculean athletic instructors as they attempted to enter America's physical fitness cult. In cartoons like "Squelched", the burly muscular and stable, convex spine of the half-dressed "Rosebud Bill" contrasts starkly against the lanky, concave postures of the "gents." Even when the intimidating all-American males were dressed at the gymnasium, they still sported thick, angular physiques, as in "A Gentle Hercules."[123] Like the "nice little boy" and "tough little boy", cartoonists played on lopsided friendships and urban encounters between the two types, often resulting with the dude being hurled through space. However, as with "The man who practically illustrates his story", Americans tended to appear well-meaningly unaware of their own power and the dude's delicacy. In these cartoons, the American male's strength and dude's fragility were foregone and irreversible conclusions.[124]

GEORGE BELLOWS: MERGING PAINTING AND CARTOONING TRADITIONS IN THE YOUTHFUL BODY

In the early decades of the 20th century, the lanky physique emerged as a more universal signifier for the unsettling aspects of adolescence, regardless of class. Whether at the end of juvenility or onset of adolescence, this body type implied that the individual was embarking on adulthood unequipped for its responsibilities. Yet, depending on how it was

[123] *Judge*, July 9, 1892, 26.
[124] *Judge*, December 17, 1892, back cover.

rendered, the adolescent male body could carry hopes for potential development or sentimental memories of pre-adult freedoms. Artist and illustrator George Bellows helped both endorse and institute the adolescent physique as a troubling apparition for manhood.

Bellows provides a convenient capstone for contemplating how early 20th century viewers had become acclimated to both juvenile and adolescent male bodies. Bellows used the lanky adolescent physique prolifically for fashioning both tenement boys and young businessmen. Working in paint and lithography, Bellows' images demonstrated how this abject performance of manhood accrued new threats and social urgency when relocated to the high-profile venues of fine and political art.[125] However, affectionate responses to Bellows' works showed a countercurrent to the admonishing reviews. His sprouting, misbehaving bodies functioned as cathartic outlets, displaying a world in which the joys of juvenile freedom prolonged into adolescence.

Rebecca Zurier's research demonstrates how Bellows, along with many other American Ashcan artists, collapsed the wall between Fine Art and cartooning in their works. This visual compound is crucial because, as Rebecca Zurrier shows, journalistic drawing styles became synonymous with the lived experience of the city.[126] Bellows' work uniquely combined representational schema from the antithetical realms of Fine Art and cartooning. Similar to

[125] Rebecca Zurier's analysis of contemporary reviews reaches this conclusion, focusing on how his portrayals of the slum juvenile and adolescent were inseparable from the lower, even despised visual form of comics: "The negative reactions to Bellows' work from cartoonists, jurors of art contests, and art critics suggest that, like the graffiti scrawled by the Hogan's Alley gang on an uptown parlor wall, the comics were a form of drawing that did not belong in polite surroundings." Zurier, *Picturing the City*, 226.

[126] See especially Zurier's chapter "The Cartoonist's Vision (Part 1): William Glackens and the Legible City" in *Picturing the* City, particularly 181-212.

how Eugene Sandow permeated visual culture as a ubiquitous "image" of manhood, Bellows' works were often discussed as existing outside the protocols of fine art as a more purified, direct experience of "truth."[127] Bellows' paintings thus indicated how the juvenile and adolescent had, by the early 20th century, begun coalescing for the American public into recognizable, meaningful types.

Reporters during Bellows' lifetime specifically cited his 1907 work *Forty-Two Kids* (Fig. 4.1) as launching Bellows' career-defining reputation as a recorder of New York's unique slum culture.[128] *Forty-Two Kids* offered an unabashed portrayal of naked and nearly naked prepubescent boys rough-housing, bending, diving with spread legs, urinating, and generally displaying their unevenly developed sprawling bodies. Bellows had approached this theme previously in the 1906 painting *River Rats*, but from a more distant vantage point. A critic for the *New York Evening Mail*, Joseph Edgar Chamberlin, took offense at the gratuitous display in *Forty-Two Kids* during its showing in the 1908 National Academy exhibition, describing the work, "a tour de force of absurdity - a graphic impression of a lot of boys diving off a wharf, in which most of the boys look more like maggots than humans."[129] Marianne Doezama has

[127] For example, in his review of Bellows' 1911 solo show at Madison Art Gallery, James Gibbons Huneker juxtaposed Bellows' "truth" to the Academy's pursuit of beauty: "George Bellows has achieved a distinct personality in his art. Whether he will elect to pursue that fickle goddess Beauty – as understood by the Academy – or follow the narrow, deep furrow of truth he is at present ploughing, we dare not prophesy, though we are inclined to expect the continuation of his present style." Quoted in Marianne Doezama, "Tenement Life: Cliff Dwellers, 1906-1913" in *George Bellows* (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 2012), 52. Sarah Newman investigates concepts of authenticity in Bellows' congested visions of the city in "George Bellows' New York and the Spectacular Reality of the City," *American Art* 18, no. 3 (Fall 2004): 92-99.

[128] Robert G. McIntyre reflected in *Art and Progress* in August, 1911 , ". . . look at the "Forty-two Kids," the picture that first attracted attention to his work . . . " Quoted in Marianne Doezama, "Tenement Life," 52.

[129] Quoted in Marianne Doezama, "The "Real" New York" in *George Bellows* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1992), 102.

extensively catalogued the cues in this painting that threatened cultural lectures on family values and stewardship over the poor.[130] Yet, Doezama also documents how many of Bellows' contemporaries responded positively, even affectionately toward Bellows' representation of tenement male nudes. In 1908 the jury at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts initially selected *Forty-Two Kids* for the $300 Lippincott Prize, reversing the decision hours later for a more conservative work.[131]

A comparison with Eakin's exploration of the same subject in *Swimming* indicates what made Bellows' explorations of the youthful male nude acceptable.[132] Bellows invoked the language of comics through his packed compositions, jagged poses, defiant gestures, and gravity-defying antics. Not only does the title reference to "Kids" align these youths with the juvenile cast of Hogan's Alley.[133] The complexions of alternating pale, dark, and sunburnt skin also confirmed their identities as ethnically diverse tenement youth within a juvenile age range. As Rebecca Zurier has discussed, this invoked a "comic" gaze conditioned by the presentation of such subjects in Sunday supplements.[134] Bellows' nudes were stripped of associations with aesthetic pleasure and thus divested of the threatening, ambiguous status of Eakin's nudes.

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[130] See especially Marianne Doezama's chapter "The Other Half" in *George Bellows and Urban America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).
[131] Mary Sayre Haverstock, *George Bellows: An Artist in Action* (New York: Merrell, 2007), 41.
[132] Rebecca Zurier makes a thorough comparative analysis particularly of the formal and aesthetic different between *Forty-Two Kids* and *Swimming* in "Hey Kids: Children in the Comics and the Art of George Bellows," *The Print Collector's Newsletter* 18, no. 6 (January-February 1988): 197. See also David C. Ward's crosse examination of bathing scenes by Eakins and Bellows in "George Bellows Symposium: Bellows' "Riverfront": The Pestilential City and the Problem of Masculinity", National Gallery of Art, November 13, 2012, https://www.nga.gov/audio-video/audio/bellows-symposium-ward.html.
[133] For a discussion of Bellows' use of the term "kids" see Zurier, "Hey Kids," 197-199.
[134] For more on Bellows, his relationship to the comics, and the complications this presents for understanding their varied meanings for a mass audience, see Zurier's "Forty-Two Kids and the Sunday Comics" in *Picturing the City*, 216-234.

Reviewers of *Forty-Two Kids* and *River Rats* discussed these works as if they operated like comics. Descriptions of the scene's "nervous intensity" or the fact it was "conscious only of the moment and the pleasure it brings" invoked the immediacy of comics.[135] Many reviews referenced the piece's humor. In 1911 Robert G. McIntyre discussed the work in *Art and Progress* as having "the very joy of pure existence" as its central idea.[136] In 1908 James Gibbons Huneker affectionately described the *Forty-Two Kids* as "caught in the act" in a scene that could "move the heart of a grumpy schoolmaster."[137] This hardly towed the line of fellow AshCan painter and teacher Robert Henri's invocation to his students to disturb, upset, and enlighten through their works. A 1915 article in *International Studio* touched upon Hall's recapitulation theory and the therapeutic effects of laughter to consider Bellows' successful formula: ". . . a pool of water on a summer day, an army of youngsters disporting themselves in it and performing characteristic, boyish antics, which reveal what is peculiarly simian in the young male, and arouse thereby our risible, healthy emotions."[138] As discussed in Chapter 3, this quote points to how vicarious experiences of juvenile freedom had become a popular commodity by the early 20th century and recommended tonic for combatting modern maladies.

Another stream of responses considered how Bellows' young male nudes worked within the fine art gaze. Reflecting on *River Rats*, Frank Fowler discussed how Bellows' handling of paint channeled both exotic references and mannerist techniques. Referring to the boys as

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[135] "Conscious only of the moment" (Robert G. McIntyre, *Art and Progress*, August 1911, quoted in Doezama, "Tenement Life", 52) and "nervous intensity" (James Huneker, *New York Sun*, 1908, quoted in Haverstock, *George Bellows*, 41).
[136] Quoted in Marianne Doezama, "Tenement Life," 52.
[137] Quoted in Haverstock, *George Bellows*, 41.
[138] 1915 article in *International Studio* quoted in Doezama, "Tenement Life," 53.

"slender street arabs," he described how the "rough setting" removed sordid associations from the "fragile and active forms" of the boys, rendering them "chaste."[139] Going even further, many reviewed Bellows' paintings as if they ceased to be paintings at all and transformed into direct, unedited access to reality. Reflecting on Bellows' first one man show and particularly on his 1906 *River Rats*, a reviewer for the *New York Daily Tribune* stated, "Actuality is his leading motive."[140] Referring to Bellows' and William Glackens' depictions of child-life, a *New York Times* critic aligned the "brutal frankness" of their "screaming, grimacing, contorted youngsters" as "notes taken on the spot and published without rewriting."[141] A 1915 article stated it most bluntly when saying how if you saw *Forty-Two Kids* "in a gallery of Old Masters" it would be "as though, in strolling through the gallery, you had suddenly come upon an unexpected window, and your eyes strayed for a moment from the pictures to the out-of-doors, and rested upon a scene of a strangely familiar character."[142] Reporters praised Bellows' aptitude for "truth" in other urban subjects as well. However, the repetition of this epithet for Bellows' childhood scenes indicates just how much the comic juvenile body had become synonymous with the lived urban experience.

Bellows himself stoked such epithets by channeling the creative philosophy of Robert Henri. Bellows described "the artist" as an open receptacle for the onslaught of modern life: "His (the artist's) picture chooses him. He doesn't choose what he shall paint anymore than a

[139] Marianna Doezama notes this combination of "sordid" and "chaste" set a pattern for readings of Bellows' works. Quoted in Doezama, "Tenement Life," 47.
[140] Quoted in Ibid., 52.
[141] Quoted in Haverstock, *George Bellows*, 40.
[142] 1915 article in *International Studio* quoted in Doezama, "Tenement Life," 53.

writer chooses the news that shall happen or the idea that shall possess him."[143] Yet Bellows, like Jacob Riis, knowingly hand-picked and manipulated his subjects and images. His portraits of tenement boys, such as *Cross-Eyed Boy,* purposefully highlighted physical unevenness and deformities. In *Laughing Boy* and *Paddy Flannigan*, Bellows took liberty with expressive brushwork to exaggerate their faces as a meaty, pulverized mishmash with swollen eyes, broken noses, and swollen welts. Jane Myers notes how *Paddy*'s risqué pose was of Bellows' choosing and not a spontaneous display of gutter bravado.[144] Despite Bellows' incorporation of latent violence, defiance, and sexual leer in *Paddy*, some undeterred reviewers seemed charmed instead of threatened. In 1908, Chamberlain named *Paddy* a "pearl of the gutter" and *New York Evening Star* reviewer Leila Mechlin calls the work a clever character study of a street urchin.[145]

A comparison between Bellows' upper-class boy and lower-class boy portraits reveals how much Bellows' portraits echoed conventions established in the comics. The reticent pose and soft features of *Boy in a Blue Coat* (Fig. 4.9) were diametrically opposed to the spreading, dynamic limbs and gawky grin of *Frankie the Organ Boy*. Upper-class *Walter Littlefield* echoed the buckteeth and confrontational gaze of *Paddy Flannigan*, but his symmetrical pose, delicate, flushed features, and oversized cardigan emphasized both a more sheltered childhood and burgeoning self-confidence. If depicted in balance and not excess, these traits forecasted

[143] Quote from "George Bellows, N.A. Paints 'The Call of the City.'" *The Sun*, December 26, 1915. Quoted in Robert Conway, "American Life: Drawing, Illustration, and Lithography, 1912-1924" in *George Bellows* (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 2012), 219.
[144] Myers, "Bellows' Portraiture," 185.
[145] Leila Mechlin, "Riot of Attractions: Displays in the Art Galleries of New York," *Evening Star*, March 26, 1909, 11.

successful upper-class adulthood. Likewise, *Paddy*'s features, prematurely aged by beatings, flaunted an accelerated adolescence that could be simultaneously threatening and reassuring. A decade after Outcault launched his street urchins into the public arena, the prematurely sprouting tenement boy stood as an emblem of American resilience and defiance. Jane Myers suggests that *Paddy*'s bared body dangerously projected his lower-class sexuality.[146] Yet, if read as an Outcault-style comic performer, *Paddy*'s attempts at masculine intimidation and sexual lure satired rather than embodied these cultural obsessions. Indeed, the boy's starkly white skin and falling garment recalled John Singer Sargent's 1884 *Madame X (Madame Pierre Gautreau)* in its scandalously high contrast baring of flesh.

Bellows also worked scenes of youthful male kinship into lithographs, many of which were published by the leftist magazine *The Masses.* Historian Robert Conway demonstrates how Bellows could wield his marauding youngsters into more disturbing political tools when he created images for the self-defined "monthly magazine devoted to the interests of the working people." Conway compares two renditions of the same scene that Bellows composed for two different magazines: the 1914 *I Was Beatin 'is Face* for mainstream *Harper's Magazine* and the 1917 *The Street* for *The Masses*. The earlier, more light-hearted illustration *I Was Beatin 'is Face* focused on the comic interplay between uncouth children. The more disturbing *The Street* immersed this narrative scene within a dark, claustrophobic avenue highlighting two strolling prostitutes.[147] In *The Street*, comic-strip juvenile play does not command and relieve the

[146] Myers, "Bellow's Portraiture," 185. Zurier also describes *Paddy Flannigan*'s partial undress as "slyly erotic." Zurier, *Picturing the City*, 238.
[147] Robert Conway, "American Life," 217-218.

tenement block. Rather, the children become subsumed by their environment, a composition that plugged for city social reform.[148]

This darker, pessimistic outlook on tenement play also characterized Bellows' lithograph *Splinter Beach* which appeared in *The Masses* on July 4, 1913 (Fig. 4.10). Although all the subjects appear pre-pubescent, the boys of *Splinter Beach* generally skewed older in age than the miscreants of *Forty-Two Kids*. Now viewed at eye-level rather than above, the bathers were not only closer to the audience but also more exposed, particularly one spread-eagled lounger. The inclusion of figures in full-dress accentuated the stark nudity of their companions. Unlike the majority of illustrations in *The Masses*, Bellows' *Splinter Beach* lacked an overt political message. However, its appearance on Independence Day and its placement in the middle of a cautionary modernist short fiction piece deepened *Splinter Beach*'s potential political read.

The parodic story by Robert Carlton Brown, "Adam and Sunday", followed the aimless radicalism and idealism of protagonist "Adam", who gulped down philosophy during a self-imposed naturist existence in the Alabama woods. After a chance meeting with the like-minded woman "Sunday" on a beach, Adam and Sunday forged a platonic, intellectually driven relationship. The chaste couple accidentally created a cash cow enterprise by attracting a cult of like-minded followers but then suddenly abandoned all their ideals, fleeing to Paris in pursuit of a conventional marriage and domestic, materialistic bliss. Typical of Brown's work, the

[148] Rebecca Zurier discusses how, by the early 20th century, social reformists began gravitating away from trying to change the poor themselves toward changing the city environment. *Picturing the City*, 223-224.

critique of American culture was both elusive and wide-ranging, attacking philosophical self-indulgence, the capitalist machine, and mass media fanaticism.[149]

Plunked in the middle of Brown's story as an unrelated two-page spread, Bellows' *Splinter Beach* creates an evocative, perhaps sarcastic, oppositional narrative to Brown's story of cultural and philosophical puerility. The beach setting connected both narratives. In "Adam and Sunday," the couple's initial meeting took place on a beach where, lured by the sensual sand, they almost indulged in a physical relationship before holding steadfast to their communist ideals. By contrast, Bellows' boys lived in the bodily moment, finding nature not in refuge but in the squalid city pollution. *Splinter Beach* was refreshingly devoid of ideals or circuitous, unproductive intellect, appearing honest and genuine by comparison.

However, the Independence Day publication date complicated this potential idealism. One central boy among his near-nude companions proudly donned a straw hat and coat, suggesting a pathetic attempt at a dignified July 4th jubilee. On the cover, *The Masses* ran a drawing by John Sloan of strolling, joking prostitutes titled *The Return from Toil*. While capturing a care-free spirit and sense of comradery evocative of Independence Day, the Bellows' centerfold illustration in combination with the cover make a stinging mockery of American equality and progress. The formal similarities between *Splinter Beach* and *Return from Toil* gave Bellows' fraternal play a double-edged commentary on American Independence.

In the context of the magazine, the humor of *Splinter Beach* created a cleft experience. The images were entertaining and familiar, defiant of condescension and authority. Yet

[149] For more on the writer Robert Carlton Brown, see Paul Stephens, "'Inforg': The 'Readies' at the Limits of Modernist Cosmopolitanism," *Journal of Modern Literature* 35, no. 1 (Fall 2011): 143-164.

laughter probed readers to question why such inhumane living conditions had become normalized and endemic. This concept of a joke that should not be a joke was encapsulated by a stand-alone passage that appeared in a series of editorials written by Max Eastman for the July 1913 edition. Titled "Funny?", Eastman reflected on scholars who, failing to understand passages in Don Quixote, often quipped, "We think this must be a joke." Eastman continued, " . . . I am reminded of this by a statement of John A. Sleicher, the publisher of *Judge* and *Leslie's Weekly*, to the effect that the new tariff policy, if adopted 'will definitely decide that there are to be no more increases of wages in the United States at present, if ever.' Mr. Sleicher is the publisher of a funny, and I am inclined to conclude that this must be a joke."

As Bellows' nude juveniles matured toward adolescence and climbed in social status, their meanings grew more disturbing and ambiguous. In 1915, Bellows' painting *RiverFront, No. 1* took on the same subject as *Forty-Two Kid*s and *Splinter Beach*. Art critics and historians did not approach this piece with the same affection as *Forty-Two Kids*.[150] Bellows increased the number of bathers and included even more blatant displays of sprawling, languid nudity. The viewpoint was now placed low on the beach, so that nudes scrambled on the wharf and towered above the viewer.

[150] In an overall cantankerous art review, a critic for the New York says this about *RiverFront*'s 1915 exhibition at the MacDowell club: "It is overcrowded with figures, the massing is unimpressive, and if one must attempt crowds of people then order becomes of the highest importance; but worst of all the individual figures are uninteresting. The facts set down are not significant. True, one boy takes his shirt off and another puts on one and one boy dives and another makes ready to dive. These facts are not made memorable for us. H. Hogarth would have chosen incidents for each performer that would have made him essential to the picture." See "What is happening in the world of art?," *The Sun*, February 14, 1915, 3.

Some reviewers referred to *Riverfront No. 1'*s figures as "boys" while historian David C. Ward calls them "men." This discrepancy pointed to the danger of the adolescent body, which stands on the cusp between childhood and manhood, able to serve as mascot to either stage of development. While there were no obvious signs of manhood, such as pubic hair, many of the figures appeared much taller with more muscular development than Bellows' previous bathing figures.[151] In addition, a few figures channeled the fall in the Garden of Eden by seeming to self-consciously conceal their nudity. A central tanned figure, the compositional fulcrum, ambiguously clasped both hands before his groin, despite the fact he wears a bathing costume. Off to the left concealed in the shadows, two chatting figures who almost looked like twins sported oppositional stances. One fully exposed his nudity with arms stretched back and genitalia thrust forward while the other, wearing black swim trunks, crisscrossed both arms and legs before his torso.

Bellows' affinity for this painting was suggested by the fact he returned to the composition in reverse twice nearly a decade later for a lithograph dated 1923-24 (Fig. 4.11) and the 1924 painting *RiverFront No. 2*. Although Bellows reorganized the composition using Jay Hambidge's theory of dynamic symmetry, the later renditions not only duplicated but arguably heightened the first work's ominous juxtapositions.[152] David C. Ward notes how *Riverfront*'s cast of characters were less ethnically diverse than previous bathing pictures and casts this as a predominantly white working-class assembly.[153] *Riverfront No. 2* confirmed this

[151] David C. Ward comments that these figures appear more robust than the emaciated *Forty-Two Kids*, classifying this as a relatively healthier working-class group. Ward, "Bellow's 'Riverfront'."
[152] Lauris Mason, *The Lithographs of George Bellows: A Catalogue raisonné, revised edition* (San Francisco: Alan Wofsy Fine Arts, 1992), 239.
[153] Ward, "Bellow's 'Riverfront'."

read by heightening the contrast of pasty white bodies against deeply tanned heads and hands. Although Ward suggested ethnic uniformity provided reassurance for the group, it also complicated our position as a viewer gawking at the semi-nude display. In his lithograph, Bellows took advantage of crayon's definitive line to make more descriptive notations of bodily anatomy, clearly distinguishing between juvenile bodies and late adolescence. In the foreground, a boy stripping off his shorts showed a bony sternum and prominent ribcage, indicating his youth. However, a nude figure lounging on his abdomen to the left showed deeply defined back muscles, indicating his maturity. In the lithograph, the "Garden of Eden" pair (now off to the right) provided an even more dramatic contrast of exhibitionism and concealment. The exposed boy freely shifted his genitals with his right hand while the crisscrossed figure is more deeply encased in shadow, possibly even returning the viewer's gaze.

In Bellows' works, riverfronts and public beaches created a juvenile haven where adolescent leanness could convey freedom and resilience, conveying, as one critique put it, the "very joy of pure existence."[154] Bellows also understood how signs of pubescence could trouble these forms by imbuing them with unstable implications for America's future. Bellows' painting *Beach at Coney Island* dated 1908-1910 presented one of his most organized commentaries on the relationship between adulthood, juvenility, and adolescence. Marianne Doezama analyzes how the cavorting adult couple in the bottom left-hand corner of the painting acted like a magnet, drawing gazes from co-ed groups of spindly giggling juveniles in the center and

[154] Robert McIntyre, *Art and Progress*, 1911, quoted in Doezama, *George Bellows*, 52.

foreground.[155] Bellows' juicy paint amplified the slick textures of the male's tensed, tanned biceps and the femme fatale's flow of red hair over his lap, corporeal forms that emphasized Coney Island's moral laxity. While this may seem like a dangerous demonstration for young pleasure seekers, just below this couple, almost out of a frame, Bellows placed a mimicking adolescent couple who have clearly missed the point. In a reversal of the adult embrace, a seemingly bored young female, red hair tied back, draped her arm over her lanky, languid male teenage companion. Positioned in her lap, the male teenager closed his eyes and drew back on his cigarette, oblivious to any sexual allures. Ironically, the debilitating threat implied here laid not in the male adolescent's pursuit of sex, but rather his lack of interest.

BELLOWS AND THE COLLEGE ADOLESCENT

Several historians have noted the kill-joy presence of clothed figures entering at the edge of *The Riverfront No. 1's* composition. Mary Sayre Haverstock says, "Ominously, there are three fully dressed adults approaching from the right, led by a man in business suit and homburg striding into the fray, apparently bent on teaching some hapless lad a lesson he will not soon forget."[156] David C. Ward similarly identifies the suited figure as a possible authoritarian or policeman intent on imposing order, or a voyeuristic adult seeking an illicit liaison.[157] Bellows' slashing paint triggers this ambiguity, but an examination of the more clearly drawn *Riverfront* lithograph suggests a different narrative. Relocated to the left edge, Bellows has rendered two suited figures. One smoked a cigarette. They sported boyish faces

[155] Doezama, *George Bellows and Urban America*, 182.
[156] Haverstock, *George Bellows*, 100.
[157] Ward, "Bellow's 'Riverfront'."

and an arrogant swagger, identifying not as authorities but instead adopting the behaviors commonly ascribed to college-enrolled leisure seekers. The more disturbing indication was that these figures of pronounced social status would become indecipherable from the surrounding rabble once they stripped their jackets and derby hats.

Bellows explored even more disturbing manifestations of the white-collar late adolescence through a series of excoriating prints. His 1916 lithograph *Business Men's Class, Y.M.C.A.* (Fig. 4.12) echoed the familiar cartoon trope of dudes at the gym. However, the attenuated, lanky physiques belonged to green-looking college grads instead of hunch-backed, vacant British nobles. These inductees intermingled with the fat and aging male physiques long used to symbolize corporate America. Lead by an instructor that moved more like a dancer than an athlete, the class delivered an unconvincing performance of strength. Aged businessmen wheezed and strained while younger would-be athletes lifted weights with unmasculine flamboyance. Only the far-right figure, viewing the class with a smirk from the sidelines, sported the traditional Herculean body of the gym. The "conscientious body-building ritual" on display in Bellows' *Business Men's Class* is far cry from the intensity of Bellows' boxing pictures that were admired for encapsulating the swift force of the "brawny roustabout of a New York wharf" rather than "the athlete of the university gymnasium."[158]

Bellows' second YMCA lithograph placed these adolescent physiques on nude display in the 1917 *Shower-Bath* (Fig. 4.13). His 1923 lithograph *The Business-Man's Bath* (Fig. 4.14) readdressed this theme repeating many of the same figures. As in *The Business Men's Class*,

[158] Included in a review for Bellows' first one-man show at the Madison Gallery in the *New York Tribune*, 1911. Quoted in Doezama, "Tenement Life," 51.

the managerial class was divided into three physiognomies. Geriatric and portly middle aged men were familiar tropes from comic magazines, made all the more grotesque as many towel off their buttocks and genitals. However, the lean college graduate was a relative newcomer to America's early 20th century visual culture (see Chapter 5). In physique, discoordination, and rough-housing, Bellows' college graduates were nearly indecipherable from the misbehaving youths on *Splinter Beach* and the various *Riverfront*s. They sported faint moustaches and pubic hair, yet their sunken chests, spindly ribcages, and soft buttocks indicated the undeveloped physiques of juveniles. In this vision, the college graduate was a disturbing amalgamation of juvenile and adult.

In the 2011 exhibition *Hide-Seek: Difference and Desire in American Portraiture* at the National Portrait Gallery, co-curators Jonathan Katz and David C. Ward forward the homoerotic content of *The Shower-Bath.* Specifically, the proximity of two central foregrounded figures, one an arrogant posing youth and the other a barrel-bodied slippered man with comb-over, insinuated the position of gay sex.[159] In the later *The Business-Man's Bath*, which reworked this composition, Bellows highlighted a different liaison in the background that was mostly lost in *The Shower-Bath*: an adolescent behind the diving board cupped his hands to whisper into a portly balding man's ear. The conspiratorial pose and leaning, but separated bodies suggested a pecuniary tip-off. In the artificial, bloated world of the gymnasium and capitalist America, twiggy adolescents functioned as a disturbing and dangerous scourge, threatening the tenacity of America's economic future.

[159] Ward, "Bellows' 'Riverfront'."

Bellows' *The Business-Man's Bath* also reworked the suggestive foreground couple, who now stood in a less interactive, penetrating pose. Disturbingly, the extremely spindly, now younger looking youth seemed to pose explicitly for the viewer's visual pleasure. He smiled confidently outward, statue-like. Marianna Doezema demonstrates how, in the late nineteenth and early 20th centuries, both the act of creating and looking at art were imbued with concepts of male virality.[160] Robert Henri defined artistic conviction with manly vocabulary, as his student Guy Pène du Bois recounted, "Henri did not expect the artist to be a normal man . . . He expected him to be a real man. Art and manhood were thus compounded into one."[161] In 1926, Van Meter Ames organized these concepts into an aesthetic theory that linked the visual arts to one's physical, rather than social, being. Paintings were capable of stimulating the body, literally providing physical nourishment. The brazen presentation of Bellows' ephebic form for aesthetic contemplation in *The Shower Bath* thus not only emblemized the decay of American business but suggestively degraded the virile promises of American art.

While historians discuss homosocial voyeurism in Bellows' bathing displays, very few of the figures explicitly gazed at one another. Bellows' most blatant exploration of voyeuristic fawning over the male form occurred in a different print, one arguably containing his most aberrant rendition of the adolescent physique. A drawing in the Harvard Fogg Museum titled *Sweeney, The Idol of the Kids, Had Hit a Home Run* (Fig. 4.15) depicted a post-game scene where a crowd craned at the open door and window of the team dressing room. Their idol, Sweeney, stood fully nude in the center of the composition, looking backward at the fans

[160] Doezema, *George Bellows*, 89-90.
[161] Rebecca Zurier reprints this quote and discusses Robert Henri's "manly" take on art in *Picturing the City*, 119-120.

triumphantly while massaging his tricep.[162] Three hunched players, not the target of adoration, also stripped down post game. In comparison to his teammates, Sweeney's body was unnervingly gangly and bony, channeling *Paddy Flannigan*'s flimsy swagger. Bellows also clearly marked Sweeney as a post-pubescent man.[163] Sweeney's posturing, arrogance, and wiry musculature was a far cry from the passionate, skull mashing battles played out by Bellows' boxers. Although the idol of "kids" (which implied Sweeney makes an unworthy role model), leering adults also comprised the crowd. Most disquieting is the smiling, cigar-smoking suited man in the dressing room, likely an owner, who seemed pleased by the cash value of this retinue.

As a shortstop for Ohio State who was approached by the Cincinnati Reds, Bellows was most intimately connected to the sport of baseball, although baseball hardly appeared in his oeuvre despite his focus on American athletics.[164] Jay Thomas describes how *Sweeney* reflected the intimate "vision of an athlete" who understood the seamier side of major league sports and contemptuous relationships between achievement, fandom, and fame. Bellows never achieved fame as a baseball player, but he did accelerate to artistic stardom in his early twenties and was one of the youngest artists admitted as an associate member to the National Academy of Design. The derogatory portrayal in *Sweeney* suggested a dangerously premature

[162] This description is based on Jay Thomas' account of the drawing. Thomas uses his own experience of an athlete to interpret the after-game routine on display here. See Jay Thomas, "George Bellows: America's artist on the National Pastime", The Smart Set, July 2, 2018, https://www.thesmartset.com/george-bellows-americas-artist-on-the-national-pastime/.

[163] Despite the proliferation of nudes in his works, Bellows only occasionally portrays male genitalia and usually only those of prepubescent boys. Even in the adult display of the *Business Men's Bath*, most of the groins are obscured or deep in shadow. His depiction of Sweeney is uncharacteristically specific in exhibiting mature male genitalia.

[164] See the "The Player as Artist" in John Bowman and Joel Zoss, *Diamonds in the Rough: The Untold History of Baseball* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 237 – 239,

self-confidence. Perhaps the drawing doubled as veiled portrait of the artist, a self-deprecating reflection on early stardom for the artist nicknamed "The Bad Boy of the Academy" in 1908.[165] As a representation of America's belove pastime and hence America itself, it forecasted a compromised future.

Another lithograph by Bellows targeted the adolescent college body, not for admiration but for humiliation and punishment. Bellows' 1917 lithograph *Initiation in the Frat* (Fig. 4.16) almost exactly followed the composition of his 1912 drawing *I remember being initiated into the frat.* The titles recalled his sophomore year invitation to join Beta Theta Pi at Ohio State University.[166] Bellows presented a new physiognomic dynamic here with broad-shouldered burly men forcing adolescent-bodied inductees into spasms and contortions. This was accomplished by paddling, bouncing students on a trampoline, and forcing them to stand on their heads, climb telephone poles, and bend down as footstools.

The arrogant and casual brutality of the fraternity members stoked vehement responses. Bellows Historian Lauris Mason writes, "the uglier, more ominous aspects of hazing are depicted," and Mary Sayre Haverstock describes it as "an unflattering examination of fraternity hazing."[167] In his 1927 catalogue raisonné of Bellows' lithographs, Thomas Beer clearly expressed his disgust at the subject: "A weak and muddled business, *Initiation in the Frat* has had the odd result of stopping this stupid form of sadism outright in one American college.

[165] Haverstock, *George Bellows*, 87.
[166] For a description of Bellows' college years, see Haverstock, *George Bellows*, 19-24 and Doezama, *George Bellows*, 73-74.
[167] Mason, *Lithographs*, 93; Haverstock, *Bellows*, 114.

All art is not quite useless."[168] However, the college-themed images Bellows created while attending OSU generated a different scene. Most of these early images rendered college boys as polished, smoothly muscled gods or society swells, fawned over by gorgeous girls emulating Dana Gibson's polished styles.[169] In addition, Bellows' much later fraternity scene did not differ much from comical, much more lighthearted illustrations of the same acts of freshman hazing that appeared in 1903 editions of Princeton's humor magazine, the *Princeton Tiger.* Bellows' *Initiation in the Frat* did not resolve the tensions around masculine rituals that pervaded college campuses, but it signaled their important and controversial status in discussions about the American adolescent experience.

By the early 20th century, the popularity of college sports began to place the collegiate body center stage in America's visual culture. During the same period, artists began using adolescent physiques to excoriate the modern male and stoke metaphorical worries about America's future. Together, this maelstrom placed enormous visual pressures on the living, breathing adolescents growing up during these decades. Adolescents themselves responded to these pressures by creating college humor magazines, throwing their parodic voice into the masculinity debate.

[168] Quoted in Harold J. Baily, "George Bellows' Painting: My Mother," *The Brooklyn Museum Quarterly* 22, no. 2 (April 1935): 77.
[169] George Bellows also created satirical cartoons parodying college men. See Haverstock, *George Bellows*, 20-21.



Fig. 4.1 George Bellows. (American, 1882-1925). *Forty-two Kids.* 1907.
Oil on canvas. 42" x 60 ¼". Corcoran Collection
(Museum Purchase, William A. Clark Fund). 2014.79.2.
Image courtesy of the National Gallery of Art, Washington.



Fig. 4.2 Winslow Homer (American, 1836-1910). *Undertow.* 1886.
Oil on canvas. 29 3/16" x 47 5/8". The Clark Institute. 1955.4
Image courtesy of the Clark Institute. Clarkart.edu



Fig. 4.3 Thomas Eakins (American, 1844-1916). *Arcadia.* 1883. Oil on canvas. 38 5/8" x 45". Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of Miss Adelaide Milton de Groot (1876-1967), 1967. 67.187.125. Image courtesy of the Met's Open Access policy.



Fig. 4.4 Thomas Eakins (American, 1844–1916). *Swimming.* 1885. Oil on canvas. 27 3/8 x 36 3/8 in. Amon Carter Museum of American Art, Fort Worth, Texas. Purchased by the Friends of Art, Fort Worth Art Association, 1925; acquired by the Amon Carter Museum of American Art, 1990, from the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth through grants and donations from the Amon G. Carter Foundation, the Sid W. Richardson Foundation, the Anne Burnett and Charles Tandy Foundation, Capital Cities/ABC Foundation, Fort Worth Star-Telegram, The R. D. and Joan Dale Hubbard Foundation and the people of Fort Worth. 1990.19.1. Image courtesy Amon Carter Museum of Art

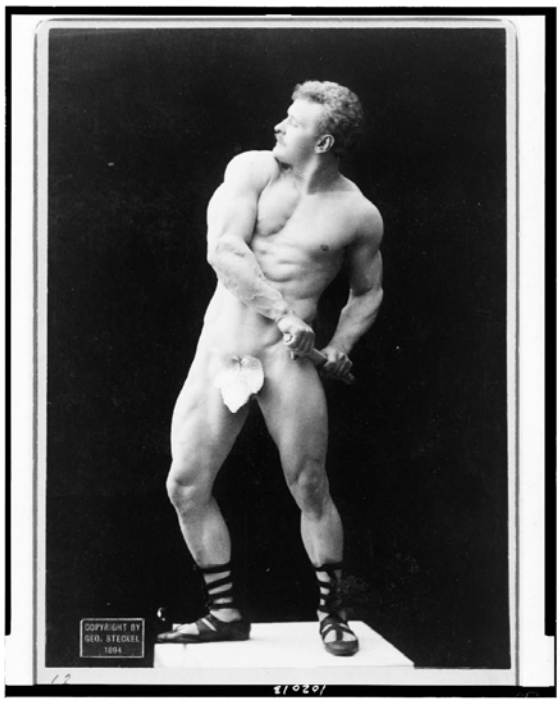


Fig. 4.5 "Eugen Sandow." photographed by George Steckel. c. 1894.
From Library of Congress
https://lccn.loc.gov/90715319
(Accessed May 31, 2021)



Fig. 4.6 Thomas Hovenden (American, born Ireland, 1840-1895). *Breaking Home Ties.* 1890. Oil on canvas. 52 1/8" x 6' 1/4". Philadelphia Museum of Art.
Gift of Ellen Harrison McMichael in memory of C. Emory McMichael, 1942. 1942-60-1.
Image courtesy the Philadelphia Museum of Art.
https://philamuseum.org/collection/object/47809 (Accessed May 31, 2021)

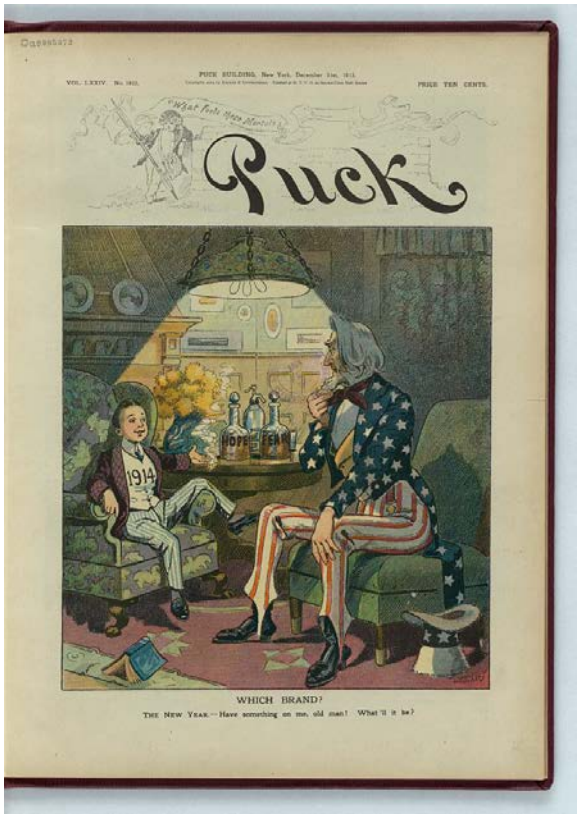


Fig. 4.7 S. D. Ehrhart. "Which brand?" *Puck*, December 31, 1913. From Library of Congress. https://lccn.loc.gov/2011649657 (Accessed May 31, 2021)

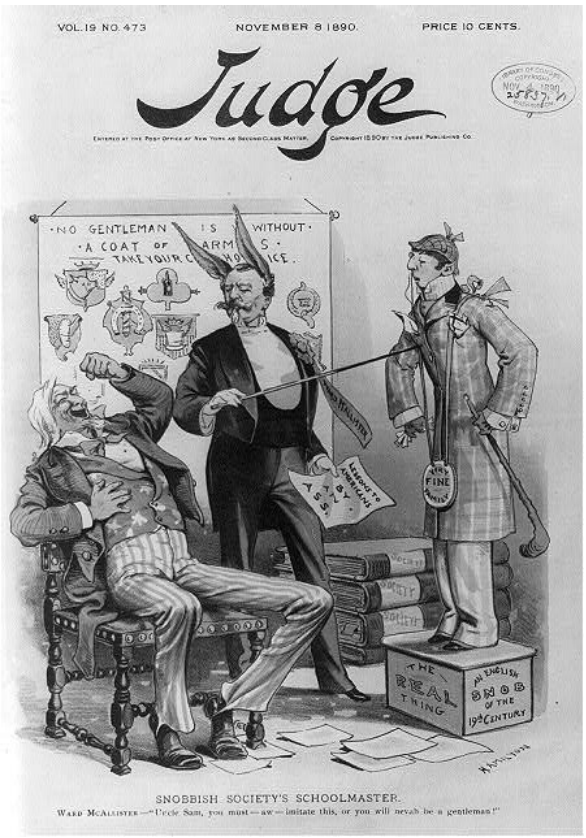


Fig. 4.8 "Snobbish Society's Schoolmaster." *Judge*, November 8, 1890. From Library of Congress. https://lccn.loc.gov/2004679727 (Accessed May 31, 2021)



Fig. 4.9 George Bellows (American, 1882-1925).
Boy in a Blue Coat. 1915. Oil on canvas. Unframed: 91.5 x 61 cm (36” x 24”).
Cleveland Museum of Art, Bequest of Mrs. Henry A. Everett for the Dorothy Burnham Everett Memorial Collection. 1938.45
Image courtesy of the Cleveland Museum of Art

Fig. 4.10 George Bellows (American, 1882-1925). *Splinter Beach.* 1916. Lithograph on wove paper. 15” x 19 3/4”. National Gallery of Art. Purchased as the Gift of Max N. Berry. 2014.21.1.
Image courtesy National Gallery of Art, Washington





Fig. 4.11 George Bellows (American, 1882-1925). *Riverfront.* 1923-1924. Lithograph. 14 7/8" x 20 7/8". Indianapolis Museum of Art. Acquired by exchange. 26.11. Image courtesy Indianapolis Museum of Art



Fig. 4.12 George Bellows (American, 1882-1925). *Business Men's Class.* 1916. Lithograph. 11 ½" x 17 ¼". Philadelphia Museum of Art.
Purchased with the SmithKline Beckman Corporation Fund, 1958. 1958.150.7
Image courtesy Philadelphia Museum of Art.
https://philamuseum.org/collection/object/57124 (Accessed May 31, 2021)



Fig. 4.13 George Bellows (1882-1925). *Shower-Bath.* 1917. Lithograph. 15 7/8" x 23 7/8". Amon Carter Museum of American Art, Fort Worth, Texas. 1985.306. Image Courtesy Amon Carter Museum of American Art.



Fig. 4.14 George Bellows (1882-1925). *Business-men's Bath.* 1923. Lithograph. (39 x 55 cm) 16 7/8" x 11 7/8". Boston Public Library. Gift; Albert H. Wiggin Image courtesy Digital Commonwealth: Massachusetts Collections Online. https://ark.digitalcommonwealth.org/ark:/50959/7d279x079 (Accessed May 31, 2021)

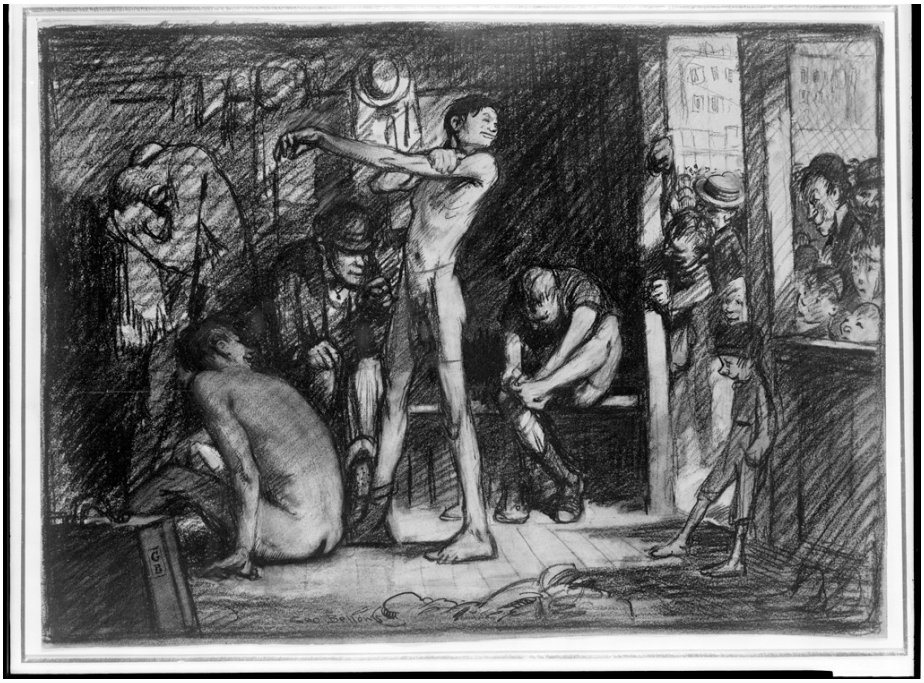


Fig. 4.15 George Bellows (1882-1925). *Sweeney, The Idol of the Kids, Had Hit a Home Run.* 19th – 20th century. Drawing. 13 1/6" x 17 9/16".
Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum, Bequest of Grenville L. Winthrop. 1943.568.
Image Courtesy Harvard Art Museum. https://hvrd.art/o/307932 (Accessed May 31, 2021)



Fig. 4.16 George Bellows (1882-1925). *Initiation in the Frat.* 1917. Lithograph.
12 5/8" x 10 1/8". From Library of Congress.
https://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/98503951/ (Accessed May 31, 2021)

Chapter 5

THE UNDERGRADUATE: AN AMERICAN PROBLEM

A 1911 advertisement for Goodyear Welts shoe pedaled product reassurance by illustrating six happy male consumers of varied ages literally sliding down "the banister of life" (Fig. 5.1). The adverts showed each male in a various stage of development, beginning with a nightgowned infant and concluding with a vivacious old man happily careening head-first down the banister. In between these two bookending figures, the banister supported four males that demonstrated the intermediary steps leading from juvenile development to financially successful manhood. The juvenile figure closely resembled Buster Brown in both dress and his self-endangering shenanigans. The fat, prosperous adult leaned confidently back, cigar in mouth and smirking assuredly at the viewer. Both exhibited a playful and defiant demeanor, recalling how Buster Brown's irreverence for rules and regulations served as both an emotional outlet and potentially positive model for navigating the challenges of the modern world.

In the middle of the banister appeared two new characters in the canon of humorous bodies. A gawky limbed adolescent slid conservatively down with legs closed together and hands in lap. He was the only character sporting a vacant, even gullible face. His suit jacket and starched collar reemphasized his underdeveloped and boyish physique. In front of him, a slightly older figure in between adolescence and manhood slid down on all fours with rump joyously lifted in the air. This figure boasted neophyte manhood through a struggling moustache and slightly thickened physique. However, he nowhere near approximated the robust, aging masculinity of the successful businessman. These two midline figures are a new

addition to the male comic character canon. Consistently repeated throughout student-produced college humor magazines, they represented the freshman and senior physique. More important, they showed an increasing interest in the stages of manhood bridging early and late adolescence.

Like lower-class juveniles, adolescents enjoyed increased freedom from the domestic sphere and formed an independent cultural body. R. F. Outcault, Jacob Riis, and other visual artisans were self-appointed spokesmen for juvenile culture and represented it with competing visions. However, progressive era adolescents differed from juveniles in that they left a significant visual legacy of their own: the college humor magazine. By George Stanley Hall's definitions, undergraduates were still undergoing adolescent development throughout their four years of education. Produced by students and largely for the consumption of students, college humor magazines permit a rare cross-examination of the image-phenomenon of the male adolescent and the male adolescent's self-perception. They show how adolescents engaged with the very public excoriation of their own bodies. They also reveal a desire to enter a claim in the competition over American masculine identity by harnessing the medium of print and humor.

COLLEGE STUDENTS AS A MODERN CRISIS

The College Adolescent as a Social Cause

By the 20th century, high school and college had become crucial places to monitor adolescent development in the upper-middle and aristocratic classes. As high school diplomas grew more ubiquitous among these classes, high schools themselves became perceived as step

ladders to college degrees.[1] By the 20th century, universities no longer waved in gentlemen but instead vetted their students with academically rigorous entrances requirements. Institutions began broadening their social milieu, attracting middle class youths and some of the aspiring poor with hopes of upward mobility.[2] This shaped a unique class of young Americans bonded by their shared experiences.[3] However, only after the introduction of the 1944 GI Bill did college enrollment constitute the logical, automatic follow-up after high school.[4] With only 4 percent of those between eighteen and twenty attending college by 1900, this remained a limited sampling of American adolescents. That percentage would double by 1920, an increase in proportion to the rising popularity of college life as a subject for American entertainment.[5]

Through the late 19th century, the university increasingly moved centerstage in positioning young, primarily Anglo-Saxon, men to climb the corporate ladder or advance to lucrative professions in law or medicine.[6] The industrialization of business, the increase of jobs requiring engineering expertise, and the new prominence of technical professions repositioned college degrees, once a luxury, as a necessity. Oscar Handlin and Mary F. Handlin summarize how increased college enrollments were catalyzed in this climate by "the desire for credentials in an complex society of large organizations, the difficulty of recruiting and identifying talent for

[1] Richard Ohmann, *Selling Culture: Magazines, Markets, and Class at the Turn of the Century* (New York: Verso, 1996), 162.
[2] Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, *Campus Life: Undergraduate Cultures from the End of the Eighteenth Century to the Present* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 7.
[3] Frank Deford, "Preface" in *Roaring at 100: The Princeton Tiger Magazine Centennial Album* (Princeton: The Princeton Tiger, 1983), ix-x.
[4] See Daniel A. Clark, "'The Two Joes Meet. Joe College, Joe Veteran': The G.I. Bill, College Education, and Postwar American Culture", *History of Education Quarterly* 38, no. 2 (Summer 1998): 165-189.
[5] Horowitz, *Campus Life*, 5
[6] Ohmann, *Selling Culture*, 162

very specialized tasks, and the reluctance of consumers of technical services to rely upon purely pragmatic judgments of competence." [7] The social mobility promised by this economy was a two way street, with both the overnight rich and the overnight poor making headlines.[8] By permitting future executives to rub shoulders with the aristocratic classes, college could help young men secure their business prospects with influential social contacts.

According to Richard Ohmann, the university "helped forge national bonds of experience and ideology throughout the [professional managerial] class, as well as preparing its youth for advancement and authority."[9] As custodians of culture, colleges further promised to imbue college men with a broad educational base that would "distinguish them in the future, not so much through formal courses of instruction as through participation in the way of life as a community."[10] This conditioning occurred on the residential campus, where students could independently curate their social practices and codes of conduct.

The unprecedented freedom from both familial influence and adult social pressures on college undergraduates raised alarm, prompting the circulation of self-help guidelines for potential undergraduates. Theodore T. Munger's 1884 *On the Threshold* was aimed at the wealthy young sons of self-made fathers poised on this precipice toward success. For Munger, the catch-all term "success" included citizenship, racial dominance, and reaping in the "double harvest" of America's material prosperity and noble manhood.[11] Munger was extremely

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[7] Oscar Handlin and Mary F. Handlin, *The American College and American Culture: Socialization as a Function of Higher Culture* (New York: McGraw Hill Book co., 1970), 46.
[8] Idem.
[9] Ohmann, *Selling Culture*, 162.
[10] Handlin and Handlin, *The American College*, 56.
[11] Theodore Munger, *On the Threshold* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, and Company, 1884), iv.

specific about how racial pedigree determined temperament, recommending a eugenic recipe that combined Anglo-Saxon ethnicity with "a refining strain of Norman blood."[12] Thus success was not just the prerogative of white Americans but only the right kind of white Americans. Revised editions of *On the Threshold* continued to be republished into the early 20th century, suggesting the persistent crisis perceived around those adolescent shoots who would comprise the next generation of American gentlemen.

Foreshadowing Hall's theories of adolescence, Munger described the male youth as brimming with "faculties" that required an organizing will and resolute training for even, productive development. Though not specifically targeting undergraduates, Munger's frequent references to the college experience assumed many of his readers had "suffered themselves to be sent" to university.[13] Munger rejected college, genius, or talent as a saving force and bemoaned "the country is full of unsuccessful educated men; indeed, it is a problem of society what to do with the young men it is turning out of its colleges and professional schools."[14] As antidote, Munger insisted that young men, naturally consumed with "wonderful fact of selfhood", must "reach the core of their being" to ignite purpose and attainment. He expounded to young men "cultivate yourself; I do not mean in the sense of putting on a finish, but of feeding the roots of your being, strengthening your capacities, nourishing whatever is good, repressing whatever is bad."[15] With chapters covering friendships, entertainment, and

[12] Ibid., 104.
[13] Ibid., 5.
[14] Two decades later, Hall would join Munger's laments about the "infecundity" of college graduates in *Adolescence: Its Psychology and its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology*, *Sex, Crime Religion, and Education* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1904), xvi.
[15] Munger, *On the Threshold*, 26.

education, Munger detailed a psychological regime in which this prerogative consumed every aspect of a maturing adolescent's life.

Between 1900 and 1907, *The Saturday Evening Post* addressed college-bound adolescents even more directly in dedicated issues titled "The College Man's Number." Many other issues included articles featuring "Young Men" in their titles and addressed the benefits and drawbacks of college. It was during these formative years that George Horace Lorimer shaped the derelict magazine into a mass media success. Historian Jan Cohn's work demonstrates how Lorimer, in constructing the ideology of the *Post*, also formulated what he saw as America's new dominant class, the American businessman.[16] During the first decade of the 20th century, Lorimer focused especially on herding young men toward financial success by emphasizing a practical, democratic application of education.[17] Expository articles and fictional stories emphasized how college provided a crucial yet low stepping-stone, not a staircase, toward professional achievement. In a pro-education article titled "Does a College Education Pay?", high-profile contributor Grover Cleveland upped the stakes by equating an investment in college with an investment in manhood as a national institution.[18] He urged parents preparing college-bound children to be "constantly mindful that they have in charge not only a son, but an uncompleted man, who is soon to become their contributions to the manhood of the world." For successful germination of manhood, Cleveland echoed Munger's imperative that

[16] See Jan Cohn, *Creating America: George Horace Lorimer and the Saturday Evening* Post (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1989), 88-89.
[17] Ibid., 34-39.
[18] Grover Cleveland, "Does a College Education Pay?", *Saturday Evening Post*, May 26, 1089-1090.

students must navigate their four college years with a clear directive defined by a democratic and patriotic sense of duty and honor.

In a 1905 article for *The School Review,* Charles Darwin Adams reinforced Munger's and *The Saturday Evening Post*'s imperative by presenting college as a watershed training ground for manhood. With juvenile and adolescent theories in mind, he described the transition to college as bridging a developmental period "that begins with the unquestioning of the little child, and ends with the mature freedom of the man."[19] For Adams college instilled character by gifting personal freedom. Preparation in "character" through moral vigor was quintessential to avoiding the crippling temptations of college life. Echoing the *Saturday Evening Post*, Adams warns of the ruinous persuasion of what he calls "collective college sentiment." Though not clearly defined and always in flux, the college sentiment included hazing practices, dishonest sportsmanship, and seeking social approbation through wasteful extracurriculars and shallow friendships. Adams warned how such vices prompted young men to choose childish "compulsion" over free ambition.[20] John Corbin colorfully summarized this apparition in his 1903 *Post* editorial "High Life and Higher Education":

> "Many silly youths spend their four years in seeking the companionship of richer and more fashionable classmates for no other reason than that they are richer and more fashionable. They waste their fathers' money and the opportunity of building up mind and body, only to acquire habits of thought and of living that, harmless in themselves, perhaps, are for them false and vicious. They end of being that most repulsive of all reptiles, the toady snob."[21]

[19] Charles Darwin Adams, "College Preparation in Character", *The School Review* 13, no. 8 (October 1905): 607.
[20] Ibid., 612.
[21] John Corbin, "High Life and High Education," *Saturday Evening Post*, November 14, 1903, 10.

In 1913, Charles Whiting Williams forwarded an exhaustive solution to this problem by detailing how universities might conduct a "scientific study" of each incoming student's moral constitution, which would systematically dictate their course of study and specific instructors. Williams' examples echoed Adams' and Mungers' unflattering descriptions of undergraduate temperaments: "If, for instance, all reports indicate that a certain student possesses an able mind but refuses to use it carefully, is what might be called a disorderly thinker simply from pure mental laziness, could the adviser not wisely emphasize the value of mathematics or certain other of the exact sciences?"[22] The extreme pressures of this directive for obsessive self and scientific analysis of character can be seen in F. Scott Fitzgerald's portrayal of the college experience in his 1920 novel *This Side of Paradise*. In many ways its main character, the disillusioned and prospectless college graduate Amory Blaine, illustrates the failures of these program when he calls out the book's final line: "I know myself but that is all."

Yet all these authors, despite their doubts, were quick to assuage fears with college's proven advantages. Jan Cohn shows how even the *Saturday Evening Post*'s most critical exposes on college students tend to waffle and ultimately land on the side of college's benefits.[23] The *Post* praised graduates for their trained minds and stamina for hard work. Even while chastising students for vices, authors denounced the "popular prejudice" against colleges that implied "all our institutions of learning are hotbeds of corruption and decay."[24] The *Post*'s most persuasive weapons were the idealized illustrations that silently confirmed faith in the

[22] Charles Whiting Williams, "The Scientific Study of the College Student", *Science* New Series 38, no. 969 (July 25, 1913), 117.
[23] Jan Cohn, *Creating America,* 33-39.
[24] Corbin, "High Life", 10.

college set. In the first decade of the 20th century, *Pos*t college men were almost universally displayed as poised, handsome specimens directly plucked from clothing advertisements. They posed to exhibit manly resolve, sophisticated contemplation, or joyful comradery. Illustrators hinted at reassuringly masculine physiques under the graduate robes and college sweaters. All these arguments, written and visual, confirmed college's egalitarian, holistically American advantage. In 1885 Indiana University President David S. Jordan put this in writing, declaring that everywhere in the country, ". . . college men take the lead. In education there is no upper class to reap the benefits for which the poor man has to pay; no caste ruling by right of birth, because our scholars and leaders are of the people."[25]

Visualizing the Modern College Adolescent in Popular Culture

As social theorists were attempting to diagnose and cure college maladies, illustrators and cartoonists were experimenting with what an adolescent-aged college student should look like. In idealized illustrations, undergraduates donned the youthful, Anglo-Saxon manliness identical to polite parlor cartoons and advertisements. Progressively illustrators began infusing college bodies with more explicit muscular strength. This change was naturally fed by two affiliated American cults: the craze for gymnastic exercise and surge in popularity of college sports. The college adolescent as a satirical subject had, like adolescence itself, an uneven development. Initially, adolescents were not even the visual go-to for representing of the university system. For example, *Puck* ran several prominent full color cartoons between 1897

[25] David S. Jordan, *Educational Weekly* 5, no. 7 (August 29, 1885): 7.

and 1905 ridiculing the surplus of useless college degrees and rendered graduates as the rotund, middle-aged output of professional schools (Fig. 5.2).[26] Other early cartoons pulled from a gamut of undesirable stock types. Backward schoolboys, sickly scholars, drunk incorrigibles, and feeble dudes were all models of the undergraduates. As the college ideal became more athletic, professionalizing undergrads became more anemic, operating as a direct foil. This section surveys these varied and contradicting representations to describe the climate under which an undergraduate would be contemplating his own body.

Many derogatory cartoons fulfilled Jordan's 1885 pessimistic apparition that "The fool and dude come out of college pretty much as they go in. They dive into the Pierian springs of learning like the duck, and come up fully as dry."[27] In an 1894 *Judge* comic, an emaciated "Mr. Yale" (Fig. 5.3), decked with monocle and top hat, unconvincingly tried to empress his bored female companion how he longs "to go in for football." A few pages away from "Mr. Yale", a two-paneled comic presented the opposite adolescent type: the handsome, broad-shouldered adolescent with an infatuated sweetheart (Fig. 5.4). He promised to eschew "tobacco and liquor and all bad company" in return for her love, but the second "2 a.m." showed him as a disheveled drunk faceplanted on the mantel. Though not specified as a college student, his behavior coupled with his age illustrated ruinous campus vices.

Other cartoons explored the college education's promised transformative power. Over-studying was a maligned malady of the future undergraduate, depicted in the *Judge* cartoon

[26] See also "A Prospect of Over Education", *Puck*, January 22, 1902 and "The June Proposition", *Puck*, June 21, 1905.
[27] Ibid., 6.

comparing a robust "farmer's boy, aged seven years" to a gaunt, sickly "city boy, aged seven" running to class, prominently labeled as a "collegiate institute" (Fig. 5.5). Yet this comic presented a twist, showing "the farmer's boy, aged sixty" looking old and crippled while robust, sturdy "city boy, aged sixty" strode while twirling his cane. This cartoon used the plastic cartoon body to reassure higher education's role in securing the continued success of the elite. Yet this plasticity could be equally derogatory. Contemporary authors argued that college secured America's democratic promise by promising the struggling classes upward mobility.[28] *Puck*'s 1897 centerspread offered some insight on the prospective uneasiness around this social upset. Critiquing how those who "rail at wealth" are often its beneficiaries, the cartoon depicted the "sons of the populist farmers and the demagogues" benefiting from a college education at endowed universities, here labeled "Yalevard College" (Fig. 5.6). These boy-men wreaked of the middle-class, a hayseed-beaked-nosed and tradesmen-snub-nosed lot who strode with prideful yet bow-legged gaits. The cartoon reminded how the college campus, though promising to pair future leaders with the social elite, brought together classes that had become progressively isolated by the shaping of suburban neighborhoods.[29]

By the early 1910s, many cartoons addressed the uncanny threats posed by anemic graduates entering the world of business. In the cartoon titled "Social Climber," a slight young boy in a sack suit, no taller than his seated boss, explained how he was leaving the company in

[28] "the American college is a democratic institution, in which worth counts more than wealth . . .": Orlando F. Lewis, "The Self-Supporting Student in American Colleges," *The North American Review* 179, no. 576 (November 1904): 728; "any poor boy can contrive in this country to attend a university, and the great number of impoverished young men in America who have worked their way through college and afterwards attained eminence, proves what poor boys may accomplish": Jordan, *College Education*, 103.
[29] See "City and Suburb" in Ohmann, *Selling Culture*, 119-136.

order to better himself 'socially.'[30] His girlish features and wiry attenuated figure, which could not even fill out the trimly cut suit, utilized the wealthy "man-boy" stereotype (See Chapter 3). However, judging by the female secretary's enthusiastic leer, this underdeveloped body had become an object of admiration by merit of its social savvy. The cartoon captioned "By Merit Alone" sported a more grotesque image of an adolescent attempting to don the successful businessman's apparel.[31] The cut of the suit and the starched collar, meant to emphasize masculine features, awkwardly pulled and distorted around the boy's lanky frame, effecting the opposite. Despite his ridiculous constitution, the surrounding masculine, older working men were under his dominion. George Bellows would channel these early depictions of pee-wee bodied college graduates stealing executive and social power from the successful, mature self-made man in his 1923 *The Businessmen's Bath*.

As an extreme counterexample to the scrawny undergraduate, by far the most prolific representations of undergraduates circulated through illustrations of intercollegiate football matches. Michael Oriard's comprehensive study in *The Art of Football* demonstrates how the college game surged in popularity by the 1890's, matched by a stream of journalistic and satirical illustrations.[32] These diverse images were often united by the players' tell-tale gladiatorial physiques, a focus on strenuous exertion with gravity-defying collisions, and emphasis on the team's collective force. As a modern masculine ideal, football players fulfilled the gentlemanly athletic mold established by the internationally famous strongman Eugene

[30] *Puck*, October 15, 1913
[31] *Puck*, August 27, 1913
[32] Michael Oriard, *The Art of Football: The Early Game in the Golden Age of Illustration* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2017),

Sandow. Idealized football matches were presented as meditated dramas that promised their elite audiences the heart-thumping suspense and athletic prowess of a Greek Hellenistic frieze.[33] Genteel magazines of the 1880's and 1890's often foregrounded the match's fashionable audience and posited football as a testosterone infused tonic. Images like Frederick Barnard's 1888 "The Ardor and the Joy of a Game at Foot-ball" in *Harper's Weekly* demonstrated football's promise to reinvigorate mature businessmen with memories of blithe youth and catalyze admiring boys toward manhood.[34]

Although these were intercollegiate matches, the connection between the sport and campus were not initially obvious. The speculative eligibility of many of the team players, who often appeared too old or unfit for higher education, remained controversial. Oriard shows how by the 1890's, illustrators progressively modelled their players with more boyish facial features, which firmly located football within the college environment and helped cast football as "an innocent, carefree sport."[35] Conversely, undergraduates in general appeared athletically fit as if absorbing the benefits of the sport through proximity and enthusiasm. Football posters by John E. Sheridan and Edward Penfield commissioned by universities further cemented the relationship between the college environment and the development of resolute Herculean players. Artists frequently situated their players strolling around campus or prominently displayed before the college's name. In the *Saturday Evening Post*, the "College Man's"

[33] See "Football as Contest and Social Event" in Oriard, *The Art of Football*, 6-14.
[34] Oriard's discussion of this image includes an extended quote from Walter Camp's article that originally accompanied the illustration. The quote describes how "in the excited faces of the two men in the foreground one easily recognizes the old undergraduate enthusiasm stirred into new life by the excitement of the game." Ibid., 8.
[35] Ibid., 11.

numbers almost universally depicted a resolute iconic athlete on the cover, typically modelled on the bulky football hero's physique. These issues collapsed the concept of the undergraduate with masculine development and competitive determination.

Yet Oriard demonstrates how football's contradictions were also "ready-made" for satirical cartoonists who challenged football's relevance to college education and its legitimized brutality.[36] The elite consumption of football's often fatal violence remained the subject of deep controversary throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries. To depose the footballer's position as an American idol, critics and satirists regularly depicted players as bludgeoned, meat-headed savages with lower class, zoological physiognomies. Many cartoons capitalized on the footballer's instantly recognizable mop-topped hair (a pitiful forerunner to protective helmets) and disfiguring equipment, rendering the players bizarre objects of affection by elite alumni and fashionable women (Fig. 5.7). Others accentuated the footballer's lower-class origins, stripping off the sport's upper-class patina.[37] A 1902 cartoon in *Judge* of a "foot-ball-playing son, home on a visit from college" attacked the fitness of both football and the rural classes for college education (Fig. 5.8). Father "farmer sleeper" complimented the rugged, arrogant mop-top for kicking out his daughter's lover and concluded "forgive me fer doubtin' the value of eddication."

Puck's cover from September 24, 1913 "When Duty Calls" (Fig. 5.9) similarly ridiculed the countryside football recruit by parodying the coming-of-age rural departure made famous

[36] Ibid., 57.

[37] Oriard's research shows that "some of the best (football) players migrated from college to college . . . or arrived not from a prep school but from a factory or the docks, maybe even a traveling circus." Ibid., 53.

in Thomas Hovenden's 1893 *Breaking Home Ties*. In place of Hovenden's stalwart maternal sendoff, *Puck*'s sobbing "Spartan Mother" handed her son "Harold Halfback" football gear and a first aid kit. Both Hovenden's and *Puck*'s youths were tall and lanky with uneven growth spurts. However, *Puck*'s "Harold Halfback" looked ridiculous in his college kit, having grown out of his pants yet dwarfed by the oversized Yale sweater. He stood with hunched shoulders, emphasizing a sagging chest and belly. His babyish doughy cheeks, a whiny expression, and tiny freshman beanie marked a strong contrast to Hovenden's youth's resolute stare. By contrast, Hovenden's youth retained dignity and purpose with a uniformly wiry physique, humble yet streamlined country clothes, and shoulders drawn squarely back.

A comparison between *Puck*'s and Hovenden's farmhouse adolescents demonstrates the emerging visual distinctions between promising American adolescence (to be reared in competitive business) and abject adolescence (to be corrected by collegiate sports). In his 1901 *Saturday Evening Post* article "The Young Man's Opportunity in the New Business Order", Herbert H. Vreeland explained why the "country boy" succeeded over the college graduate. For Vreeland, the very isolation of the country boy released in the city guaranteed his success: " . . . they have no opportunity for social relaxation when they get to the big city. They have no social ties. Nobody knows them . . . So he puts every spare moment that he has into work . . . the habit of work is so thoroughly formed in him that he perseveres in it, after the immediate necessity is past."[38] The college man's downfall derived from a false sense of security and entitlement bred by the college campus. Although both *Puck* and Hovenden portray the iconic

[38] H. H. Vreeland, "The Young Man's Opportunity in the New Business Order," *Saturday Evening Post*, March 23, 1901, 2.

country boy, their contrasting anatomies speak to different paths and destinations in the vicinity of manhood. Even with his slight frame, Hovenden's adolescent promised the internal resolve to transform his raw, sinewy material into manly success. *Puck*'s bloated adolescence already foreshadowed the pummeled, brainless behemoths that, according to the cartoonists, typified the university's manly output.[39]

Alongside the satirists and before the first decade of the 20th century, J.C. Leyendecker had invented a visual trope that resolved football's unnerving contradictions. His football players retained slender, Apollo-like physiques and younger, unmistakably aquiline features. Yet these were rendered with slashing lines and a "faceted" approach to volume that made the players appear, according to a contemporary reviewer "composed of planes like the facets of crystal", or in Oriard's words, "chiseled out of granite."[40] This gracefully united gentility and machismo, shedding stigmas of upper-class molly coddling and lower-class vulgarity. Leyendecker's magazine covers focused less on collective collisions and more on intricate, interlocked gestures with renewed attention to each face's individualized determination and aggression. These thinking men united mental and physical exertion, assuaging accusations of the sport's unchecked brutality. Through these figures, Leyendecker established a new paragon of modern American manliness, firmly located in the university and poised at very exit of adolescence.

[39] Perhaps intentionally, *Puck*'s "Harold Hatchback" closely mimics J. C. Leyendecker's other famous character: puffy cheeked "New Year" babies that pantomimed American pastimes.
[40] Quoted in Oriard, *The Art of Football*, 112-113.

Overall, the college student operated as a flexible enigma. A series of *Puck* covers between 1904 and 1906 demonstrate how easily magazines played upon college as a marketable theme that fluctuated according to seasonal interest. In a 1906 *Puck* cover, Glackens' referenced college's cyclical nature with an image of freshman hazing titled "College Days Again" (Fig. 5.10). A burly, square-jawed senior dwarfs the boyish round-cheeked freshman, a physiognomic difference also picked up by George Bellows in his 1912 depiction of a fraternity initiation. In November, Frank A. Nankivell illustrated hype around the upcoming championship football game in "The College World" (Fig. 5.11). A helmeted sun beamed on a football-shaped earth while an enraptured damsel-shaped cloud gazed on. Yet, just previously during June commencement, a 1904 *Puck* cover ultimately asserted faith in the exiting graduate. In "The Game of Life" (Fig. 5.12), a suited grad with diploma in pocket threw aside an exhaustively diverse hoard of sports equipment and trophies to catch a beach-ball sized world. He smiled confidently with classical features while his snug suit disclosed a Herculean physique. This figure imagined the ideal college experience that Adams would describe a year later, based on an institution that "would combine the athletic, the social, and the intellectual pursuits in the life of every student."[41]

[41] Adams, "College Preparation," 611.

COLLEGE HUMOR MAGAZINES – ADOLESCENTS REPRESENTING THEMSELVES

Inventing the College Humor Magazine

College students entered their own voice into this public fray by producing campus journals. By the late 19th century periodicals had become a potent, far reaching medium for consolidating and representing America's social groups. On campus, college journals operated similarly for the college populace. Different journals became associated with distinct campus personalities and social leagues. Journalist and especially editorial positions were often competitive, marking for the undergraduate a badge of prestige and achievement.[42] Although the publications were written by undergraduates for undergraduate readership, they could act as training grounds for professional journalism careers.[43]

College humor magazines, as opposed to other campus publications, provide an especially intimate picture of this insular college culture for several reasons. These magazines include a wealth of illustrations of undergraduates. As many period images of adolescents also circulated through cartoons, this facilitates a direct comparison between how undergraduates were ridiculed by society versus how undergraduates used humor to represent themselves. College humor magazines perceived themselves fulfilling an important high calling of journalism. With their voice in print, college humor writers often meditated on how to push

[42] This *Side of Paradise* illustrated the devastating social blow Amory received when, poised to enter the coveted *Princetonian* editorial board, he loses his eligibility upon failing his exams. An extensive article by the *Omaha Daily Bee* on college periodicals also confirmsed"The editor of the paper is usually considered one of the "big" men among the students and receives consideration he might not otherwise have." ("College Daily Newspaper an Influential Factor." *Omaha Daily Bee,* 22 Aug. 1909).

[43] Although college humor magazines expanded their circulation off campus, the 1909 *Omaha Daily Bee* article on college periodicals stated, "Circulation of a college paper is limited to a majority of the undergraduates, most of the faculty and a small per cent of the alumni." (Idem)

back against the mass media portrayals of college students. Even among other types of college publications, humor magazines stood out for their unusually broad readership.[44]

These first editorials showed undergraduates recognizing they comprised a unique community shaped by their shared experiences.[45] In its inaugural publication in 1872, the *Yale Record* justified its existence by lamenting about the University's existing periodical, *The Yale Courant*. Criticizing that the *Courant* had dilapidated into a "general college publication", the *Record* explained its prerogative in serving as a "record" of the uniquely Yale experience.[46] Although the *Yale Record* claims the longest lineage of any American college humor magazine, it included few jokes or comical stories until the 1880's and only began running its first sparse illustrations in 1883.[47] The majority of the *Record*'s articles are unmasked complaints about university blights, including ineffective tutors, hostile faculty, and uppity students. Articles often expressed these grievances with scornful reporting and bitter venting. Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz's study of *Campus Life* shows that the concept of college student culture, particularly one bound by revolt against faculty and other authorities, was already well established in the American University by the late 18th century.[48] With the university poised between the "old

[44] The 1909 *Omaha Daily Bee* article on college newspapers acknowledged how college humor magazines, unlike other campus periodicals, reached audiences off campus: "Other papers, such as the Harvard *Lampoon*, the Cornell *Widow*, and the Princeton *Tiger*, have reputations that reach far beyond their schools." (Idem.)
[45] Handlin and Handlin, *The American College*, 58.
[46] *Yale Record* 1, no. 1, September 11, 1872.
[47] The *Yale Record* magazine often operated like a local posting board, reporting local events and updated rules and customs governing collegiate life. For an example, the "The Freshman Campaign" from October 23, 1872 posted the newest resolutions adopted by the committees of three Freshman Societies that governed a new system for campaigning.
[48] "College Men: The War between Students and Faculty" in Horowitz, *Campus Life*, 23-55.

kind of truth" and revolutionary academic practices, the inherent cultural ambiguity of the college curriculum made it ripe for critique by its skeptical student recipients.[49]

It was not until the *Harvard Lampoon* launched in 1876 and the *Princeton Tiger* in 1882 that undergraduate magazines settled on a satirical format, driven both by written and visual humor. When college humor magazines launched, American humor magazines were in an embryonic phase, forwarding the British publication *Punch* as the main model.[50] In both their inaugural issues, the *Harvard Lampoon* and the *Princeton Tiger* signaled their commitment to a comedic format and justified why their choice filled a vacant niche in college publishing. They identified humor as the most effective tool for truthfully representing collegiate life. Like the *Yale Record*, they also wished to project the disempowered student voice, but by deploying comedy as their weapon to fight campus maladies.

Harvard Lampoon's first editorial contrasted its own "trenchant pencil and sarcastic pen" against other Harvard publications, chiefly against the *Advocate*'s "poet-laureatism" and the *Crimson*'s "high moral and aesthetic tone."[51] The editorial portrayed competing publications as haughty and hostile, envisioning a perturbed *Crimson* editor as "stroking his beard, adjusting his eye-glasses, and muttering to himself in terms that would hardly be appropriate to the drawing-room or boudoir, as he casts his eagle eye over the first issue of the *Lampoon*." Anticipating a publication backlash, the *Lampoon* defended its position as a comedic magazine, first by forwarding that "the very lightness" of their material "will make any

[49] Handlin and Handlin, *The American College*, 44-45.
[50] *A Treasury of College Humor*, eds. Richard Koppe, William Irvine, and John Burns (New York: WM. Penn Publishing Corporation, 1950), 10.
[51] Editorial, *Harvard Lampoon*, February 10, 1876, 3-4.

injury a slight one." More importantly, they conceded that they were "ministering to the student's wants", answering a collegiate plea for more "cuts" (jabs or jokes) against "all the affectation, all the snobbishness, and all the censoriousness, which hovers about the College." With the battle cry of "Youth at the prow and pleasure at the Helm!", the *Lampoon* aligned comedy with qualities of youthful rebellion.

In 1882, *The Princeton Tiger* similarly introduced itself with both an apologetic and hapless tone. Proclaiming spontaneous generation from student need, its opened, "we are here chiefly because we couldn't help it."[52] Over 25 years later, founding editor Van Tassel Sutphen confirmed this take on the college humor magazine as an inevitable necessity rather than an inventive addition. Sutphen recounted how he tried to publish a humorous article critiquing Princeton's rowing team in the *Princeton LIT*.[53] Finding that "no one took my remarks in the jocular sense; I even got myself disliked for my modest attempt to add to the gayety of nations", he discovered a "crying need" for a "new medium of expression." By 1890, the *Princeton Tiger* proudly declared itself in alignment with the American humor magazine, which by then had become a unique art form and established cultural institution.[54] The *Tiger*'s imperative expanded beyond college levity though. With a self-described "liberal" policy, the *Tiger* ambitiously promised to "develop men in the sphere of artistic, humorous, and light

[52] Editorial, *The Princeton Tiger*, March 7, 1882, 2-3.
[53] *The Princeton Tiger*'s June 1908 editorial published a letter by Van Tassel Sutphen recounted this history.
[54] *The Roar of Laughter: A Light Look at Old Nassau Through 75 Years of "The Princeton Tiger"* (Princeton: Princeton Tiger, 1957), 2.

journalism in our college life which *Puck*, *Judge*, and *Life* fill so admirably in the outside world."[55]

Although self-publicized as undergraduate magazines, college journals were highly aware that their publications carried their voice off campus. Pithy jokes and poems were frequently republished in national periodicals and the *Journal of Education* under the header "college humor." The magazines themselves circulated amongst an influential group of faculty, parents, and alumni. June covers and "Graduate Number" issues flattered this elite populace with illustrations showing older, upper-class readers perusing the magazine on public newsstands. Moving into the second decade of the 20th century, exposure increased as "college humor" signified a new, nationally recognized brand of joke-smithing. In 1906, an article in the *New York Daily Tribune* credited the "good fellowship, the genial pleasantry, the healthy jollity of college fraternity" for revitalizing American humor.[56] In 1910 the *San Francisco Sunday Call* dedicated a full page featuring and debating the "special brand of wit which can be singled out, corralled, and branded as 'college humor'."[57] During this decade, the fad for college humor spread not just through magazines, but also wildly popular touring college burlesque theatricals. A number of professionally produced stage plays focused on the college experience were applauded for their accuracy.[58]

This institution of the college humor magazine initially emerged between the 1870's and 1880's with three publications issued by Yale, Harvard, and Princeton. In 1910, a newspaper

[55] Quoted in Idem.
[56] "College Jokesmiths: Many of Them Turn Their Gift to Good Account," *New York Daily Tribune*, December 23, 1906.
[57] "The College Brand of Humor," *San Francisco Sunday Call*, August 7, 1910.
[58] "Just Out of College," *The Bennington evening banner*, Bennington, Vermont, August 12, 1910.

article cited fourteen college humor magazines in circulation.[59] By 1920, there were enough college humor magazines and interest in college humor as a genre to create the *College Humor* digest, which curated a selection of "humor appearing in the college humorous publications and the collegiate world."[60] The magazine gleaned its materials from 69 college humor magazines coming from 18 different states as well as Canada. Just as *Puck* folded after the conclusion of the war in 1918, college humor magazines began peaking in circulation. Chip Deffa's history of *The Princeton Tiger* shows how the publication reached a record size in length (112 pages), board membership (40 – 50 total), circulation (10,000 copies an issue) and reach (self-proclaiming distribution to "both hemispheres").[61] An ad in the April 24, 1924 *Tiger* considered, "Contact of this sort should do much to break down artificial barriers – those between the college world and the rest of the country, and those between America and the rest of the world." The "insular" undergraduate voice of the college humor magazine was thus conceived as a uniquely shaped voice that embodied a vital American experience. With college enrollments increasing 25 percent following World War I, this "college world" was becoming more synonymous with the American adolescent experience.[62] By 1920, the college lens and its social cauldron were coveted as sources of both entertainment and reflection.

Repeated visual trends connected the *Lampoon*, *Record*, and *Tiger*, the three longest running publications, between the 1880's and World War I. Standing at the threshold, these magazines were actively inventing the medium. Their editorials frequently referenced each

[59] *The San Francisco Call*, August 7, 1910.
[60] See *College Humor: 1920-1921* (Chicago: The Collegiate World Publishing Company, 1921).
[61] Chip Deffa, "The Boom Years: 1915-1931" in *Roaring at 100*, 41.
[62] David O. Levine, *The American College and the Culture of Aspiration, 1915-1940* (New York: Cornell University, 1986), 38.

other, treating the college humor magazine as a unique and adventurous vantage point. The visual treatment of undergraduates exhibited a distinct change around 1900 that exaggerated and surged through the century's teen years. Shifting styles of comedy and illustration pointed to progressively unstable conceptions of how the college-bound adolescent envisioned himself both in the collegiate world and as a participant in American manhood. The advent of World War I upset production by taking many undergraduates into service. While college humor magazines hit their popular stride in the 1920's, their often raunchy humor began reflecting the slick reverie of the jazz age. In short, they accepted and streamlined the youthful rebellion of the earlier part of the century.

Unfortunately, the very nature of college humor magazines presents obstacles to identifying their dominant trends. The production of a collegiate magazine proved to be a hazardous affair due to an ever fluctuating staff, tight deadlines, and unpredictable budgets.[63] An inevitable quick turnover of college staff meant that the opening editorials changed dramatically in mood, reflecting the distinct personalities and outlooks of the editing staffs.[64] The scramble toward deadlines exposed shortcuts that professional magazines could either avoid or at least disguise.[65] College humor magazines unapologetically stole images and jokes

[63] *The Princeton Tiger* ceased publication after only its first 9 issues, probably due to budgets but with a legend of being shut down by offended faculty. See Iams, "Here We Are," 5-6. Output varied as well. *The Princeton Tiger* put out 14 issues for Volume 8 (1897-1898), but by Volume 14 (1904-1904) output dropped to 10 issues.

[64] The editorial that ran in *The Princeton Tiger* March 1901 by the outgoing staff is surprisingly self-admonishing and apologetic, saying, "let us express a hope that the new board will continue to keep THE TIGER in the same tone as Mrs. Nation's performances, in other words, that it may be 'witty without being vulgar'." The first editorial of the incoming staff from April 1901 appears to mock this tone: "He will keep a watchful eye upon the conduct of affairs by the gentlemen of the faculty and shall from time to time offer suggestion and advice whenever it is deemed expedient or necessary."

[65] *The Princeton Tiger* reran its cover from Vol. 9, no. 1 (October 8, 1898) on issue no. 4.

from each other.[66] Self-mocking references admitted they just as liberally borrowed cartoon styles and gags from mainstream humor magazines as well. Often the goal was simply to get the magazine out and the bills paid by whatever means possible.

A visual analysis of college cartoons hit similar snags. Moving into the late 19th century, the largely text-based college humor magazines tried to follow professional periodicals in their reliance on striking illustrations. However, frequent solicitations for illustrators and early clunky drawings indicate that talented draftsman could be rare on campuses. In 1887, the *Record* strangely conceded, "Those who are interested in the development of Art and the ability to design and illustrate in black and white, will henceforth find the *Lampoon* on file in the readings-room."[67] Moving into the 1890's, talented illustrators regularly joined staff, but they often worked with highly individualized styles that seemed to reflect personal interest as much as broader cultural trends. Despite all these challenges and inconsistencies, clear patterns surface in this burgeoning visual medium.

The College Humor Magazine: A New Medium

Throughout the 19th century, issues of the *Lampoon*, *Record*, and *Tiger* were true to their word in emulating the layout, look, and subject matter of contemporary humor magazines. While interiors remained in black and white, the magazines attempted modest color printing on their covers. If available, magazines added elaborate illustrated parodies or

[66] The joke "Freshman: Comedy of Errors" that appeared in the *Yale Record* 20, no. 2, October 27, 1900 also appeared in *The Princeton Tiger* 9, no. 7, February 22, 1899.
[67] *Yale Record* 15, no. 6, May 28, 1887.

jokes that filled one or two pages. For the most part, smaller humorous cartoons appeared interleafed between text-based parodies. Cartoons borrowed a predictable cast of seedy urban characters and ethnic immigrants from the comic weeklies. They appeared as standard humorous fair unrelated to the college experience. However, most illustrations did represent actual college students.

Pre-1900, the majority of these imitated the Victorian styles and witty banter of the polite parlor room cartoons found in comic weeklies. These college cartoons avoided caricature, rendering students with rationally proportioned bodies located within logical spaces. College students typically sported strong broad chested physiques with sharp jawlines and aquiline noses, signatures of idealized young Victorian men. Sometimes set outside of campus in fashionable domestic settings, college student cartoons could be nearly indistinguishable from other witty cartoons located in high society gatherings. For example, the *Harvard Lampoon*'s cover from February 23, 1882 (Fig. 13) was devoid of college references, featuring a co-ed gathering of figures in formal dress conversing around what appears to be the home parlor. The only college reference appeared in the accompanying dialog text, which identifies the impertinent, smartly dressed young man as a recent "sub-freshman." As in other popular media, "dudes" appeared as visual foils to the idealized undergraduates. With slight frames and stodgy expressions, dudes were familiar campus blights, unable to participate effectively in the culture of relaxed witty exchanges.

Elaborate shading, correct perspective, and varied textures often gave these drawings the attributes of high-brow illustration. B.S.K's drawings of college students for the *Yale Record*'s 1888 issue seemed especially preoccupied with rendering the sophisticated details of a

neo-Gothic arch or dormitory furnishings (Fig. 5.14). W. S. Conrow's 1898 illustration for *Tiger* follows this vein by situating two students in an interior adorned with pictures, curtains, and pillows sporting Princeton insignia (Fig. 5.15). As in upper class cartoons, which elaborated the décor of the parlor room, dormitory and common room furnishings communicated shared cultural experience and values.[68]

Geo D. Richards '01 of the *Princeton Tiger* specialized in college vignettes of leisurely students relaxing on campus greens or in the dormitory. Even more so than the comic weekly parlor cartoons, the typed dialog and humorous titles accompanying these images had little to do with their content and appear tagged on after the fact. For example, a benign drawing of a verdant campus with two smartly dressed young men escorting a woman got an inexplicably suggestive title, "That Freshman's Sister."[69] Another joke that started, "Has the war excitement abated any in the city?", connected to the illustration only by virtue of a suitcase one student holds.[70] Rather than hasty shortcuts, these clumsy sutures between text and image reigned as the norm. The fractured relationship suggests that the images were drawn first, not for their comedic virtues but as ameliorating reflections on the leisure and freedom on the college.

While domestic leisure was prized as an upper-class luxury, its appearance could also antagonize anxieties over the epidemic of shiftless young college students. Theodore T. Munger bemoaned, "The most pitiable sight one ever sees is a young man doing nothing."[71] In 1905, Charles Darwin Adams declared, "the greatest danger is that of the ruinous habit of sheer

[68] See "Reflections on the Parlor" in Ohmann, *Selling Culture*, 142-149.
[69] *The Princeton Tiger* 8, no. 14, June 9, 1898.
[70] *The Princeton Tiger* 8, no, 7, February 10, 1898, 107.
[71] Munger, *On the Threshold*, 21.

loafing."[72] Richardson's *Princeton Tiger* cartoon "The Alternative" appeared to celebrate this college custom by depicting two students in a deep recline, one strumming a banjo while the other perused a book (Fig. 5.16). The intention for this to read as a leisurely image is clear when contrasted to Richardson's January 1898 parody of mid-year exams (Fig. 5.17). In this more simplified cartoon, a hunched, tense student surrounded himself with ridiculous study aids, including a head vice that forces him to stare at his book.[73] A small inset "After" image ridiculed the equally extreme leisure that follows exams, a temperament that characterized most of Richardson's depictions of college life. Lounging deeply with pipe in mouth and a blissful expression, Richardson's "After" parodied the same pattern of cramming and idling that social critic Adams defined as one of the greatest moral dangers of the college community. Yet Adams approved of jolly fraternizing and pursuing a "course of comfort" when it accompanied "a vigorous and growing intellectual activity", which together were "essential parts of the full ripening process of manhood."[74]

The majority of college images, like Richardson's March 1899 cartoon in *The Princeton Tiger* (Fig. 5.18), appeared to celebrate relaxed fraternizing as the justified reward, not a risible vice, that defined their social group. In this cartoon, manly students stood with relaxed confidence within a richly adorned common space. Books, china, framed artworks, and even sculptural replicas filled the room, boasting their educational breadth and civilized upbringing. A bold "Princeton" banner over the fireplace proclaimed this cultural sophistication as endemic

[72] Adams, "College Preparation", 609.
[73] The cartoon is simplified in the sense that it excludes the heavy shading and elaborate textures in Richards' other images. Rendered with bolder lines, the comedic inclusions (like a brewing coffee pot, bolted pipe box and dormitory door eliminating distractions) are much easier to read.
[74] Adams, "College Preparation," 609, 610

to the college experience. Even the text sports a witty critique of modern commercialization, as the students decided whether they should attend a ballet or simply enjoy "Dr. Jaeger's" revealing advertisements for women's lingerie. An elaborate illustration from the 1900 *Harvard Lampoon* perhaps most blatantly celebrated relaxation as a cherished college privilege (Fig. 5.19). In a room filled with tankards and periodicals, three undergraduates perused and relaxed, with the accompanying poem below: "A quiet place to sit and dream / With book and pipe and stein, / To while away the idle hours, / While idle hours are mine." Pages of cigarette advertisements reconfirmed this image of handsome young men enjoying a well-earned break. In 1912, the Yale Record ran Fatima ad of a smiling undergrad relaxing on half a dozen pillows with the tagline: "Planning the future: Big things later – but now *pleasures* count – like Fatimas."[75]

Images of fraternizing students with ill-connected texts continued to appear in college humor magazines in the first decades of the 20th century. For example, the *Yale Record*'s 1912 centerfold "Spring Fever" echoed contemporary football posters with a dashing, muscular blonde man poised almost like a Michelangelo statue while dreaming of summer romance. Yet these idealized college students became progressively interleafed with more caricatured and garish approaches. A close visual analysis demonstrates that Outcault's Yellow Kid, despite being set in the Irish ghetto, hugely influenced how college students were visualizing the microcosm of campus life. In March 1899, *The Princeton Tiger* imagined their campus overrun by lowly urban characters in "The Trolly Comes to Princeton."[76] The crude bodies, garishly

[75] *Yale Record* 40, no. 11, March 1912.
[76] "When the trolley comes to Princeton," *The Princeton Tiger*, March 1899.

patterned clothes, and tendency toward violence all echoed newspaper comics. Once again, the urban poor tried to ineffectively parrot the leisure and airs of the fashionable classes. In 1913, a similarly styled comic also featured mayhem upsetting the sophisticated tranquility in front of Princeton's Nassau Hall (Fig. 5.20). However, this time the violators were students, primarily sophomores forcing freshmen to perform ridiculous feats. Their lanky legs, spastic movements, and oddly oversized clothing were reminiscent of the ill-shod, urban characters from newspaper comic strips and even more specifically Outcault's Yellow Kid.

Although Outcault's cartoon was specific to ethnic tenement life, these images demonstrated how the Yellow Kid was quickly becoming a universal touchstone for envisioning youthful autonomy.[77] In 1898, the *Yale Record* also made a direct allusion to Yellow Kid comics, this time in its graduation issue centerfold cartoon titled "Another Crew Embarks on the Sea of Life!" (Fig. 5.21). With gaping grins and clamoring frenetic movement, the lanky crew of graduating seniors felt directly inspired by Yellow Kid phenomenon which was just coming to a close that year. The *Yale Record* revisited the Yellow Kid in the 1899 "On top of the wave", which again rendered Yale's graduating class like boys from *Hogan's Alley* with scrawny bodies in hysteric shenanigans. The cartoon was particularly scathing in light of Munger's advice to "drifting" young men who "float with the current instead of rowing up the stream" to seek a "resolute and definite purpose."[78]

[77] The Yellow Kid's widespread popularity among college set is implied by a "Yellow Kid" themed play written for the University of Nebraska in 1897 by notable undergraduate Hartley Alexander. Louise Pound. "Hartley Alexander as an Undergraduate," *Prairie Schooner* 22, No. 4 (Winter 1948), 376.
[78] Munger, *On the Threshold*, 5.

While not all comics took on Outcault's style so directly, many borrowed his technique of filling a large composition to the brim with escalating slapstick comedy to depict the frenzy, elation, and conflicts of college life. In the *Harvard Lampoon*'s 1900 January edition, a cartoon titled "Ye pleasures of ye newe Universitie skatinge rinke" showed a packed crowd trying to play hockey, tie skates, and perform genteel skating moves while constantly colliding (Fig. 5.22). Ironically, two shabbily dressed children reminiscent of Michael Angelo Woolf's cartoons (see Chapter 2) pointed to the chaos and snickered. In 1912, the *Yale Record* tried on the style of "Bringing up Father" with a cartoon full of slips and collisions as students played pranks on professors.[79] In the *Princeton Tiger*, R. C. Demange adopted a newspaper comic approach for a 1902 illustration of a Yale-Princeton football game and a 1904 cartoon titled "Thanks to Mr. Carnegie" (Fig. 5.23). With rounded simplistic characters, the former cartoon depicted brutish-faced football players running with comical split-leaps. The latter cartoon pictured springy-limbed students and professors crowding chaotically on the newly installed lake. Demange experimented with many cartooning styles, including *Puck*'s polished, big-headed political caricatures and Frank Morris Howarth's flattened graphic approach, so adoption of a Sunday comics frivolity marked a deliberate choice. These images harnessed college adolescence to the comic strip hero's natural affinity for wildness and irreverence.

This merging of cartooning practices was still unique at the turn of the century. Even into the second decade of the 20th century, there remained a stark visual divide between comic weeklies and Sunday supplements. Unlike the exclusive comic weeklies, cheaply priced Sunday

[79] *Yale Record* 40, no. 7., 276-7. See also the cartoon "You Are?" in *The Princeton Tiger*, June 19, 1913.

supplements both welcomed and spoke to their lower-class consumers through their rowdy comics. Using derogatory stereotypes and spastic violence, Sunday comics flaunted how urban run-ins with working class and immigrant populations unhinged class boundaries. The distinction was strong enough that weeklies would imitate the style of a particular comic strip to excoriate "Yellow" print culture.[80] As the popularity of newspaper comic characters skyrocketed, the more expensive and respectable comic weeklies responded in twofold. First, they lambasted Sunday supplements as degenerate.[81] The weeklies also gradually began pinching the winning formulas of the newspaper, incorporating looser and more experimental cartooning styles.[82] Furthermore, they worked public affection for comic strip characters to their advantage. Political cartoons, favoring the elite, would often pirate the same visual techniques that made the impoverished Yellow Kid so hapless and relatable to lure empathy to a rich caricature.[83] College humor magazines appear to spearhead rather than follow this combination of cartooning styles.

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[80] The centerfold comic from *Puck*'s January 5, 1910 edition echoes the simplified Simian faces of Irish caricature that characterized many strips including Happy Hooligan and Bringing Up Father. Titled "The "Common People" – A Picture for Cartoonists", the cartoonish simplification stands in contrast to the realistic setting. A grand bronze statue of Abraham Lincoln looks over the garish scene contemplating "Are these the Common People I said God would have loved because he made so many of them?" Here, the comic strip caricature stands in directly for the comics and also stands in for the coarse, unsophisticated population poised as its readership.

[81] See Bill Blackbeard, *R. F. Outcault's The Yellow Kid: A Centennial Celebration of the Kid Who Started the Comics* (Massachusetts: Kitchen Sink Press, 1995), 41.

[82] Criticism came in the form of damning covers. Scathing covers united the image of William Randolph Hearst with decried Yellow journalism. *Puck*'s cover from January 7, 1903 illustrates a tramp reading and analyzing the newspaper. Yet black and white comics within the pages gradually incorporated the Sunday comic's bolder, simplified graphic style.

[83] *Puck*'s June 11, 1913 cartoon "Whither are we drifting?" delivered a critique on wasteful college degrees. This cartoon inserted a Yellow Kid reference by picturing scrawled, misspelled writing on the wall. In the cartoon, a middle-class father attended the four graduations of his four children, aged kindergarten through college. After witnessing each child recycling the same commencement speech,

While the comic strip aesthetic had the potential to endear the rapscallion undergraduate to his readers (as it did with juvenile miscreants), such cartoons did not exonerate him. Rather, college cartoonists minted a new derogatory stereotype. These exaggerated caricatures stretched the undergraduates' acceptable idleness into blatant indolence. In a 1908 *The Princeton Tiger*, J.P. Alex took on the traditional "lounging" exchange that characterized so many of the 19th century parlor style cartoons (Fig. 5.24). Rather than enjoying sophisticated leisure, these students' bodies sagged and deflated into their chairs. In another Alex cartoon, two college students balanced on bowed, lanky legs and oversized clunky feet. With hunched shoulders, misshapen heads, and a rubbery tension in their movements, these two students echoed the lanky street-rat bodies branded by R. F. Outcault. *Yale Record*'s 1912 issue included depictions of conversing college students marked by hunched shoulders, slack-jawed open mouths, and sleepy eyes (Fig. 5.25). The dopey incompetence recalled the inbred expressions of dudes. Cover drawings for the *Harvard Lampoon* in 1913 also applied distinct receding chins and sloping noses to their undergraduates, recalling the uneven development of the adolescent (Fig. 5.26). *Harvard* illustrations typically portrayed these students' faces curled into a dimwitted snicker.

Such self-portrayals could be abrasively degrading, confirming society's deepest critiques over rot and immoderation in America's college youth. Yet their elite pricing and high-end advertisements continued to court readers from the upper class and managerial

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he is pictured in a pile of bills pointing to a hand-scrawled sign with backwards, crooked letters: "Whither are we drifting? We are drifting to the poor house and d---- quick."

positions.[84] Public opinion held a soft spot for the rowdiness of college days in contemporary literature and articles. Laughing was portrayed as a necessary modern tonic especially for survival in business, the college man's destination.[85] In 1898 the theologian Paul Carus explained laughter was required "because life is serious, and because we need a buoyant spirit to fight the struggle of life bravely, we need as a temporary relief from time to time a hearty laugh."[86] Even into the 1920's, Caltech Professor George R. MacMinn contemplated how college "vitality", though distracting from studies equipped students with the "ability to bounce in an unpredictable direction."[87] A letter to the *The Sun* defended the sometimes flawed pursuit of college comedy as a natural, even manly, aspect of growing pains: "Any man who has not entirely forgotten his youth will recall many instances where he carried fun to the verge of indiscretion, even if he did not push it over."[88] Overall, college students were portrayed as having an innately comic frame of mind.[89] The *Harvard Lampoon* embraced this sentiment in 1898 when it nicknamed itself the "eternal undergraduate."[90] The *Lampoon*'s March 1909 editorial took this further by advising students that "The Joy of Existence" must also play into college "man-making":

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[84] For instance, in 1907 individual copies of *Puck* were priced 10 cents while *Harvard Lampoon* was priced 15 cents.
[85] George V. N. Dearborn even advocated its scientific application in business so that one can distinguish true and disingenuous smiles. George. V. N. Dearborn, "The Nature of the Smile and Laugh," *Science* New Series 11, no. 283 (Jun. 1, 1900), 283.
[86] Paul Carus, "On the Philosophy of Laughing", *The Monist* 8, No. 2 (January 1898), 251.
[87] George R. MacMinn, "Our Serio-Comic Undergrads", *The North American Review* 225, no. 841 (March 1928), 284.
[88] "A Defence of Collegians," *The Sun*, New York, November 9, 1905.
[89] "No one is quicker to grasp the humor of a situation than the average college student . . ." *Omaha daily bee,* August 22, 1909.
[90] *The Harvard Lampoon*, January 20, 1899, 111.

> "We take college life too seriously; for after all work for its own sake and leisure mean nearly the same thing. There are always some necessary tasks that we don't like. The rest of the time is merely an opportunity for reading good books, making good friends, keeping young our hearts and bodies, thinking big thoughts, and dreaming."

Yet there was also bafflement and disgust by the public at college inanity, prompting one article to declare every college student "a d---d fool."[91] Prof. Boyesen was so perplexed about why his students penned joke autobiographies instead of true ones on their German exam that it lead him to contemplate the "plague of jocularity" amongst America's youth.[92] The term "college humor" in newspapers could signify college periodicals and plays but also became synonymous with hazing practices and pranks. All these forms of college levity, legal and illegal, were often treated as stemming from the same cultural state of mind. Although newspapers ran accounts of contemporary campus and exam pranks for entertainment, sociologists berated college humor when it breached into violence and destruction.[93] College periodicals could be equally castigated for applauding hazing practices. Universities had limited tolerance for critiques of the institution and would expel student editorial boards for particularly scathing or scintillating issues.

Many of these public criticisms pivoted their critique around the issue of humor gone wrong. In 1906 the *East Oregonian* sarcastically incorporated references to college humor in a

[91] On November 5 and 9, 1905, at least two letters were published in response to "G. R. Howard's letter on college men" and took particular offense at his used of the term "d---d fool."
[92] Hjalmar Hjorth Boyesen, "The Plague of Jocularity," *The North American Review* 161, No. 468 (Nov. 1895), 528.
[93] Many newspaper articles urged for legal repercussions for especially destructive or violent acts: "nobody who defies the statutes governing all citizens may plead the baby act because he happens to be a college man." *Goldsboro Weekly Argus*, Goldsboro, North Carolina, March 8, 1894.

report of hazing fatalities, writing, "In an Ohio college hazers in an excess of humor chloroformed a fellow student and put him on a railroad track where he was killed by a train. It was a most successful joke, a real side splitter."[94] In 1905, Rev. Dr. Washington Gladden ranted against such "college thuggery" and similarly derailed the "humorous" acts:

> "That grown men should submit to be paraded in public places clad in the garb of clowns and performing the antics of imbeciles is sufficiently amazing. It is undoubtedly the expectation of those who direct the performance that it will excite the mirth of bystanders, but I have never seen any one laugh at it. The look upon the faces of the spectators is always one of same or indignation. Reflective minds are probably trying to estimate the degree of refinement to which college humor has attained."[95]

As per usual, manliness, nationhood, and even the future of civilization were at stake in these critiques.

None of this dissuaded college humor's popular rise through the early 20th century. In fact, many cartoons celebrated the undergraduate's debauched characterization as a fool. *The Princeton Tiger*'s 1910 centerfold cartoon of "The American College Student" proudly claimed to portray "what the public believes" (Fig. 5.27). A lanky adolescent marched with both arms aloft, one holding a beer mug and the other a banner proclaiming "Rah! Rah! College." He trampled on a book of knowledge, spilling cash, playing cards, pipes and cigarettes from his pocket as a stout cop pursues. This cartoon ridiculed public paranoia, but other students seemed to happily accept their characterization as indulgent merrymakers. Cartoonists across publications symbolized undergraduate frivolity by depicting college students playing nursery games. In 1914, the *Harvard Lampoon*'s centerfold cartoon portrayed four undergraduates

[94] "University Discipline," *East Oregonian*, February 19, 1906.
[95] "Thuggery in our Colleges," *Perth Amboy Evening News*, December 26, 1905.

from each class dressed as cowboys and performing a pistol-shooting jig as they destroyed papers labeled "notes" and "work" (Fig. 5.28). They faced off against a sober, organized "Noble Army of Profs" lead by a commanding dean who stood with a loaded cannon labeled "final exams."

The *Yale Record*'s cover from May 1912 epitomized these foolhardy labels by portraying an upperclassman as "toying" with the world (Fig. 5.29). A comparison to *Puck*'s 1904 cover "The Game of Life" exhibits how directly college humor magazines countered the dominant vision of the model graduate. Rather than an athletic physique, the *Record*'s character sports a gangly body suspended in late adolescence. In the background, an awkwardly choreographed parade of athletic figures performed their feats in concert with strolling social types, symbolizing undergraduate life as a clumsy clash of bodily and social cultivation. While *Puck*'s graduate leaned forward to catch the world, the *Yale Record*'s student casually spun the world like a toy top, watching gleefully. Standing on rollerskates, the Yale student's blithe optimism, a quality often pinned to undergraduates, was both reassuring and precarious. The image juxtaposed qualities of the undergraduate that were both denounced and empowering.

In summary, 20th century cartoons of college students began gravitating toward the hyperbolized slapstick styles more associated with newspaper comics than comic weeklies. The college magazine's incorporation of Sunday comics humor marked a sharp break from their comic weekly progenitors. It also introduced a new form of self-deprecating humor about the elite classes. Abhorrent caricatures could confirm social pressures on college students by subjugating campus undesirables to ridicule. Yet the unique amalgam also mirrored Outcault's

formula for Buster Brown, which subjugated upper class heroes to lower class tumult in order to critique the elite and their concepts of the social order.

Historian Gavin Jones's work on gilded age dialect provides a guide for interpreting how derogatory caricature could function as social critique. Jones demonstrates how, despite its pejorative nature, "dialect writing was not always a proof of hegemonic command" but could also "encode the possibility of resistance" by giving voice to subversive experiences of being American.[96] College cartoons likewise undermined dictates on how adolescents should groom themselves for successful manhood and citizenship. A close analysis of these images shows how, similar to comic strip juveniles, the caricatured college student often wielded his unruly appearance and antics as a self-reflexive critical tool. College students were processing and reflecting on their transition to manhood through several repeated university "types."

The College Humor Magazine in The Debate on Manliness

By 1900, college humor magazines were experimenting with garish caricatures to analyze and separate the various factions of their own elite and predominantly white populace. C.H. Walcott's "Types of Princeton Faces" (June 1904, Fig. 5.30) in *The Princeton Tiger* shows just how detailed this examination could be. Each of the nine unlabeled profile sketches captured an obnoxious campus personality, one we assume the reader could instantly identify and none that were regularly circulated in other mass media. The inset text "Apologies to Life"

[96] Gavin Jones, *Strange Talk: The Politics of Dialect Literature in Gilded Age America* (Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1999), 11.

not only nods to social critics who label college students as worse than useless. It also referenced a cartoon published in *Life Magazine* two months earlier of 24 unlabeled, ethnically and socially caricatured heads titled "Some bits of American scenery".[97] Both cartoons seemed to relish in the visual plastic play of physiognomies as an exercise in itself. In the *Life* cartoon, two adjacent profiles of an aristocrat and a trolley driver had a transmogrifying effect, as if one could perceive the artificially bolstered aristocratic profile degrading from repetitive work into the aged trolley driver. Walcott's image functioned similarly, using minute alterations to tweak the almost same profiles into slightly different personalities and pedigrees, Ranging from dopey to naïve to arrogant, the range of profiles suggested character for the college male was a malleable state.

Although the role of college was purportedly to prepare the college man for public life, his gaze tended to focus inward on the campus's sequestered culture.[98] Rebecca Zurier demonstrates how caricature in the broad world of popular print functioned as a way of stratifying the overwhelming diversity of the urban populace, presenting the social arena as a stage on which to enjoy a myriad cast.[99] Identifying the various heads marked a rite of passage, a form of belonging within a confusing social sphere. Walcott's cartoon, among others, showed undergraduates fabricating new caricatured types to carve out social distinctions between their increasingly mixed populace.[100] As Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz demonstrates, competitive entries to elite social clubs, athletic teams, and other high-ranking extracurriculars were already

[97] J. M. Flagg, "Some Bits of American Scenery," *Life*, April 14, 1904, 365-366.
[98] Handlin and Handlin, *The American College*, 56-58.
[99] Zurier, *Picturing the City*, 207, 235.
[100] Horowitz, *Campus Life*, 7.

publicly sifting students into desirables and undesirables.[101] The caricatures in college humor magazines held the power to either reinforce these standards or deflate their pretensions.

Several social pariahs got recycled repeatedly, including the freshman, the intellectual, and even the college athlete. These specific caricatures exhibit how undergraduates absorbed and deflected contemporary debates about manliness. As seen here, the caricatures of the freshman, intellectual, and athlete were most legible because they visualized many of the worst apprehensions about the future of Anglo-Saxon superiority.

The transformation from freshman to senior preoccupied college humor magazines from their very inception. In many ways this four-step metamorphosis encapsulated in miniature Hall's stages of growing up. *The Princeton Tiger* introduced a masthead in 1897 that visualized this progression. Along the border four classmates climb a rope toward a diploma (Fig. 5.31). Below the generic senior, rendered in cap and gown, were three distinct characters: a swanky junior with derby hat and cane, a brazen waving sophomore in casual garb, and a swinging freshman wearing his class beret and hanging on for dear life. These personalities were confirmed repeatedly in editorials, sarcastic poems, and progressive illustrations.[102] Childlike freshmen were presented as perilously unequipped to navigate the social sphere of college. They attempted to act like adults with toddler-like imitation. Irreverent cackling

[101] Horowitz, *Campus Life*, 45-57.
[102] See the poem in the *Yale Record*, Vol. XI, no. 1, October 21, 1911 ("Polish came to Willie when a Soph / Will, then at his betters ceased to scoph") and 19th century *The Princeton Tiger* limerick which opens with "What is the Freshman here for?", reprinted in *The Tiger's Family Album* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1931), 86.

sophomores echoed juvenile vulgarity and were often shrugged up as a hopeless case.[103] Juniors marked upperclassman-hood, which, like adolescence, opened entry into new cultured amusements and adult pleasures, especially wooing women. Yet sarcastic renditions also cast juniors as unconvincing arrow-collar man wannabees negligently driving up debts. All of these types became more physiognomically exaggerated as cartoon styles began loosening in the 20th century.

By far the most frequently excoriated figures were the freshman. September and October issues obsessively portrayed and addressed the incoming class in "freshman numbers." Even in its inaugural editorial, the *Yale Courant* encouragingly promised its Senior staff would uphold the "time-honored custom" of instructing "the members of the Freshman Class in the customs of the college and all the ways their fathers trod around these venerable walks and walls."[104] The vast majority of these issues fulfilled this task by haranguing incoming students through verbal and visual hazings. Echoing the practice of Victorian fraternal orders, editorials preached on the literal, social, and psychological rites of passage freshmen must face that transformed them from outsiders to insiders. In 1901, the *Princeton Tiger* embodied this stance in this sobering yet encouraging advice to freshman: "do not consider that you are as yet known as men of Princeton – that must first be proven; but as balm to your souls, know that opportunities come thick and fast to win these golden spurs of camaraderie and manhood."[105]

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[103] *The Princeton Tiger* limerick sighs "What's the Sophomore here for? Ah! Nobody knows!" The *Yale Record* 31, no. 6, January 31, 1903 pondered this developmental purgatory, reflecting "The sophomore is in a peculiar position . . . The simple primeval pleasures of Freshman year are gone, never to return while the full glory of the Junior is not yet his."
[104] *Yale Record*, September 11, 1872, 5.
[105] *The Princeton Tiger* 12, no. 1, 1901, 2.

While many of these descriptions in the magazines harped on freshman haplessness, authors were far more giddy about knocking the wind from freshman pretentiousness. In 1880 the *Yale Courant* mischievously encouraged their freshman to "put on airs. You are expected to. That's what you are here for. Nobody will know you for freshmen unless you do . . . By all means wear a stove-pipe hat and carry a cane."[106] Ten years later an 1890 *Yale Record* deflated the "unearned" conceit of incoming classmen by welcoming them sarcastically with "You have grown old and sober and wise – seemingly, in prep school."[107] The common current running between these editorials was that freshman, despite delusions of independence and grandeur, were still firmly locked in abject boyhood and must grovel up the ranks. Humor magazines confirmed this assertion with a brutal visual hazing that rendered freshmen as wretched disoriented pygmy schoolboys.

Freshman did not cohere to a standardized physiognomic stereotype, yet they were instantly recognizable in cartooning, even as early as the 1880's when college students were typically whitewashed as idealized gentlemen.[108] Cartoons of the mid 1890's began focusing on how Freshman formed an abject physical specimen distinct from other classmen. As *The Princeton Tiger*'s 1898 header "Freshman Daze" describes, Freshman wore bewildered expressions with wide vacant eyes and a slack open mouth. A comparison between the

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[106] *Yale Record* 9, no. 1, 1880.
[107] *Yale Record* 19, no. 1, October 11, 1890.
[108] Anne Margaret Daniel notes in her history of F. Scott Fitzgerald that Princeton freshman would have been recognizable on campus by their dress and habits. They wore freshmen beanies and were stifled by curfews and prohibitions that were lifted for sophomores and upperclassmen. Freshman were prohibited from smoking cigarettes and pipes outdoors. Cartoons often references these dress and smoking habits to distinguish freshmen. "'Blue as the Sky, Gentleman': Fitzgerald's Princeton through The Prince" in *F. Scott Fitzgerald in the Twenty-First Century*, eds. Jackson R. Bryer, Ruth Prigozy, and Milton R. Stern (Tuscaloosa, University of Alabama Press, 2003), 12.

freshmen rendered in *The Princeton Tiger*'s 1882 "The Seven Ages of Man" and the 1915 *Vermont Crabbe*'s "The Six Ages of College Man" demonstrates how this became ingrained as the freshman expression (Fig. 5.32). Freshman faces were frequently ungainly and garish, featuring snub noses and sloping undeveloped jawlines. While bodily reminiscent of Hovenden's and Bellow's adolescents, they lacked these characters' resolve and resilience. Their ineffective pretenses to becoming a "hard" campus man only emphasized their naivete. A *Harvard Lampoon* cover from October 1898 illustrated this with a big-headed, sweet-featured Freshman who desperately tried to shed his "green" stature by smoking, drinking, swaggering, and glaring (Fig. 5.33). The accompanying poem poked fun at the failed attempt at manliness: "I want to be a devil, / And with the devils stand - / A curse upon my baby lips, / A beer-mug in my hand." Even in popular media, freshmen were targeted as sanctioned subjects for ridicule. A joke from the respectable *Harper's Magazine* firmly placed the freshmen in the vulgar league of ethnic cartooning, not parlor room witticism. The racist joke paired the "green" freshman in a "colored" joke with a black janitor with the freshman emerging worse for wear.[109] Like many derogatory stereotypes, freshmen were also an oddly beloved figure on campus, as revealed by a series of 20th century cartoons that sadly portray the sweet naïve freshman as an endangered species.

Freshman also underwent a literal hazing by sophomores, which provided rich slapstick fodder for college humor magazines. A 1901 illustrated poem in *The Princeton Tiger* described

[109] This joke was republished across several newspapers in summer of 1910: "A freshman, meeting the colored janitor, indulged in a callow joke. "Pretty near winter, William," he said jovially. "The trees are getting nearly as black as you are." "Dat's true, sah," and William surveyed the elm trees very thoughtfully. "Nature's wonderful, sah, no mistake. Come spring, dose trees'll be most as green as you is, sah."

the Freshman experience as a year-long sleeping and waking nightmare of taunting sophomores.[110] While fraternities held exclusive initiation rituals, the freshman "horsing" was a public ordeal and cartoons intentionally set these interactions in recognizable campus quads. The trials captured by college humor magazines match those depicted by George Bellows' drawing *I remember being initiated into the frat*. Yet, unlike Bellows' dark image, the cartoons of college humor magazines staged horsing as a carnivalesque entertainment. Channeling R. F. Outcault, artists rendered freshmen with springy outlines and used comic-strip shorthand to signal freshman fear and distress. Sophomores, still in the lowly position of lower classmen, were similarly cartoonish, and thus ultimately non-threatening. They paraded with boyish impudence while wearing theatrical conical and bicorner hats. A clearly posed tongue-in-cheek photograph of 1915 Princeton sophomores "lassoing" freshman suggests that the actual incidents operated like a Progressive Era Commedia del Arte, each character performing their predictable part.[111]

Like college football, college hazing was debated within campus and professional journals, questioned by doubters for its brutality, and criticized as unmanly.[112] College humor magazines did not touch upon the violent hazing practices, which allegedly included kidnappings, mass poisonings, and branding with silver nitrate. Yet many authors pushed back on these critiques by upholding hazing as an admirable, even necessary activity that punted

[110] *The Princeton Tiger* 12, no. 2, October 1901.
[111] The photograph in retrospect creates disturbing allusions to lynching. It is difficult here to understand in what context this "roping" would have been understood. See "Slide Show: Princeton, circa 1914", Princeton Alumni Weekly, Accessed May 9, 2021. https://paw.princeton.edu/article/slide-show-princeton-circa-1914
[112] Anne Margaret Daniel refers to the practice on the Princeton campus and debates over disbanding freshman "horsing" in the student periodical *The Princetonian*. Daniel, "Blue as the Sky," 12.

college-educated adolescents into full managerial-class manhood. Humiliating the developing schoolboy body was an ingrained staple of Victorian fiction. George Stanley Hall's and Arthur Alliń's analysis of humor spoke in favor of "the much-abused college hazing", citing its restorative benefits. College hazing hardened hypersensitive minds, made prematurely fixed physical and mental constitutions more pliable, and generally prepared coddled boys for the strain of professional life. The authors rationalized:

> "A collegian who is condemned to kiss every baby he meets in a city street for a day, to wear his coat wrong side out for twenty-four hours, to wear a placard with the legend "kick me," to work for a day cleaning spittoons or sewers, to engage in a beer duel with a cleverly devised comic ritual, is surely not greatly injured, and may be given some needed flexibility and docility as well as taught to control his temper."[113]

Even the *Saturday Evening Post*, with its stern convictions on how college should build character, featured auto-biographical accounts and fictional stories celebrating college pranking. One of the most bizarre included Owen Wister's laudatory recollection of being hazed into a Harvard society by a young Theodore Roosevelt. For Wister, Roosevelt's superiority of character was revealed through his "torture":

> "He proceeded at once to torture us energetically. We were put through a number of perfectly new tricks; but dear me, how I enjoyed it! Instead of tiresome fooling that had so lately depressed me, I became filled with internal gayety that I dared not reveal. I longed to ask Mr. Roosevelt to do it some more . . . "[114]

These articles relished memories of committing and being caught up in "college scrapes" prior to accepting "the responsibilities and dignities of business and professional careers." The

[113] G. Stanley Hall and Arthur Alliń. "The Psychology of Tickling, Laughing, and the Comic." *The American Journal of Psychology*. Vol. 9, No. 1 (Oct. 1897), 23.
[114] Owen Wister, "Theodore Roosevelt, Harvard '80," *The Saturday Evening Post*, October 12, 1901, 3.

illustrations accompanying these articles generally reaffirmed college men as handsome, strong jawed and broad shouldered, aligning college pranking with manly development.[115]

In humiliating the freshmen, college magazines were echoing a larger social phenomenon of metaphorically hazing recent graduates upon their entrance to the "real" world.[116] *The Saturday Evening Post* especially condoned chastising college men for their lack of experience as a necessary humbling. Stories and instructional articles often placed college students in context with businessmen, jesting at their initial failures.[117] The bottom-line was college must be treated as a beneficial yet low stepping-stone, not a staircase, to professional success. The early *Post*'s most successful mantra against college conceit manifested in Horace Lorimer's fictional "Letters from a Self-Made Merchant to his Son." Published in the *Post* in 1901-1902 and then republished in book format in 1903, fictional father John Graham penned continually criticisms of his son's, Pierrepont, pretentious habits or social successes. Ushering in Theodore T. Munger's guidelines for youth, Graham focused solely on how Pierrepont's college experiences might prepare or, worse, destabilize his advancement after graduation.

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[115] In one notable exception, a *Saturday Evening Post* illustration rendered college hazing as a tenement style brawl with characters that feel pulled straight from George Bellows. The change can be explained by the accompanying story "Rusticated" which sets the undergraduate blowout on an 1860s Irish campus. Ironically, this ethnic display of violent spastic hazing closely mimics the energetic hazing compositions found in college humor magazines. *Saturday Evening Post*, June 6, 1903, 4-5.

[116] A March 8, 1894 newspaper article "Some College Humor" from the *Goldsboro Weekly Argus* summarized this outlook by complimenting the "college boy" for "his optimistic trust in himself and the future and his "splendid youthful courage." Yet it warns: " . . . like every other boy, he needs control and guidance. It is his fashion to speak of himself and his comrades as men. That, too, is all right, if it but teach him that men are responsible beings . . ."

[117] "His ignorance of the most ordinary business matters led him into many ludicrous blunders, but he bore the ridicule good-naturedly and, what was remarkable with beginners in that office, he didn't make the same mistakes twice." H. J. Hapgood, "The Young College Man's Chance in Business," *The Saturday Evening Post*, June 18, 1904, 13.

College humor magazines realized Graham's nightmare scenario with a repeated gag that imagined the arrogant freshman's first return home. *The Princeton Tiger*'s 1904 take rendered the freshman as a domestic menace (Fig. 5.34). Brazenly smoking and bragging about fake victories against sophomores, the slovenly socialite was unrecognizable to his parents and a frightening apparition for his little brother. One imagines that they envisioned J. C. Leyendecker's "Welcome Home" cover for the 1914 *Saturday Evening Post* Thanksgiving issue instead in which an undergraduate with youthful yet angular features beamed into his mother's face. Princeton's Freshman, by contrast, had collected a dangerous throng of admirers, including two local girls ("what splendid shoulders he has developed!") and a juvenile claiming, "Someday I'm going to be just like that too!!!" Like the larger public, college students participated in squashing the premature egos of the newest incumbents to their elite spheres as a way of staving off social degeneration.

College cartoonists played with visual contrasts to pinpoint the freshman's low social influence. The *Yale Record*'s 1911 "Freshman Number" was especially evocative of Winsor McCay's Little Nemo (Fig. 5.35). The artist similarly employed a flat graphic style and dramatic contrast of scale to recreate the freshman's discombobulating arrival on campus. Here the tenuous, pee-wee body of a dazed freshman stood shrimp-like before a massively bulky policeman. The cartoon pivoted on an ingrained trope of dwarfing upper-class bodies with lower-class brawn. Yet many cartoons, especially those of the *Harvard Lampoon*, pictured an equally drastic visual gulf between freshmen and seasoned classmen. An 1894 "Harvard Puzzler" cartoon titled "Find the Freshman" included a chubby-cheeked slack-jawed freshman

playing cards around a table of broad-shouldered, square-jawed men.[118] An 1899 October *Lampoon* cover similarly answered its own question, here asked by its central figure, "I wonder how he knows I'm a Freshman" (Fig. 5.36). The Freshman's snub nose and grotesquely sprouting body contrasted against the angular features and confident gait of a passing classman. The *Lampoon*'s 1908 Freshman cover "The First Plunge" (Fig. 5.37) most clearly presented the optimistic transition Freshmen would make in college's crucible of manhood. The spindly-bodied Freshman stood hesitantly poised on a diving board, prepared to jump into a pool already occupied by other fraternizing classmen. These older bodies became systematically more confident and athletic as they progressed from sophomore to senior. While humiliating the freshmen, these images also reassured entrants that college would resolve their messy, incomplete journey toward manhood.

Some students fell into niches that excluded them from this promised development. The college intellectual, like the studious schoolboy, was widely satirized for arrested development. Termed a "Grinder" at Harvard, "grind" being slang for studying, and a "Poler" at Princeton, feeble-bodied intellectual students missed the American memo that humanities courses were to be used for character development and business preparation, not as ends in themselves.[119] The *Yale Record* leaped early onto this nationwide discussion, expressing in 1877, "One must grow in other ways than mentally. A man ought to be a man all around, had he not?"[120] Considering compulsory athletics on campus, the *Record* also stated, "No matter

[118] "Find the Freshman." *Harvard Lampoon* 28, no. 3, November 24, 1894, 39.
[119] I have not found a definitive explanation of the term "poler," but it is probably a reference to the intellectual's "bean-pole" physique.
[120] *Yale Record*, September 22, 1877, 6.

how fine an education a person may have, if he goes forth into the world broken down in health, he is ill prepared to engage in an active business life."[121] *Princeton Tiger*'s "A Popular Class" embodied this ethos by showing bored, handsome young men drifting out of their art history lecture (Fig. 5.38).

According to the cartoons, abstention from the college's athletic culture and college's "horsing" practices wreaked havoc on one's manly physique and temperament. In January of 1895, the *Harvard Lampoon* contrasted the "Grinder" with the "Sporter" (pleasure-seeker and stranger to the library) returning from the winter break (Fig. 5.39). While the sporter dons the fashionable dress, relaxed swagger, and a Victorian profile fit for advertisements, the grinder stood stiffly frontal, spectacled with heavily sloped shoulders and gaunt features. In 1902, C. H. Walcott ran a numbered and labelled series of framed images epitomizing college "types", that included the "Poler" (Fig. 5.40). His renditions resonated with other poler cartoons depicting overgrown hair, elongated face, and spectacles perched atop a pronounced sloping nose. Most damning, polers appeared to actually enjoy their studies. In 1912 the *Yale Record* took this type to an extreme, rendering the academic with a gothic, mortician appearance (Fig. 5.41). By the late teens, this repartee about feeble academics gave way to ubiquitous jokes about the plague of abject, underdeveloped physiques on campus, with or without reference to study habits.

These cartoons cohered with late nineteenth and early 20th centuries attitudes toward the intelligentsia and corroborated George Stanley Hall's recommendation that adolescents should activate both cerebral and physical faculties to form a healthy feedback loop of strong,

[121] *Yale Record* 12, no. 9, January 26, 1884, 100.

consistent growth. Grover Cleveland similarly warned against extremes in the *Saturday Evening Post*: " . . . a sour and morose pursuit of study which leads to a sour and unsympathetic temper. This threatens unfitness for a profitable association with the outside world which is handicap in dealing with every-day affairs."[122] Jan Cohn describes how George Horace Lorimer harbored particular disdain for the intelligentsia. A story in his *Saturday Evening Post*, "The Professor of Greek" by Arthur Stringer, verbally accorded with the caricatures of the intellectual built within the humor magazines.[123] The *Post*'s professor, short-sighted, gaunt, and supine, reluctantly discovered the modern *Discobolus* in the sinewy, broad-shouldered "barbarian" figure of a student football player. The story berated the supposed rewards of intellectual superiority, portraying the professor lamenting his own lack of an athletic body.

However, the college athlete was a compromised model, both for college humor magazines and the wider public. Charles Darwin Adams lamented that college students polarized into "a group of unintellectual athletes on one side, and of flabby scholars on the other."[124] Like the comic weeklies, college humor mags were fickle in their representation of footballers. November comic weeklies often glorified footballers to kick off the national championships.[125] However, their cult of bodily worship was largely absent from college humor magazines and even challenged in non-November issues. In 1903 the *Lampoon* expressed

[122] Cleveland, "Does a College Education Pay?," 1090.
[123] Arthur Stringer, "The Professor of Greek: How he found the Hellenes Again," *Saturday Evening Post*, November 14, 1903.
[124] Adams, "College Preparation," 611.
[125] *The Princeton Tiger*'s 1902 November opening page presented a handsome posing footballer with a poem that kicks off "Here they come – our might warriors bold, / Rise and greet them, banners wide unfold . . ." The centerfold cartoon in *The Princeton Tiger* November 1, 1891 depicted a very boyish footballer, poised on the moon, as a modern idol for adoring women. Two despondent males labeled "Ye Dude" and "Ye Intellectual Swell" are cast out of the circle.

frustration at football's hold on campus affairs by showing a professor with a football-shaped head interrogating an applicant, "And so you want to enter, College, do you? How much do you weigh?" In December 1894 (following the lost championship) the *Lampoon*'s centerfold cartoon further played up football's brutality by depicting thug-bodied players punching each other in the face and even decapitating one another (Fig. 5.42).

Overall, the footballer in college humor magazines did not function as an incentivizing model for manliness for the college student. Even in C. H. Walcott's emblematic depiction of the college "athlete", No. 1 in his series of college types, the viewer was located on the sideline of a playing field with the observers, not the distant players (Fig. 5.43). As a model of manliness, the footballer often competed with, and lost to, "applicable" manliness, which leads to professional success. In the *Yale Record*'s 1893 cartoon "What we worship", a small boy worshiped the college footballer whereas by contrast a college freshman worshiped the mature senior. In 1895, the *Harvard Lampoon*'s June issue showed a young lady strolling in arm with a senior in cap and gown, while a dejected, beaten up footballer looked on despondently with the subscript "Why didn't he know it before?" (Fig. 5.44).

As the apex product of the college system, graduating seniors were also easy targets for the pessimistic college humorist. Cartoons depicted graduates contending with bleak professional prospects and low-ranking jobs. Despite their upper-class good looks, the seniors in *The Princeton Tiger*'s June 1905 "The Crossroads" and "Ain't it funny – etc" found their promised "path of roses" closed as they resort to groveling for office boy work (Fig. 5.45).[126]

[126] "Ain't it funny," *The Princeton Tiger*, June 10, 1913, 11.

Derogatory caricatures of seniors varied drastically, sometimes appearing as decrepit aging men and other times as barely developed adolescents proudly sporting mousey-haired moustaches. The *Harvard Lampoon*'s 1914 "Educated, by Gosh!" delivered a damning portrayal of graduates' chances in the world (Fig. 5.46). Shoved forward by balding curmudgeons labeled "classics", "sciences", "philosophy", and "history", the graduate brandished a thin, ornately decorated scabbard labeled "experience." His foe, a cackling goblin-like figure with a spherical torso crossed in latitude and longitude lines, greeted him with a thick serrated blade labeled "the hard cold world." The lanky graduate fell disappointingly short of manhood with his rubbery physique, pronounced Adam's apple, awkwardly crossed over-sized feet, and dopey smile. The abject senior critiqued not only the college man but the purpose of the entire university system and potential of America's ruling class.

This analysis of the freshman, the intellectual, the footballer, and undergraduate shows that college humor magazines parroted many of the same criticisms circulating in the public against college youth. Yet it is easy to overlook the college humor magazine's cultural intervention by mobilizing these discourses into cartoons. Imagining abject figures through cartoons and vaudevillian performances posed a danger by actualizing these characters as potent contenders in the American scene. Afterall, most of the harangues against college students in the public domain took on verbal form, specifically avoiding visuals. While figures like the intellectual or footballer pre-existed as cartoons, they were typically judged in isolation against broader society. These characters commingled freely in the college humor magazine. This presented college like a bizarre Anglo-Saxon tenement where its elite residents, confined in close quarters, simmered through their late adolescence with unpredictable results.

The continued appearance of idealized, fashionable renderings of undergraduates in mainstream culture exacerbated the waffling status of the college graduate in American culture. Because they targeted college-age consumers, elegant advertisements of suave undergraduate consumers often appeared in the college humor magazines. In the *Yale Record*, a sarcastic cartoon of a grubby-faced senior desperately trying to grow a moustache could be printed on the back of a J.C. Leyendecker's Arrow Collar man showing off the undergraduate as a model of fashionable sophistication. A Fatima cigarettes' ad from 1914 published in *The Princeton Tiger* specifically portrayed the college cartoonist, rendering him confident and masculine while blowing smoke rings before his easel with sleeves rolled up (Fig. 5.47). In 1915 the *Cornell Widow* offered its own vision of the magazine artist and editor, manifesting unshaven, course figures fretting for fresh ideas. These contradictory images flouted the undergraduate's ability to seesaw volatilely between upholding and desecrating American values. Cartoons like *The Princeton Tiger*'s "As They Thought They Looked" and "As They Really Looked" further explored this gulf (Fig. 5.48). Portraying "Smith and Jones and their spring styles", the students imagined themselves with the grace of advertised gentleman in sacksuits, but in reality they struck garish, awkward profiles. These images destabilized advertising's promise that a suave, relaxed cohort of elites were prepared to steer America's future. Furthermore, they destabilized the undergraduate's vision of himself, lest he believed the advertisements.

As with comics, critical contemporary discourses about the images in Progressive Era college humor magazines are scarce. However, one significant resource suggests that college humor was indeed presenting a radical, not conciliatory, reading of the college experience. F.

Scott Fitzgerald published his debut and best-selling novel *This Side of Paradise* in 1920 when college humor magazines were hitting their commercial peak. Praised as an accurate depiction of daily college life, the initial printing sold out in three days and shot the author to early fame.[127] Although *This Side of Paradise* was published after World War I, Ronald Berman asserts that Fitzgerald's characters encapsulated the contradictions of the formative 1910's, distilling how "the most characteristic experience after 1910 was the discovery of how unprepared Americans were for 1920."[128] The promise that above average intelligence and a strong work ethic could win upper-class prizes of wealth, status, and security had proven untenable. Not only was Fitzgerald attending Princeton, he was also on staff at *The Princeton Tiger* during these years. Significantly, these years marked the seismic shift in the cartooning traditions of college humor magazines, delving into the hypocrisies and instability that Fitzgerald would make famous through *Paradise's* central character, the romantic Amory Blaine. The death of Amory's friend Dick Humbird after a joy ride has received much scholarly attention for its symbolism.[129] Amory described Dick as "a perfect type of aristocrat", "the eternal example of what the upper class tries to be", and different "from the healthy type that was essentially middle class" despite Dick's middle-class origins.[130] Amory's description perfectly fit the 19th century style of polite dormitory cartoons that, by the 1910s, still appeared but rang increasingly stale as caricatures explored confusion, shiftlessness, and frivolity as the

[127] Ronald Berman, *F. Scott Fitzgerald and the American Scene* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2019), 14.
[128] Ibid., 11.
[129] For a discussion of Dick Humbird in the context of Progressive Era masculinity, see Pearl James, "History and Masculinity in F. Scott Fitzgerald's 'This Side of Paradise'," *Modern Fiction Studies* 51, no. 1 (Spring 2005): 1-33.
[130] F. Scott Fitzgerald, *This Side of Paradise* (New York: Barnes and Nobles Classics, 2005), 72-73.

undergraduate condition. Humbird's death thus also resonated with the death of a visual conceit: the Victorian college sophisticate.

The College Humor Magazine as a Counter Cultural Voice

As a latecomer magazine that did not follow the rules, college humor magazines were uniquely poised to challenge the deeply ingrained, almost unconscious conventions governing periodicals and magazine humor. This included the ethnic humor that still proliferated in cartooning despite rising protests against their harmful portrayals.[131] Nineteenth century editions of *The Princeton Tiger* followed periodical trends by indulging in ethnic humor, often utilizing the convention of the talking heads cartoon in which two heavily caricatured mugs, typically Deep South African Americans or Irish immigrants, conversed in heavy dialects. One such cartoon from March 1, 1894 suggested weariness with this shopworn formula by pivoting its racist convention to question its relevance. In an ethnic talking heads cartoon from March 1, 1894, an archetypal African American face bragged, "Yes, seh, I's makin' good wages now. I'se empl'yed foah hoahs a day teachin' Southern dialec' to one o' them fellas dat's writing for *Century.*" By drawing attention to the lucrative business of racial ridicule, the cartoon began to shift the target of the joke to critique recycled punchlines that caricatured African Americans in popular media.[132] The critique also exposed the African American caricature as trapped in an

[131] See M. Allison Kibler, *Censoring Racial Ridicule: Irish, Jewish, and African American Struggles over Race and Representation*, 1890-1930 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015).
[132] David Iams talks about the possible social awareness of this cartoon in "Here We Are," 8.

endless feedback loop that barred any fresh pathways toward overturning or reinventing its representation.[133]

Cartoons drew attention to the collapsible concept of truth in the modern world, where periodical representations of modernity claimed more accuracy and legitimacy than lived experience. In the Irish ethnic cartoon titled "Not Drawn from 'Life'", one figure remarked, "Yer face looks familiar," and the other Irishman responded, "Sure it ought to. Yez probably saw me in one of Sullivan's drawings in 'Judge' last week."[134] Playing on the title of *Life Magazine*, the cartoon mocked the magazine industry's tradition of stealing and reprinting cartoons. The cartoon also highlighted the artificial aura ascribed to these caricatures. Idealized subjects were also ripe for ridicule. *Harvard Lampoon* mocked the insipid love poems *Judge* ran alongside illustrations of beautiful women in the style of Charles Dana Gibson. Accompanied by a haughty female face, the *Lampoon*'s 1909 poem undercut the image's power by questioning whether Gibson's feminine icons ever had any ties to reality: "I've seen so many girls like you, / In street-cars, foyers, "art-shops" too. / Alas they are but pictures all / At some ad-writer's beck and call. / But still, dear poster-girl, I scan / The living faces when I can / and dare to hope – Say! Is it true? - / There really is a girl like you."[135]

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[133] Robert W. Snyder discusses how, despite the vaudevillian mindset that "anyone could play any nationality", ethnic routines for African Americans were "far more restrictive and negative", making it difficult for African American artists to develop routines that did not play off derogatory structures of minstrelsy and blackface. The *Voice of the City: Vaudeville and Popular Culture in New York* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1989), 111, 120-123.

[134] "Not Drawn from Life," *The Princeton Tiger*, Spring 1908.

[135] *Harvard Lampoon* 58, no. 1 October 4, 1909.

College humor parodies were so effective because they satirized their target by impersonating their own tactics, deceit, and outrage. After Horace Lorimers' "Letters of a Self-Made Merchant to His Son" was published in 1903, *The Princeton Tiger* mockingly ran "Letters from a Self-Made Son to His Mother" in 1904 and the *Harvard Lampoon* "Letters from a Half Mad Father to His Son" in 1913. Apparently not all young men felt they would benefit from Lorimer's conservative, world-worn advice. Humor magazines also employed hyperbole to make fun of the promises print made and clearly could not deliver. Yale students responded to the relentless blight of America's muscle culture by calling out its unrealistic expectations and narcissistic drive in a fake advertisement (Fig. 5.49). The *Record* directly parodied Alois P. Swaboda's mail order physical fitness program which flooded major magazines with full page adverts (Fig. 5.50). In the *Record*, a stripped body builder bragged, "Look at Me! You can be like me! Physically Perfect! Don't you want to be chesty?", while kissing his own deltoid. By mimicking the tough-talking ("If I could see you face to face, I would say Buck up!"), contradictory scientific data, and deceptive language ("Send me fifty dollars and I will send you a whole postal card covered with directions ABSOLUTELY FREE OF CHARGE) of athletic advertisements, the *Record* deposed the muscle cult as a facetious commercial fad. Although the Medical Society would eventually expose Swoboda as a hack two decades later, the *Record* leveled its attack when such programs were first surfacing and held convincing sway in the dialogs that framed masculine development as a civic duty.

The success of this parodic college humor formula was particularly evident when operating outside its native habitat in elaborate printed pranks. When G. R. Howard wrote a letter to *The Sun* in 1905 calling all college men "d---d fools", it sparked several passionate

counter arguments. Among the rational and carefully argued denouncements, one letter responded with college humor cheekiness.[136] The response started off with mock stuffy formality: "Apropos of one G. R. Howard's letter on college men in your paper of this date, allow me to state, and it is the writer's opinion, fortified by a large observation and by the opinions of the best men in the country, that the average non college man is a d---d fool." The letter continued with hyperbole, commenting Howard's humor is so sadly lacking that "it is a wonder how he lives through the trials of life without committing suicide." The anonymous writer concluded by rebuking not just Mr. Howard's intelligence, but the whole journalistic enterprise of attacking college students: "The non-college man is apt at times to believe everything and everybody he hears. Beware of sensational reports, Mr. Howard. They are aimed at the non-collegers." The combination of wit, satire, and ridiculousness did not allow for discussion or reply. By throwing back dictatorial or inane cultural constructs, college magazines exposed and disempowered their artifice.

In 1911, the *Harvard Lampoon* ran its first full issue parody of *Life Magazine*, a weekly humor magazine originally started by Harvard graduates and long admired by *Lampoon* staff. Perceiving *Life*'s content as "stale", the parody issue was intended "as a nudge to the Lampoon's wayward child."[137] The enormous success of this issue suggested a sympathetic audience was likewise tired of journalistic formulas designed to stimulate sensationalism, community, and American values. The *Saturday Evening Post*'s conservative attitudes, trite local submissions, and its history of lecturing to Young Men made it a prime second target in

[136] *The Sun*, New York, November 8, 1905.
[137] *100 Years of Harvard Lampoon Parodies*, eds. Eric Rayman and James Downey (Harvard: The Harvard Lampoon, 1976), 8.

1912. The *Lampoon*'s full issue parodies continued through the 20th century, taking down all forms of publication giants.

The *Lampoon*'s April 23, 1936 cover for its second parody of the *Saturday Evening Post* demonstrates the college humorist's mastery over this game of crafting and timing ridiculous mirror images of mainstream culture. Rendered in the style of J.C. Leyendecker, its extremely willowy upper-class male was completely nude except for a slender sash labelled "sentimentality" flourished over his genitals. The bony-chested adolescent was a Frankenstein amalgamation of two recent J. C. Leyendecker *Post* covers. Leyendecker's 1936 Valentine's Day cover brandished a pre-pubescent golden haired "Saint Valentine", nude except for an arrow quiver swinging precariously over his groin. Many historians have explored how Leyendecker's invention of the Arrow Collar man mainstreamed the homosexual gaze, legitimating an alternate, counter cultural standard of male beauty epitomizing the male as fashionable consumer.[138] Yet, even for Leyendecker, this glossy juvenile with his expression of ecstasy seemed particularly exposed and ripe for ridicule. Leyendecker also almost always composed an Easter themed cover for the *Post* and these frequently presented slender, overly decorous men in Victorian or colonial era clothing escorting, or preparing to escort, a lavishly dressed mistress. Leyendecker's April 11 cover, published about two weeks before the *Lampoon* parody, presented a teenage Arrow Collar man type gazing at himself in the mirror as he adjusted his tie, heavy-lidded with parted mouth. The *Lampoon* cover simply plopped the upper-class adolescent's face onto the shrunken cupid body. As a winged allegorical male

[138] Dan Gaudagnolo, "'A Superb Example of the Common Man': J.C. Leyendecker and the Staging of Male Consumer Desire in American Commercial Illustration, 1907-1931," *American Studies* 58, no. 4 (2020): 5-32.

gazing down at the viewer, this effeminate, atrophied male monstrosity now embodied the *Post* as the very monster Lorimer's magazine had worked so hard to prevent. It also ridiculed the industrial production of effete college boys as images for commodification and sexual pleasure. J.C. Leyendecker had got in his jab at college pundits in his 1920 *Post* cover "Global Graduate", which depicted a vainglorious Arrow Collar-style man clenching his diploma and lightly fingering a globe with aristocratic condescension.

To embody itself, the *Lampoon* chose an entirely different construction of the male adolescent. In Joseph D. Leland's 1909 cartoon titled "The Paper Chase", the *Lampoon* loudly proclaimed its status as a unique and culturally important art form (Fig. 5.51). Four college publications personified by four different men scrambled up separate rope ladders. Their goal was to achieve "Fame", embodied by a cloud of national publications at the top rung of each of their respective branches of journalism. The *Lampoon* had nearly reached the top, capped by a rung labeled *Punch*, by scaling steps labeled "drawing", "jokes", "wit" and "true humor." The other publications (*Advocate*, *Monthly*, and *Crimson*) trailed much farther down their ladders and strived toward gauche publications as goals (*BlackCat*, *Youth's Companion*, *Police Gazette*). The contrasting physiques prescribed to each publication showed a peculiar development in the evolution of the college man caricature. Echoing its personification back in 1876, the figure representing the *Crimson* appeared much older and fatter with swelling rump and hit of balding. The poetic and high art *Advocate* had limp, intellectual lankiness, while the *Monthly* sported a juvenile physique. However, the *Lampoon* proudly donned a physique that smacked of the adolescent's gangly angularity. With tousled hair and a rumpled shirt, he physically symbolized America's college comic spirit as a scrambling adolescent.

As he is seen from the back, the *Lampoon*'s personification creates a striking similarity to the silhouette Norman Rockwell imagined for his iconic 1938 *Saturday Evening Post Cover* and self-portrait, "Blank Canvas." Both images accentuated the spindly nervous body at cerebral work. By 1938, Rockwell was an American icon in the illustration world and well into his 40's. Yet he continually channeled a college humor ethos into his autobiographical persona and his work. Norman Rockwell's comic presentations of the body, an art form previously honed within the newspaper strips and college humor magazines, lent a parodic slant to his American genre scenes that frequently questioned, rather than endorsed, their presentations of American fulfillment.

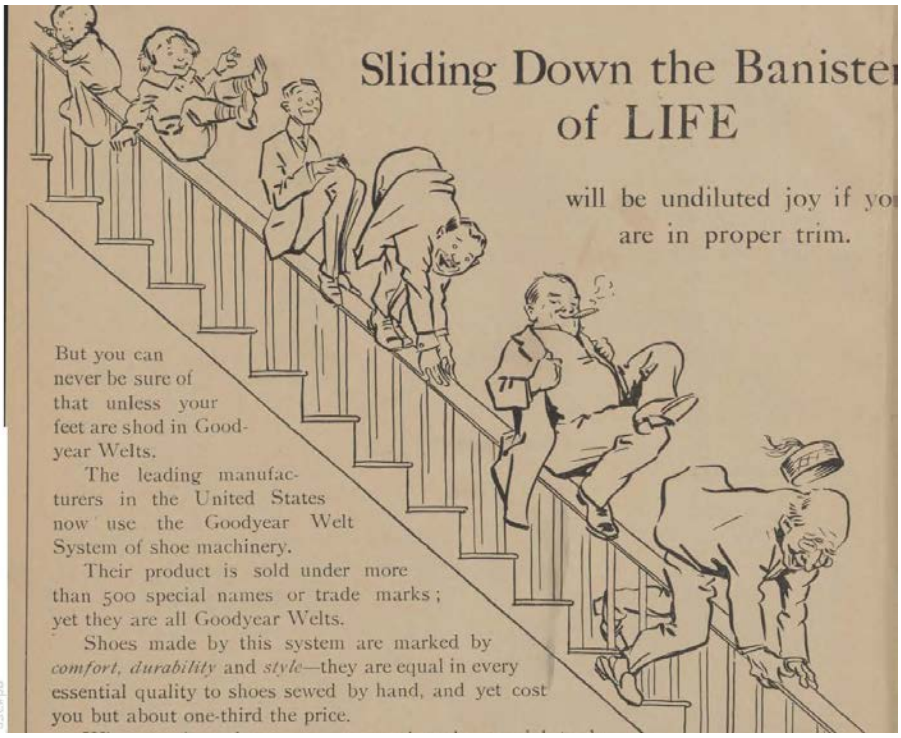


Fig. 5.1 "Sliding Down the Banister of Life."
Goodyear Welt Shoe Advertisement. *Yale Record 40*, no. 1, October 21, 1911.
Photograph by the author.



Fig. 5.2 Dalrymple Louis. "The Modern Plague." *Puck*, September 22, 1897.
From Library of Congress. https://lccn.loc.gov/2012647616
(Accessed May 31, 2021)



Fig. 5.3 "Self-Denying," *Judge's Library.* September 1894.
Courtesy Hathitrust.
Original from New York Public Library.
https://hdl.handle.net/2027/nyp.33433074817879 (Accessed May 31, 2021)



Fig. 5.4 "Power of Love," *Judge's Library.* September 1894.
Courtesy Hathitrust.
Original from New York Public Library.
https://hdl.handle.net/2027/nyp.33433074817879 (Accessed May 31, 2021)



Fig. 5.5 "The Farmer's Boy, Aged 7 / The City Boy, Aged 7." *Judge's Library.* June 1894.
Courtesy Hathitrust.
Original from New York Public Library.
https://hdl.handle.net/2027/nyp.33433074817879 (Accessed May 31, 2021)



Fig. 5.6 Inset image from "The rail at wealth is not entirely justified." *Puck*, July 7, 1897. From Library of Congress. https://lccn.loc.gov/2012647689 (Accessed May 31, 2021)

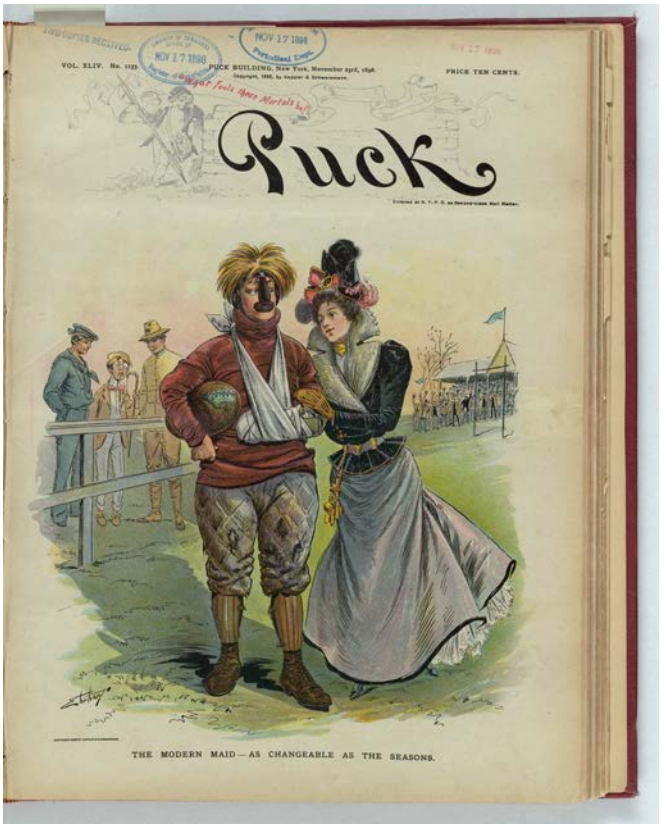
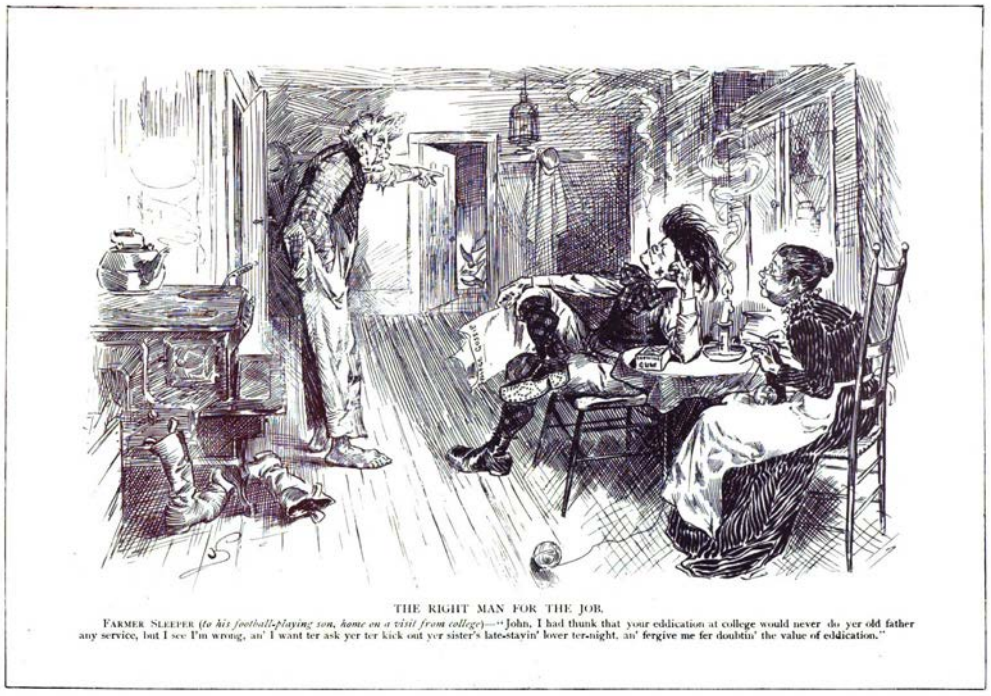


Fig. 5.7 J. J. Gould. "The Modern Maid – as Changeable as the Seasons." *Puck*, November 23, 1898. From Library of Congress. https://lccn.loc.gov/2012647489 (Accessed May 31, 2021)

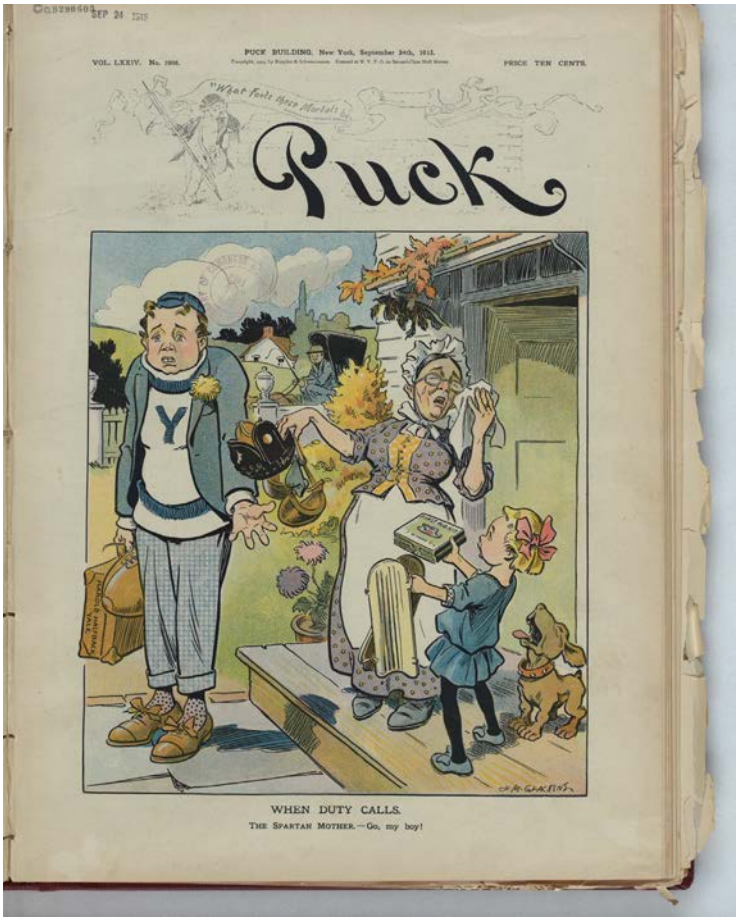


THE RIGHT MAN FOR THE JOB.

FARMER SLEEPER (*to his football-playing son, home on a visit from college*)—"John, I had thunk that your eddication at college would never do yer old father any service, but I see I'm wrong, an' I want ter ask yer ter kick out yer sister's late-stayin' lover ter-night, an' fergive me fer doubtin' the value of eddication."

Original from NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY
Digitized by Google

Fig. 5.8 "Right Man for the Job." *Judge's Library*, February 1902, 155. Courtesy Hathitrust. Original from New York Public Library. https://hdl.handle.net/2027/nyp.33433074817929 (Accessed May 31, 2021)



PUCK BUILDING, New York, September 24th, 1913.

VOL. LXXIV. No. 1908. PRICE TEN CENTS.

Puck

WHEN DUTY CALLS.

THE SPARTAN MOTHER.—Go, my boy!

Fig. 5.9 "When Duty Calls," *Puck*, September 24, 1913. From Library of Congress https://lccn.loc.gov/2011649629 (Accessed May 31, 2021)

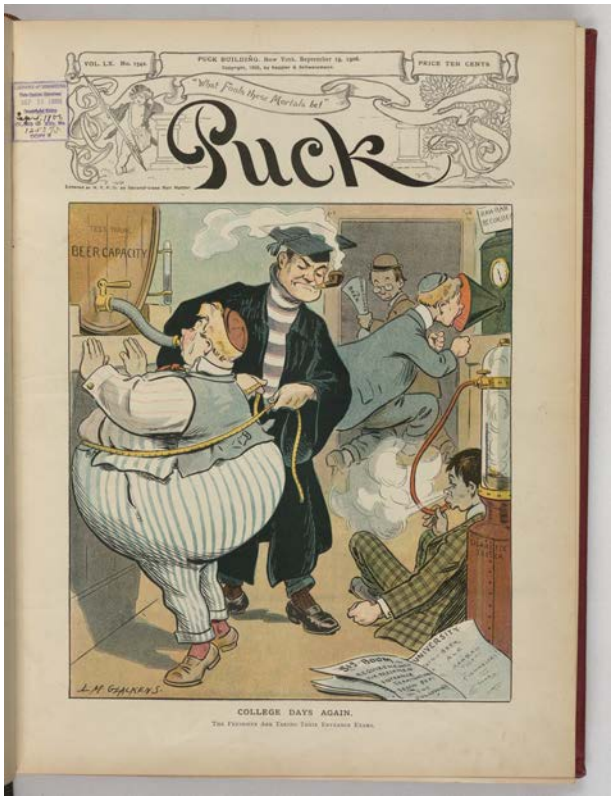


Fig. 5.10 J. M. Glackens.
"College Days Again."
Puck, September 19, 1906.
From Library of Congress.
https://lccn.loc.gov/2011645939
(Accessed May 31, 2021)

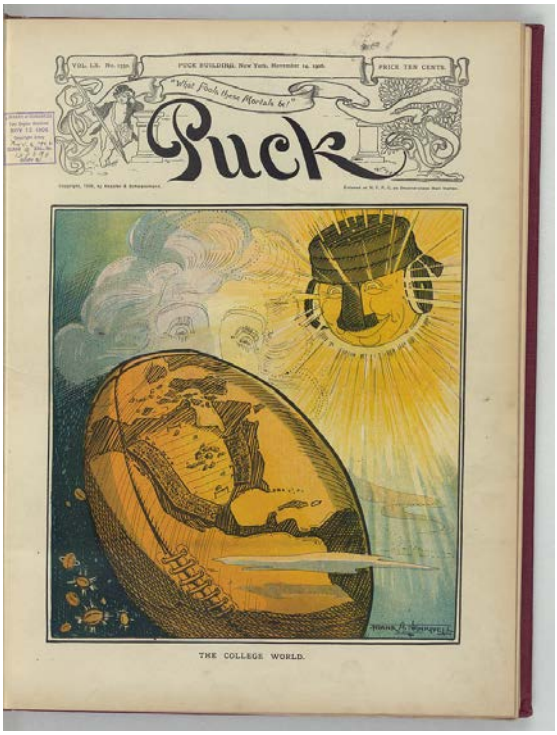


Fig. 5.11 Frank A. Nankivell.
"The College World."
Puck, September 14, 1906.
From Library of Congress
https://lccn.loc.gov/2011645955
(Accessed May 31, 2021)

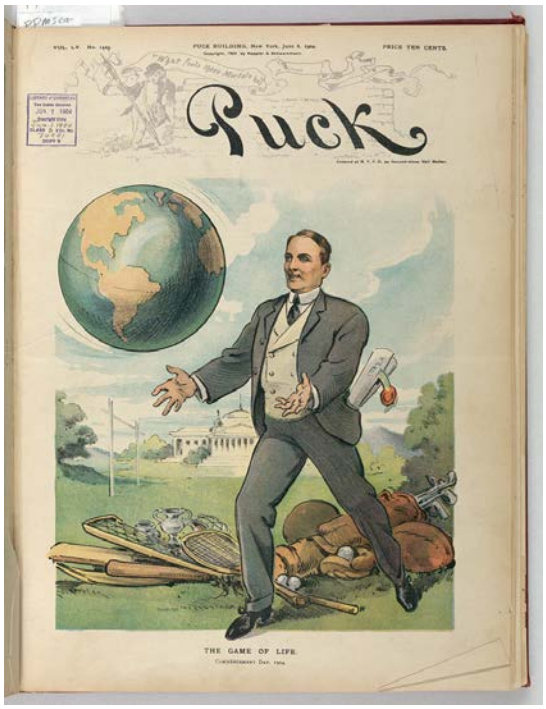
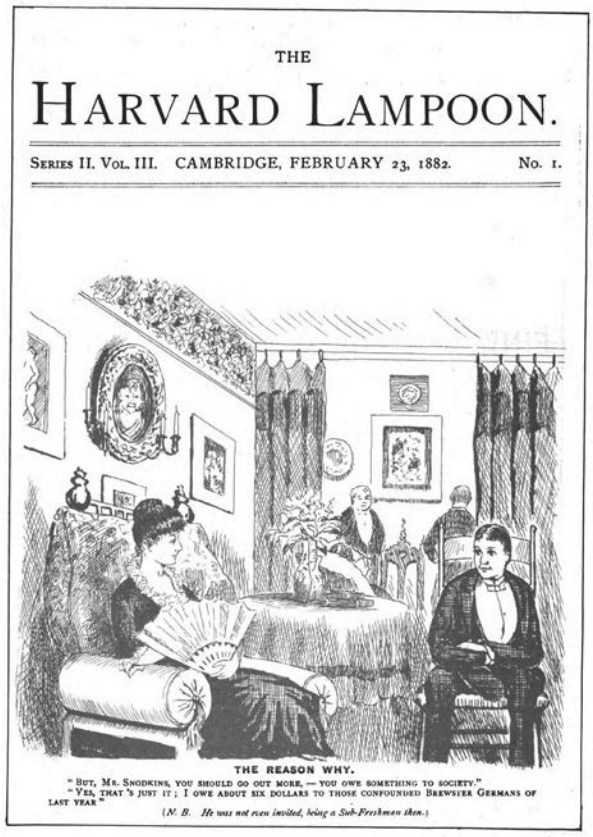


Fig. 5.12 Frank A. Nankivell.
"The Game of Life.
Puck, June 8, 1906.
From Library of Congress.
https://lccn.loc.gov/2011645539
Accessed May 31, 2021


THE

HARVARD LAMPOON.

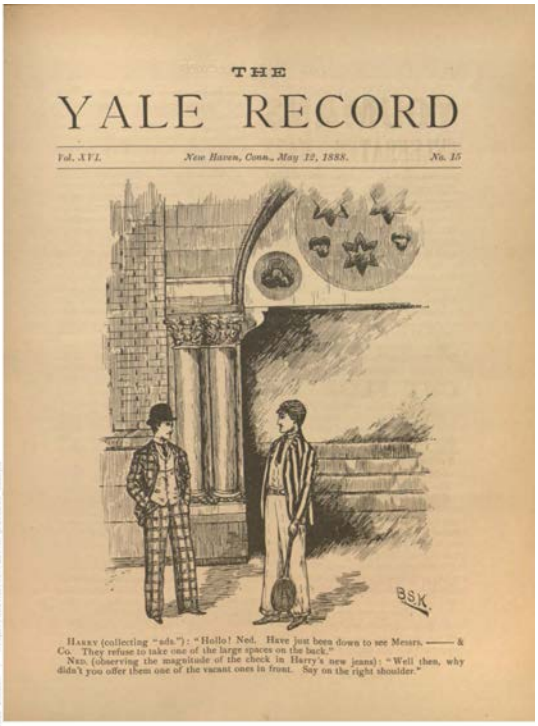
SERIES II. VOL. III. CAMBRIDGE, FEBRUARY 23, 1882. No. 1.

THE REASON WHY.

"BUT, MR. SNODKINS, YOU SHOULD GO OUT MORE, — YOU OWE SOMETHING TO SOCIETY."
"YES, THAT 'S JUST IT; I OWE ABOUT SIX DOLLARS TO THOSE CONFOUNDED BREWSTER GERMANS OF LAST YEAR"

(*N. B. He was not even invited, being a Sub-Freshman then.*)

Fig. 5.13 *Harvard Lampoon* 3, no. 1, February 23, 1882. Courtesy Hathitrust. Original from Harvard University. https://hdl.handle.net/2027/hvd.32044107293904?urlappend=%3Bseq=14 (Accessed May 31, 2021)


THE

YALE RECORD

Vol. XVI. New Haven, Conn., May 12, 1888. No. 15

HARRY (collecting "ads."): "Hello! Ned. Have just been down to see Messrs. —— & Co. They refuse to take one of the large spaces on the back."
NED, (observing the magnitude of the check in Harry's new jeans): "Well then, why didn't you offer them one of the vacant ones in front. Say on the right shoulder."

Fig. 5.14 *Yale Record* 16, no. 15, May 12, 1888. Courtesy Hathitrust. Original from Yale University. https://hdl.handle.net/2027/yul.yg15_r_245_v16_i15?urlappend=%3Bseq=1 (Accessed May 31, 2021)

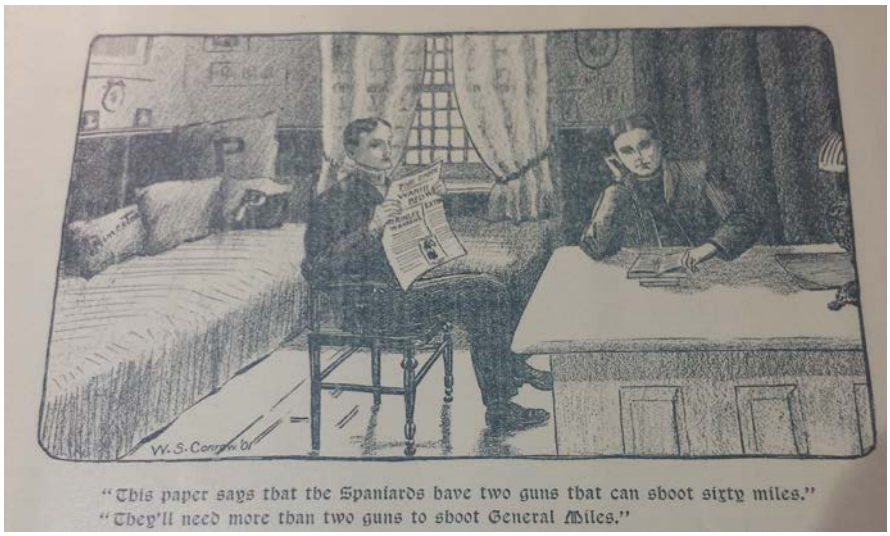

"This paper says that the Spaniards have two guns that can shoot sixty miles."
"They'll need more than two guns to shoot General Miles."

Fig. 5.15
W. S. Conrow.
The Princeton Tiger 9, no. 10 March 31, 1898.
Photograph by the author

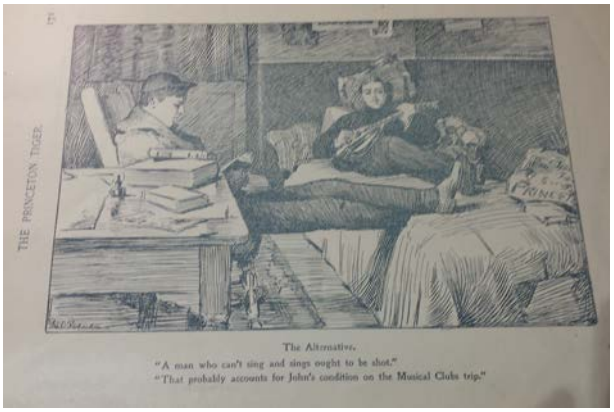


Fig. 5.16 Richardson.
"The Alternative."
The Princeton Tiger 8, no. 12
April 28, 1898.
Photograph by the author



Fig. 5.17 Richardson.
The Princeton Tiger 8, no. 6
January 27, 1898.
Photograph by the author

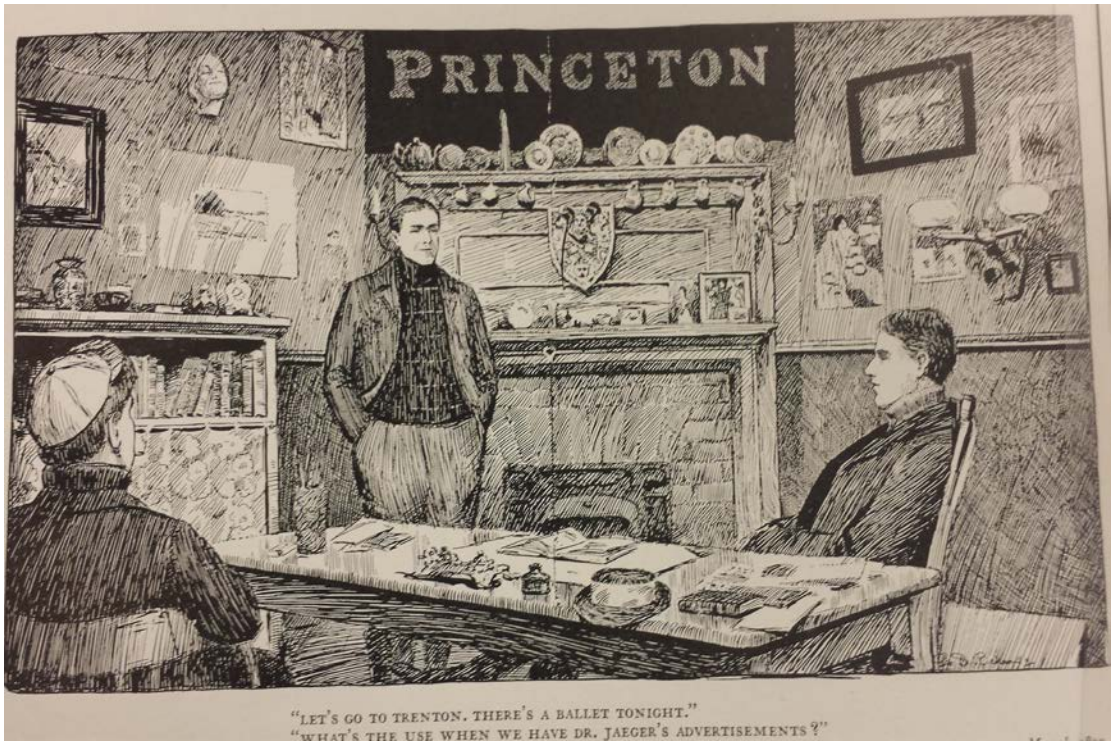


Fig. 5.18 Richardson. *The Princeton Tiger,* March 1899. Photograph by the author.



Fig. 5.19
Harvard Lampoon 39, no. 10, March 10, 1900. Courtesy Hathitrust. Original from Harvard University. https://hdl.handle.net/2027/hvd.32044107293805 (Accessed May 31, 2021)

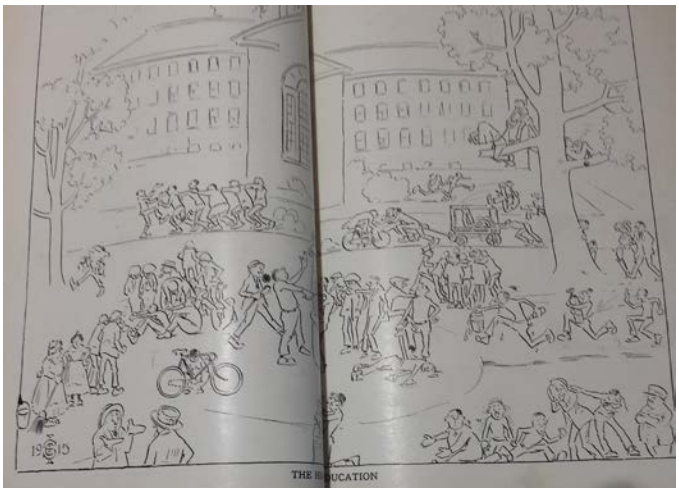


Fig. 5.20 "The Higher Education."
The Princeton Tiger 24, no. 3, October 8, 1913.
Photograph by the author

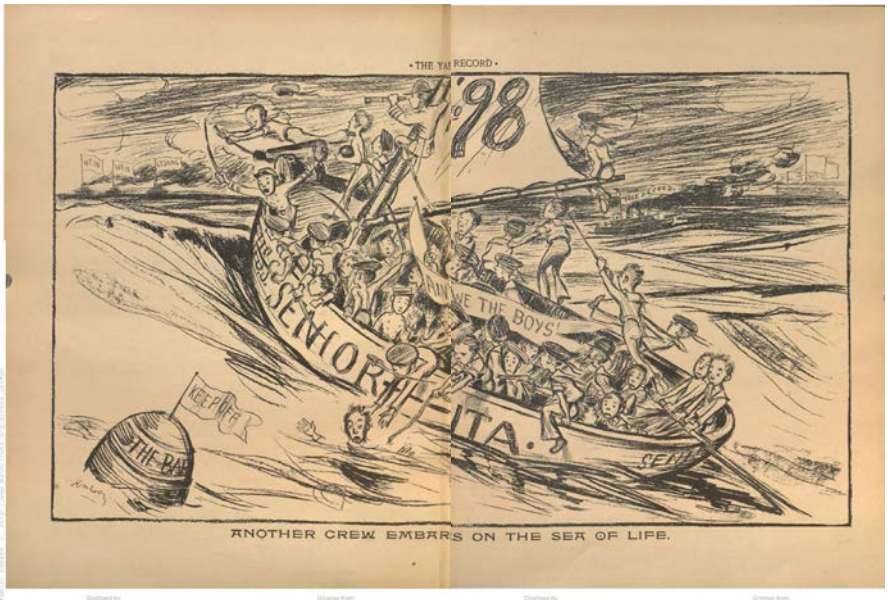
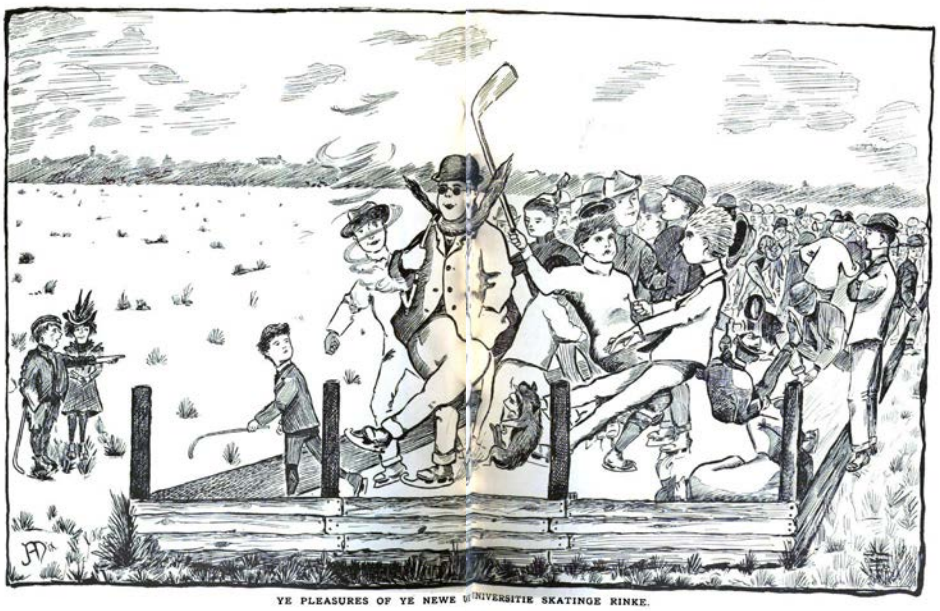


Fig. 5.21 "Another Crew Embarks on the Sea of Life."
Yale Record 26, no. 16, June 20, 1898. Courtesy Hathitrust. Original from Yale University. https://hdl.handle.net/2027/yul.yg15_r_245_v26_i16 (Accessed May 31, 2021)



YE PLEASURES OF YE NEWE UNIVERSITIE SKATINGE RINKE.

Fig. 5.22 "Ye pleasures of ye newe Universitie skating rinke," *Harvard Lampoon* 38, no. 7, January 24, 1900. Courtesy Hathitrust. Original from Harvard University. https://hdl.handle.net/2027/hvd.32044107293805 (Accessed May 31, 2021)

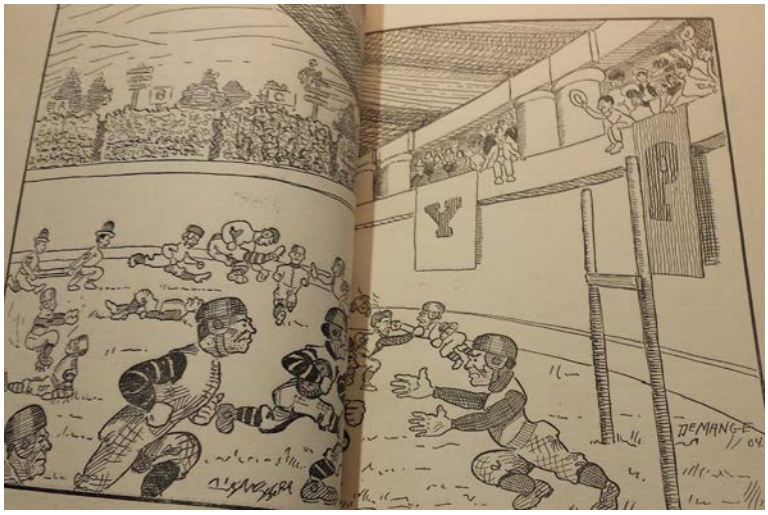
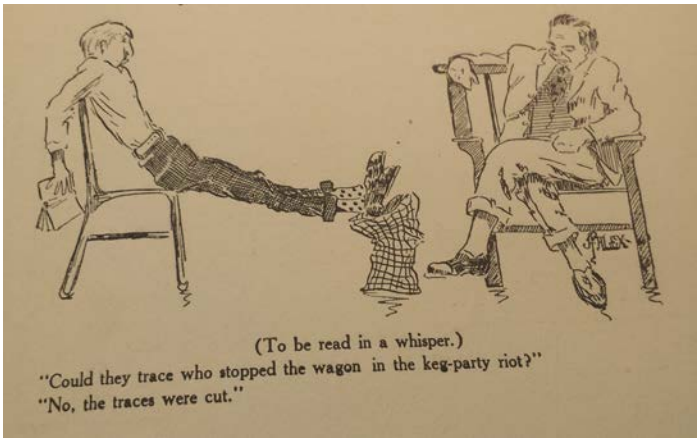


Fig. 5.23 R. C. Demange. *The Princeton Tiger* 13, no. 3, November 1902. Photograph by the author



(To be read in a whisper.)
"Could they trace who stopped the wagon in the keg-party riot?"
"No, the traces were cut."

Fig. 5.24
J. P. Alex.
The Princeton Tiger 18, no. 3, June 1907.
Photograph by the author

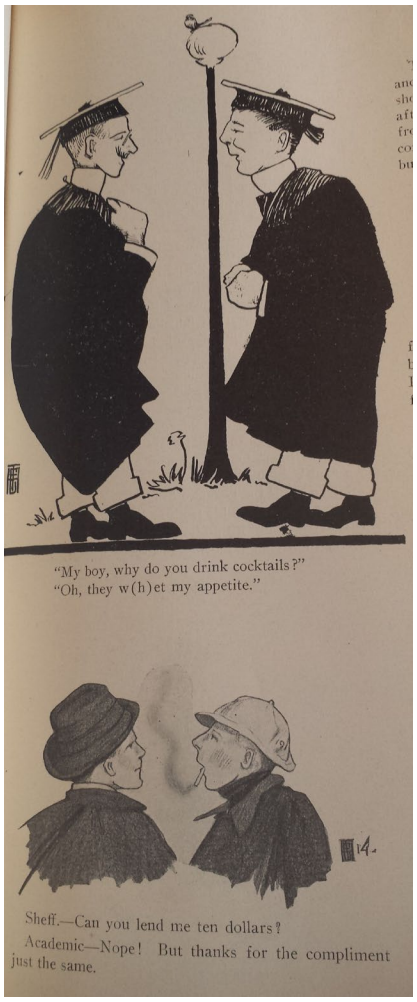


Fig. 5.25 *Yale Record* 40, no. 12, April 20, 1912. Courtesy Hathitrust. Original from Yale University.

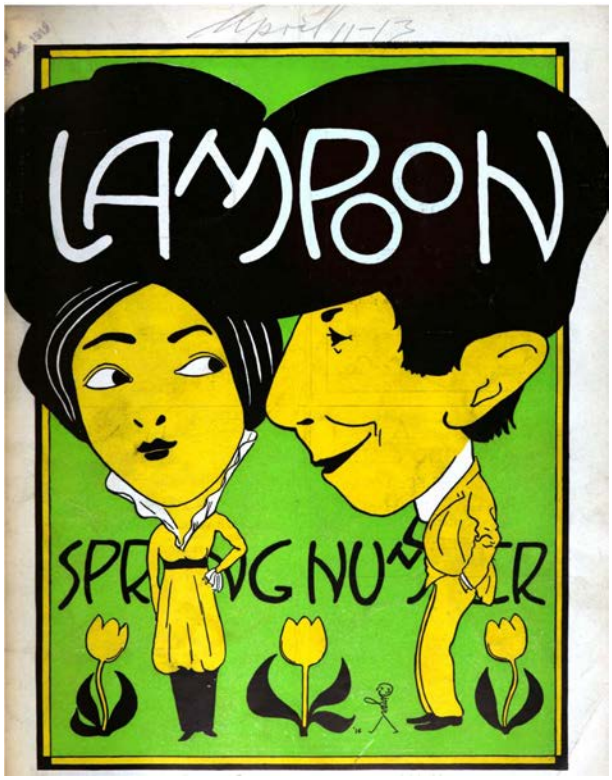


Fig. 5.26 *Harvard Lampoon* April 11, 1913. Courtesy Hathitrust. Original from New York Public Library. https://hdl.handle.net/2027/nyp.33433076008899 (Accessed May 31, 2021)

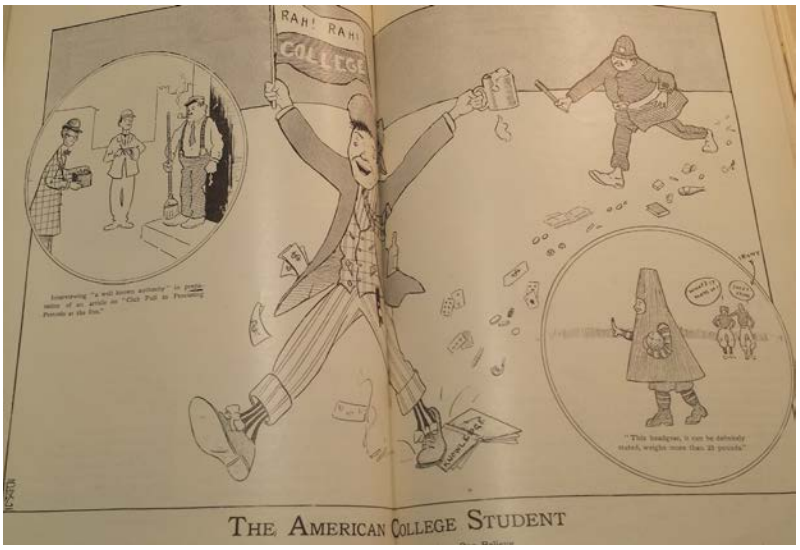


Fig. 5.27 "The American College Student." *The Princeton Tiger* 20, no. 7 January 1910. Photograph by the author



Fig. 5.28 "Watchful Waiting," *Harvard Lampoon* May 12, 1914. Courtesy Hathitrust. Original from New York Public Library. https://hdl.handle.net/2027/nyp.33433076008915 (Accessed May 31, 2021

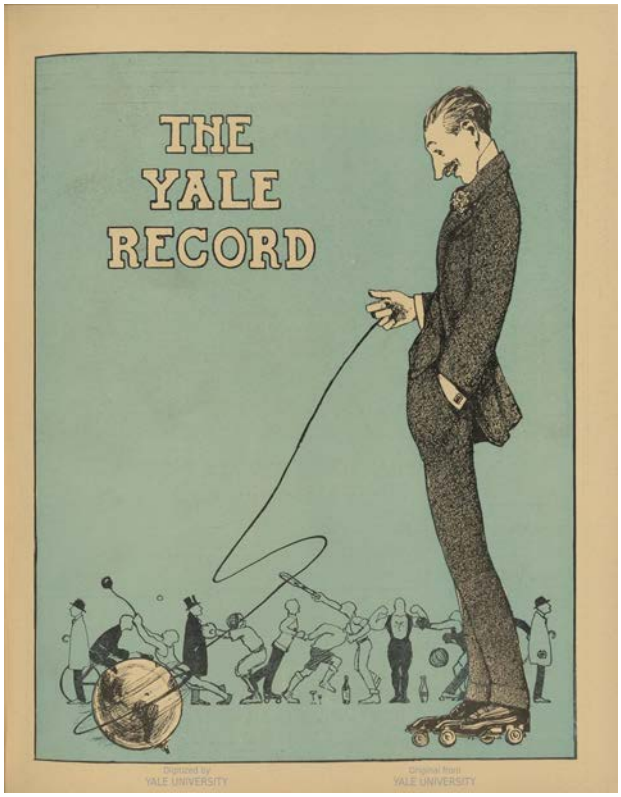


Fig. 5.29 *Yale Record* 40, no. 13 May 4, 1912. Courtesy Hathitrust. Original from Yale University. https://hdl.handle.net/2027/yul.yg15_r_245_v40_i13 (Accessed May 31, 2021)

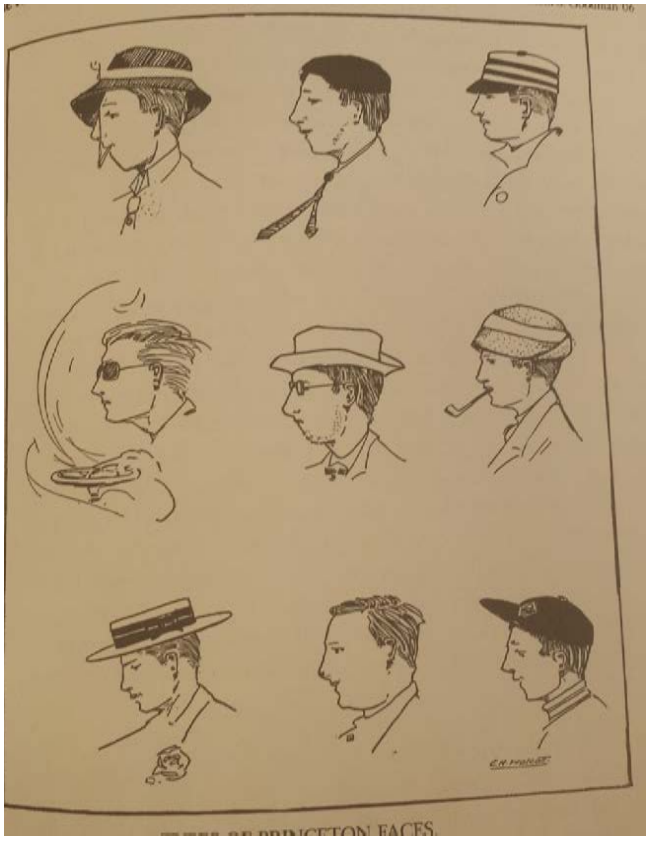


Fig. 5.30 C. H. Walcott. "Types of Princeton Faces." *Princeton Tiger* 14, no. 10 June 1904. Photograph by the author

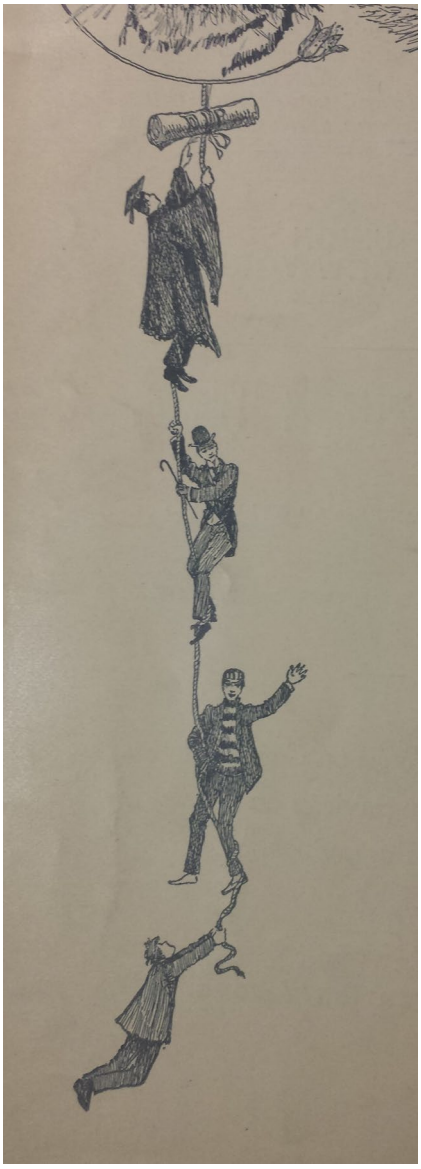


Fig. 5.31 Detail from *Princeton Tiger Magazine* masthead, 1897. Photograph by the author

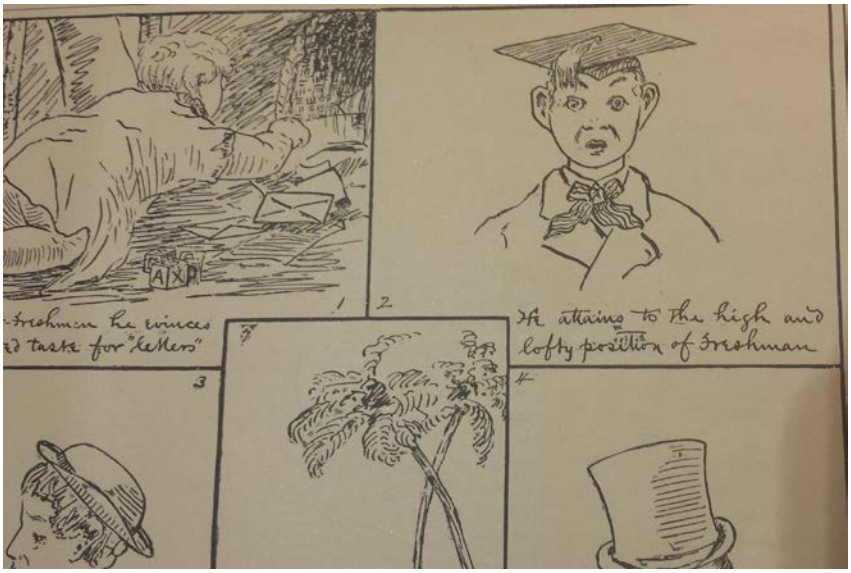


Fig. 5.32 Detail from "The Seven Ages of Man." *Princeton Tiger Magazine* March 29, 1882. Photograph by the author

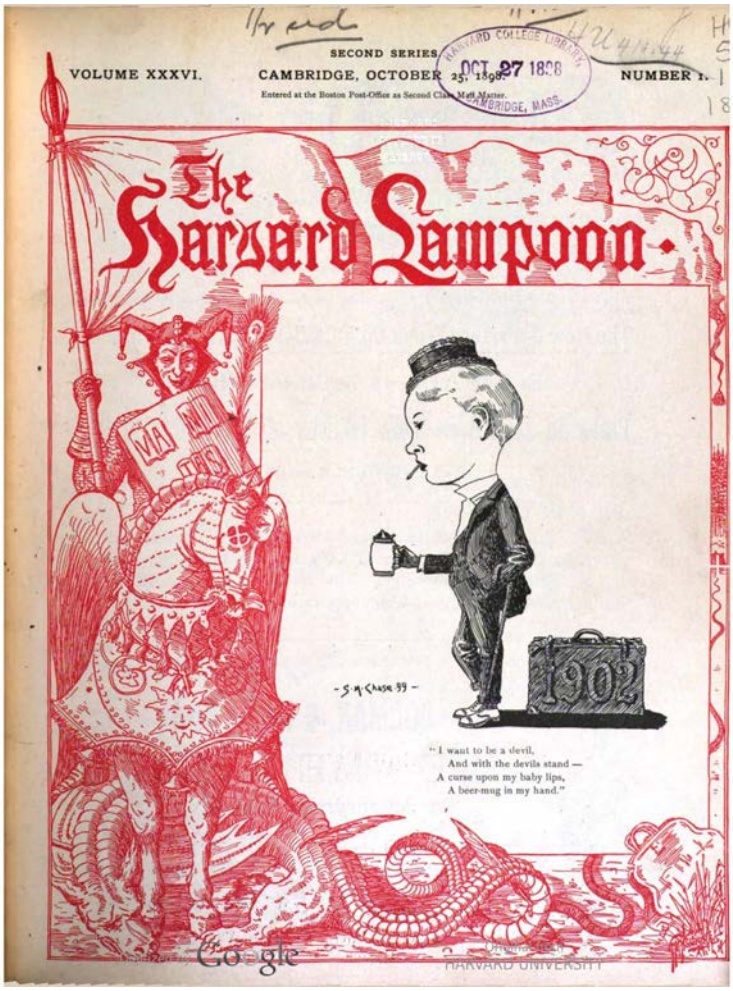


Fig. 5.33 *Harvard Lampoon* 36, no. 1, October 28, 1898. Courtesy Hathitrust. Original from New York Public Library. https://hdl.handle.net/2027/nyp.33433076009210 (Accessed May 31, 2021)

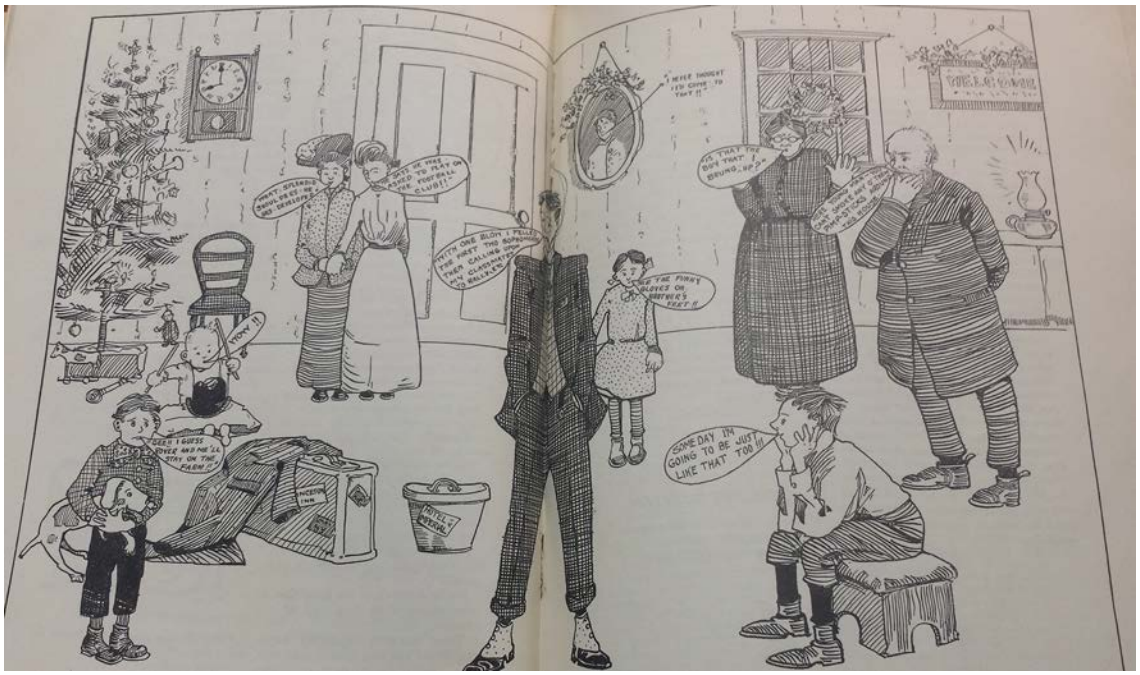


Fig. 5.34 "The First Vacation." *Princeton Tiger Magazine* 15, 1904.
Photograph by the author

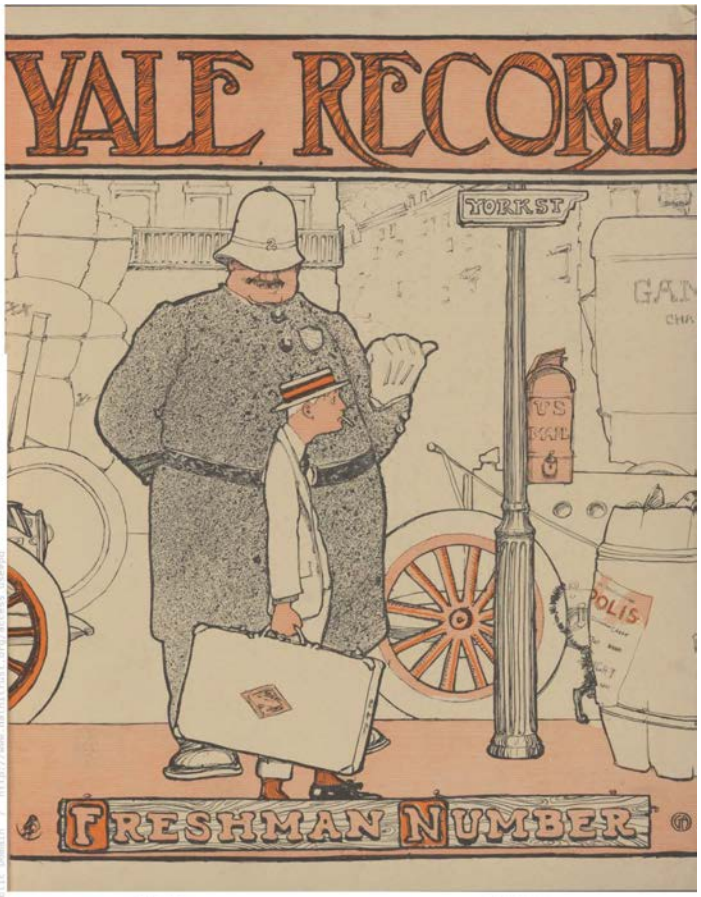


Fig.5.35 *Yale Record* 40, no. 1, October 21, 1911.
Courtesy Hathitrust.
Original from Yale University.
https://hdl.handle.net/2027/yul.yg15_r_245_v40_i01
(Accessed May 31, 2021)

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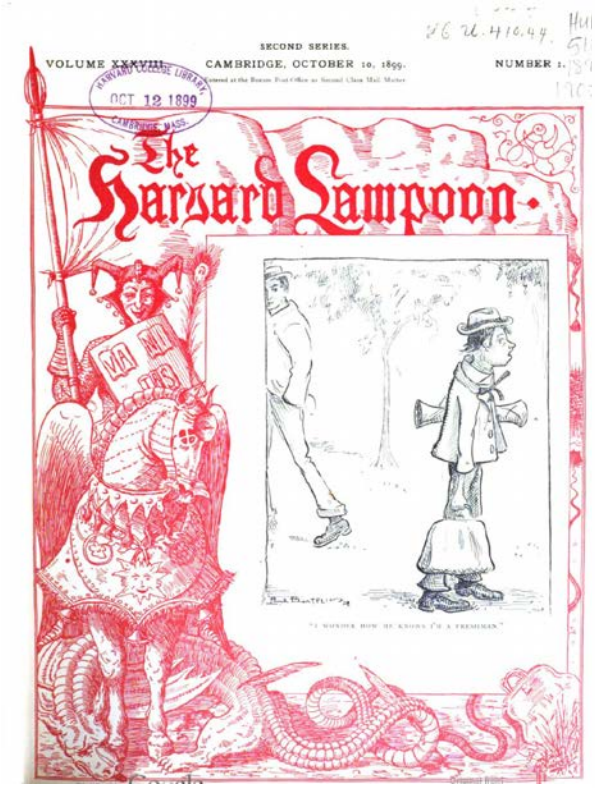


Fig. 5.36 *Harvard Lampoon* 38, no. 1, October 10, 1899. Courtesy Hathitrust. Original from Harvard University. https://hdl.handle.net/2027/hvd.32044107293805 (Accessed May 31, 2021)

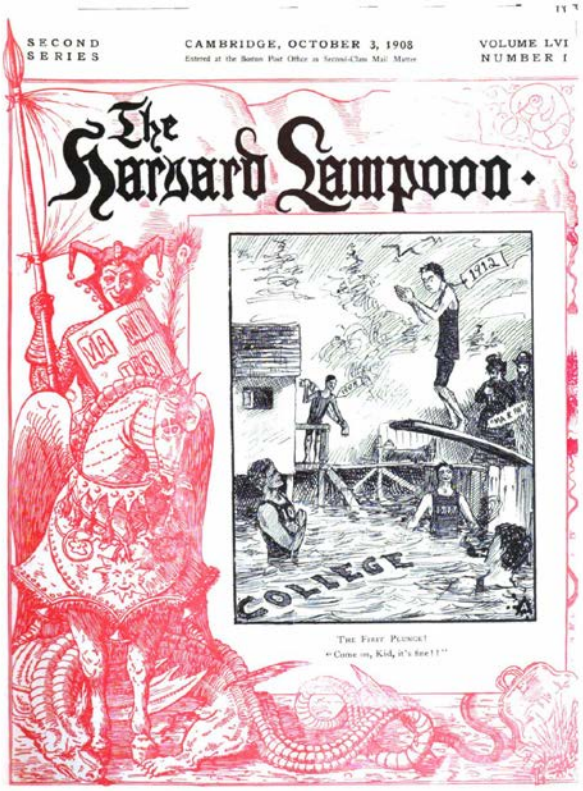


Fig. 5.37 *Harvard Lampoon* 56, no. 1, October 3, 1908. Courtesy Hathitrust. Original from Harvard University. https://hdl.handle.net/2027/hvd.32044107293896 (Accessed May 31, 2021)

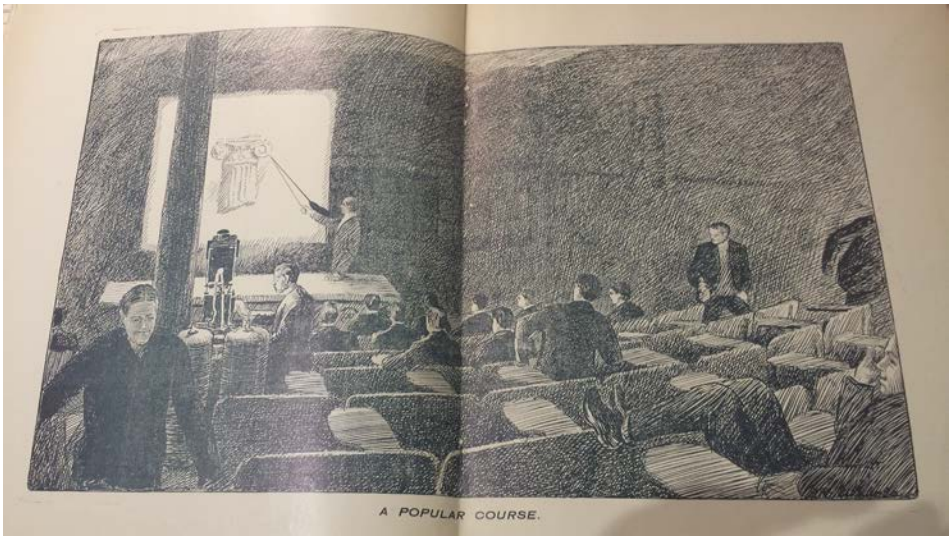


Fig. 5.38 "A Popular Class." *The Princeton Tiger 8*, no. 8, March 3, 1898. Photograph by the author



Fig. 5.39 "Grinder and Sporter Return from Vacation," *Harvard Lampoon 28*, no. 5, January 21, 1895. Courtesy Hathitrust. Original from Harvard University. https://hdl.handle.net/2027/hvd.32044107293755 (Accessed May 31, 2021)

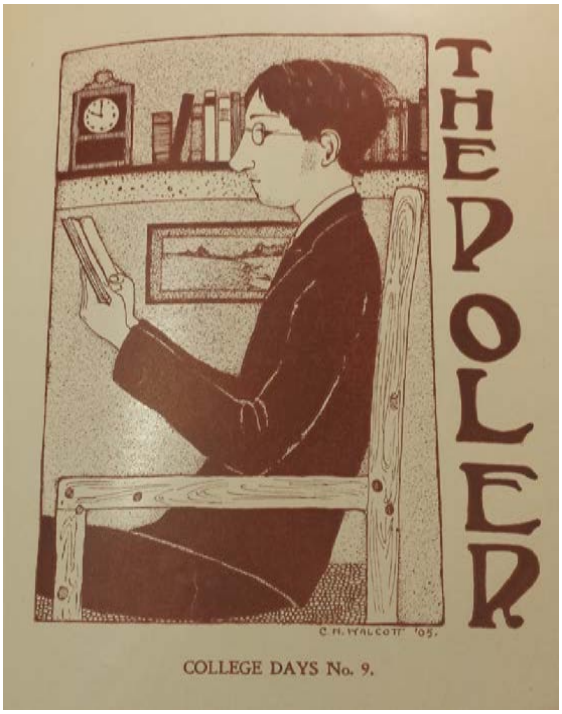


Fig. 5.40
C. H. Walcott. "The Poler." *The Princeton Tiger* 12, no. 5, January 1902. Photograph by the author

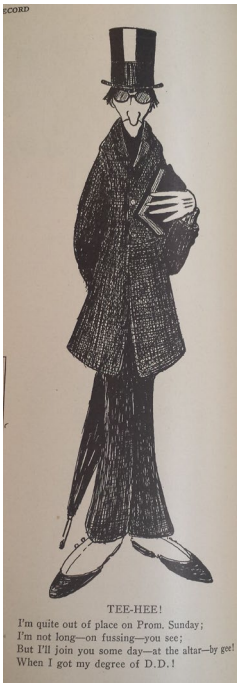


Fig. 5.41
Yale Record 40, no. 6, January 3, 1912. Courtesy Hathitrust. Original from Yale University. https://hdl.handle.net/2027/yul.yg15_r_245_v40_i06 (Accessed May 31, 2021)



Fig. 5.42 *Harvard Lampoon 28*, no. 4, December 18, 1894. Courtesy Hathitrust. Original from Harvard University. https://hdl.handle.net/2027/hvd.32044107293755 (Accessed May 31, 2021)

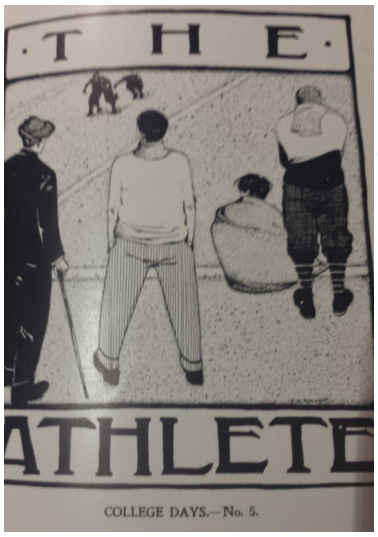


Fig. 5.43
C. H. Walcott, "The Athlete," *Princeton Tiger* 12, 1901.
Photograph by the author



Fig. 5.44 *Harvard Lampoon 28*, no. 10, June 28, 1895. Courtesy Hathitrust. Original from Harvard University. https://hdl.handle.net/2027/hvd.32044107293755 (Accessed May 31, 2021)



Fig. 5.45
"The Crossroads."
Princeton Tiger 15, no. 10, June 1905.
Photograph by the author

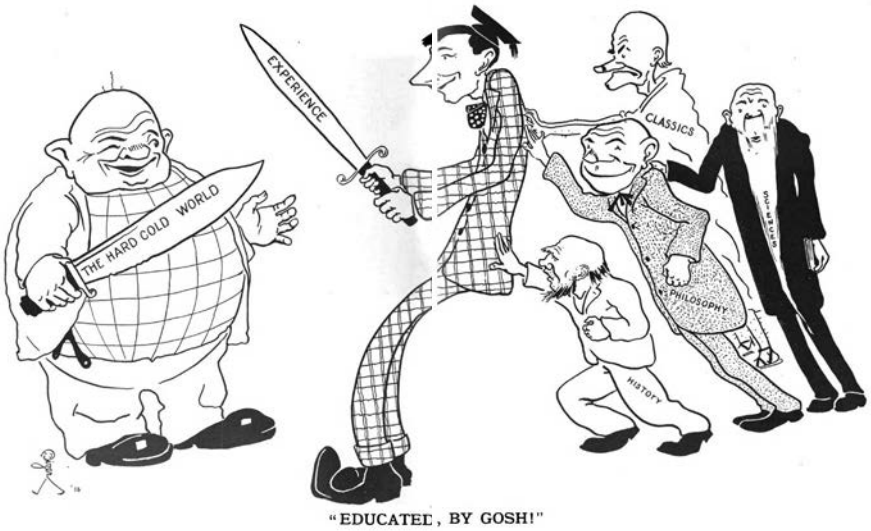


Fig. 5.46
"Educated, by Gosh!,"
Harvard Lampoon, 67, no. 10, June 15, 1914.
Courtesy Hathitrust. Original from Harvard University.
https://hdl.handle.net/2027/nyp.33433076008915
(Accessed May 31, 2021)

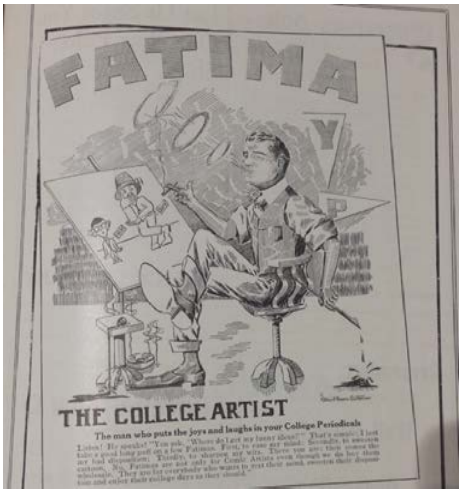


Fig. 5.47 Fatima cigarette ad. appeared in *The Princeton Tiger* 25, no. 6 December 1914.
Photograph by the author

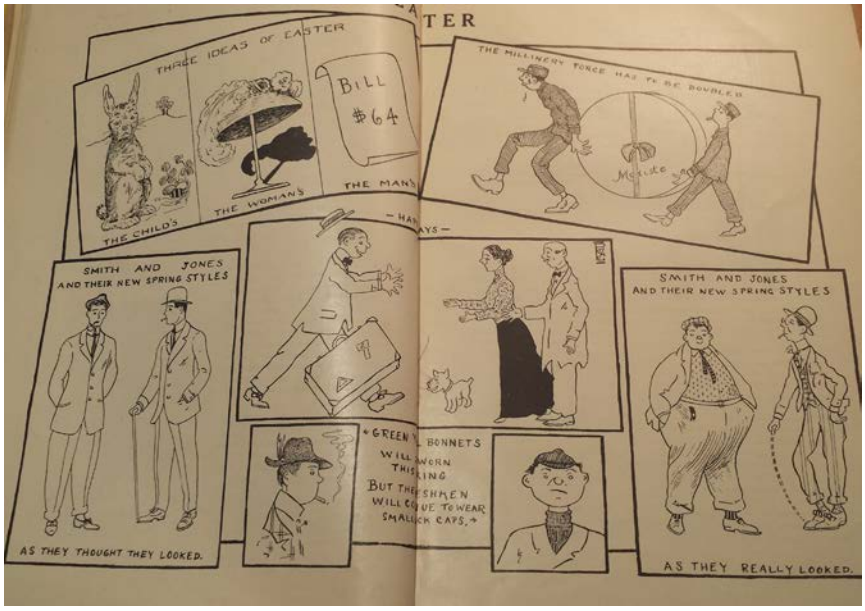


Fig. 5.48 *The Princeton Tiger* 20, no. 1 April 1909. Photograph by the author

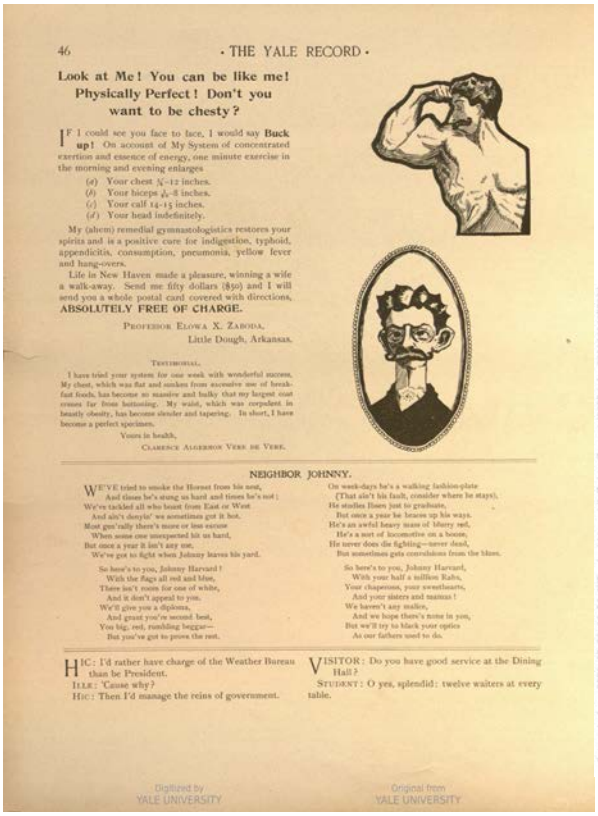


Fig. 5.49 Fake Swoboda Advertisement, *Yale Record*, 31, no. 4, September 22, 1902. Courtesy Hathitrust. Original from Yale University. https://hdl.handle.net/2027/yul.yg15_r_245_v31_i04 (Accessed May 31, 2021)



Fig. 5.50 Swoboda Advertisement, *Pearson's Magazine* 8, no. 4, October 1902. Courtesy Hathitrust. Original from Princeton University. https://hdl.handle.net/2027/njp.32101064077934. (Accessed May 31, 2021)

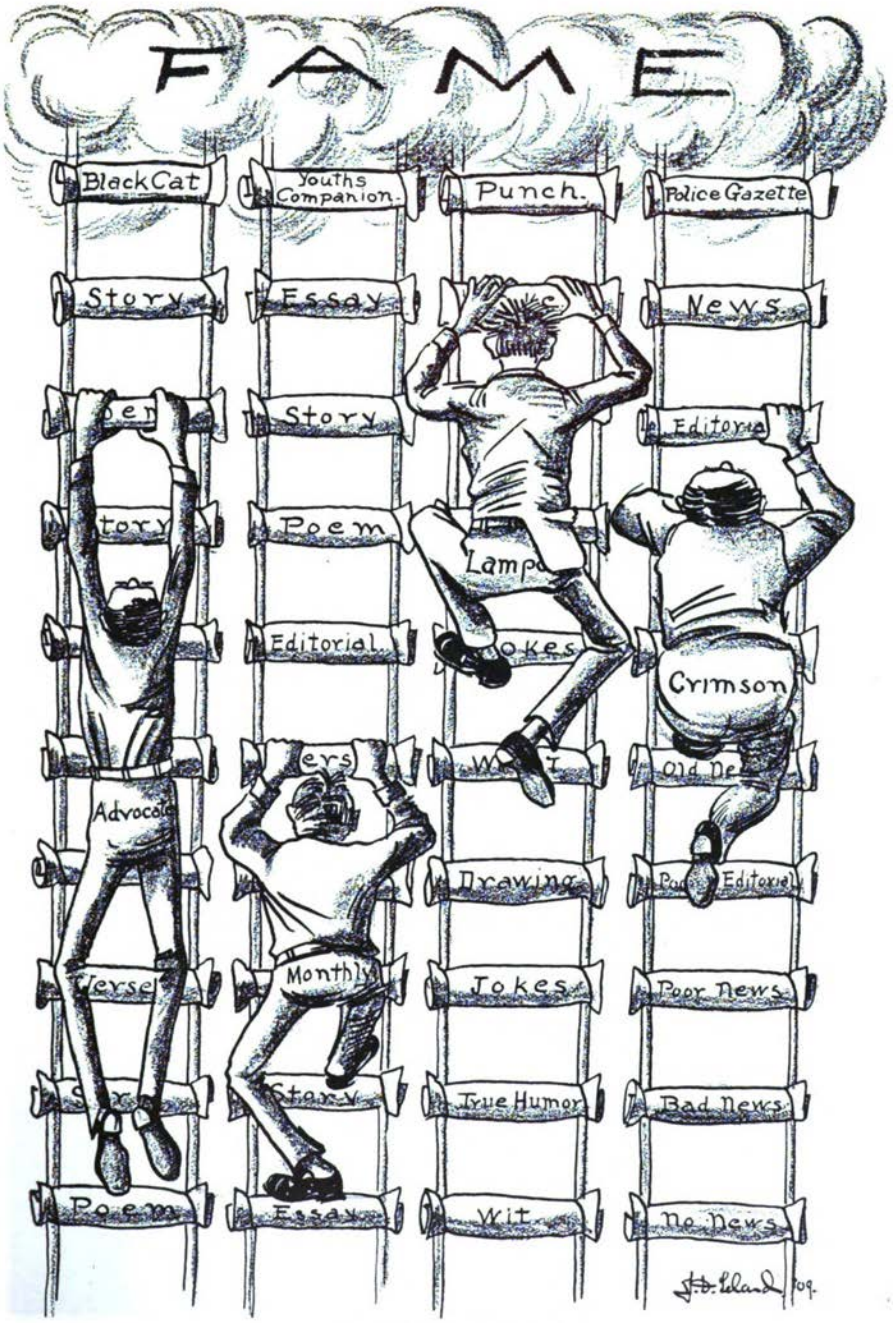


Fig. 5.51 Joseph D. Leland. "The Paper Chase." *Harvard Lampoon* 56, no. 10, February 24, 1909. Courtesy Hathitrust. Original from Harvard University. https://hdl.handle.net/2027/hvd.32044107293896 (Accessed May 31, 2021)

Chapter 6

NORMAN ROCKWELL: CARTOONIST AND CULTURAL CRITIC

Norman Rockwell's cover for the October 8, 1938 *Saturday Evening Post*, "Artist in Front of a Blank Canvas" presents something that is difficult to imagine: Norman Rockwell struggling for a cover idea. During the 20th century, Rockwell's images coursed profusely through America's mainstream media, conjuring the mass-market facility of a factory-line despite his old-world adherence to meticulous oil painting. The narratives he concocted for the *Saturday Evening Post* have similar qualities of fluidity and efficiency. 100 years later, his images often read so transparently that in retrospect Rockwell's solutions can appear obvious and inevitable. The attenuated physique he adopted for his self-portrait, for instance, resonates with his canon of empathetic American types, the humbling "aw, shucks-ism" art historian Karal Ann Marling so brilliantly coined to describe Rockwell's sense of deference.[1] However, in its historical context, Rockwell's physique was not deferential. Its adolescent characteristics signified irreparable arrested development for mid-40's manhood. The physique also channeled the cartooned self-portraits of college humorists, who proudly paraded in cartoon forms as gawky golems to broadcast their refusal to accord to polite masculine models, responsible editorship, and societal norms.

This chapter examines Norman Rockwell's vision of white middle-class-hood and the radical nature of his intervention into debates about manliness. "Radical" by definition is

[1] Karal Ann Marling, Norman Rockwell (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1997), 101.

antithetical to pejorative adjective "Rockwellian."[2] Art historians who work to rescue American realist painters from modernist dismissals continue to invoke Norman Rockwell as the gold standard of crowd-pleasing, uncritical production. However, like his predecessor R. F. Outcault, Rockwell managed to surreptitiously pipe counter-cultural visions into the mainstream market while also winning mass popularity. He was a brilliant synthesizer of contradictory American identities. His unique style reshuffled entrenched visual genres, types, and techniques, rendering glaring contradictions and impossibilities palatable. Rather than butter-churning out glib depictions of Americana, Rockwell's images combined and suspended deep-seated conflicts of white middle-class identity.

Norman Rockwell achieved this largely by merging the hyperbolic traditions of cartooning with academic, conservative painting. This lent his images a tangible modern vitality. In line with cartooning traditions, Rockwell often deployed the adolescent physique into his images. Rockwell thereby uploaded the turbulent linguistics of cartooning and its concomitant anxieties about adolescent development into the high-stakes vessel of magazine illustration, an art form which, in Rockwell's hands, masqueraded as a trompe l'oeil vision of American life. Case in point, Rockwell never explained the aberrant lankiness in this head-scratching self-portrait, but instead collided caricature and reality in his explanation: "This is not a caricature of myself; I really look like this."[3]

[2] Laurie Norton Moffatt defines "Rockwellian" as evoking "an image of an idyllic America of a simpler era, though it is also used cynically to convey a sense of hopeless naivete." "Director's Foreword" in *American Chronicles: The Art of Norman Rockwell* (Stockbridge: Norman Rockwell Museum, 2007), 10.
[3] Quoted in Linda Szekely Pero, *American Chronicles: The Art of Norman Rockwell* (Stockbridge: Norman Rockwell Museum, 2007), 93.

Rockwell's relationship with cartooning is not widely explored within his scholarship, nor much acknowledged by Rockwell himself.[4] However, connections to cartooning appear throughout Rockwell's biography. Rockwell and the American newspaper comic strip were born simultaneously in 1890's New York. In recounting his early childhood, Rockwell mentioned having to shift his ritual of reading the "funny papers" to Mondays because of his duties as a choir boy.[5] As an 18 year old aggressively seeking illustration jobs, Rockwell's early business card boasted 13 artistic trades, of which "cartoonist" comes 4th, before "magazine covers."[6] On rare occasions he referenced comic-strips directly, such as when he referred to his third *Saturday Evening Post* cover as portraying a "Foxy Grandpa" type.[7]

Rockwell's verbal descriptions of his own urban upbringing invoke a vision of R. F. Outcault's "Hogan's Alley", full of bawdiness and incident-filled narratives. In audio recordings he made in preparation for his autobiography, Rockwell recounted tenement tales of playing in vacant lots with local boys, tormenting the local police, playing games like "prisoner's base and, you know, the kind of games you play in the city."[8] Channeling the strip artist's delight with the violence of Independence Day, Rockwell's autobiographical account even included a detailed

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[4] Deborah Solomon acknowledges the impact comic strips must have had on Norman Rockwell: "He recognized that comic strips were not just a series of laugh-out-loud jokes; they represented a morally coherent universe." *American Mirror: The Life and Art of Norman Rockwell* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2013), 66. An article in the *Norman Rockwell Memory Album* notes that Rockwell "owes a great deal to the cartoon-type covers of the early magazines – the *Post*, *Life* (when it was a humor magazine), and *Judge*. They were, in effect, visual one-liners." *Norman Rockwell Memory Album* or *The Saturday Evening Post Album* 1, no. 1 (1979), 21.

[5] Norman Rockwell, unpublished interview with Thomas Rockwell, 1959, Compact Disc 1 track 2, Archives of the Norman Rockwell Museum, Stockbridge, MA.

[6] Solomon, *American Mirror*, 51.

[7] Norman Rockwell, *Norman Rockwell: My Adventures as an Illustrator* (Harry N. Abrams, 1988), 35.

[8] Norman Rockwell, unpublished interview, Compact Disc 2, Archives of the Norman Rockwell Museum, Stockbridge, MA.

July 4th recollection of a local boy shooting a blank cartridge pistol into his mouth. Although he references the "sordidness, the unpleasantness and the uncleanliness of the city," Rockwell's autobiographical stories followed the familiar construction of urban comradery and anarchical freedom that proliferated in late 19th century's journalistic slum tours and burgeoning Sunday comics strips.

Most poignant is Norman Rockwell's close relationship with cartoonist and early studio-mate, Victor Clyde Forsythe. Clyde Forsythe was already successfully publishing strips in the *New York World* and *New York Journal* when Rockwell began soliciting him for studio critiques in 1914.[9] As studio-mates, Forsythe added word balloons to Rockwell's charcoal sketches as practical jokes.[10] In *My Adventures as an Illustrator*, Rockwell credits Forsythe not only for pushing him past his insecurities to submit to the *Post* but also for directing him to focus on the images of boyhood that had successfully propelled him to the position of art editor of *Boy's Life Magazine*.[11]

Rockwell's personal account of Forsythe's cartooning production was not flattering and denied any cross-influence. He blamed his studio-mate's overtly cartoony style for preventing Forsythe from transitioning to the upscale position of *Post* cover artist. Despite his dependency on Forsythe's feedback, Rockwell described the process of reviewing Forsythe's strips as "agony" because he did not always find Forsythe's strips funny and was perturbed that ". . . It

[9] Norman Rockwell, *My Adventures*, 104.
[10] Norman Rockwell, unpublished interview, Compact Disc 2, Archives of the Norman Rockwell Museum, Stockbridge, MA.
[11] Rockwell, *My Adventures*, 107.

didn't take him more than an hour or an hour and a half at the most to make a drawing."[12] Rockwell blamed Forsythe for ruining his own appreciation of comic strips, claiming "I haven't been able to look at one with any pleasure since."[13] Yet Rockwell mined prolifically from contemporary cartoons for his figures, showing deep familiarity both with their trade techniques and their ability to inset contradictory social ideas into an image.

AMERICAN MASCULINITY IN *AFLOAT AND ASHORE*

Rockwell's own mastery over the bawdy newspaper strip style cartooning stands out in an atypically raw series of 1918 cartoons penned for the Charleston Navy Yard's journal *Afloat and Ashore* during his very brief enlistment. The 23 year old had launched his national reputation two years prior as a *Saturday Evening Post* cover artist. Having joined in the navy only three months before World War I concluded, Rockwell never left American soil for duty.[14] With a severely underweight physique, admittance to any part of the service was a challenge. The arrival of a "famous artist" was eagerly announced in *Afloat and Ashore'*s September 11, 1918 edition. His duties as the art editor for the camp newspaper only occupied two days a week. Rockwell was permitted to continue producing for the *Saturday Evening Post*, *Literary Digest*, and other publications throughout his deployment.[15]

[12] Ibid., 105.
[13] Idem.
[14] Rockwell was originally admitted as a "Landsman Quartermaster Painter and Varnisher" and scheduled to deploy to Ireland. Solomon, *American Mirror*, 86.
[15] Rockwell, *My Adventures*, 121.

However, Rockwell's inaugural cover image on October 8, 1918 looked nothing like his tightly composed and academically painted *Saturday Evening Post* fare. Instead, his *Afloat and Ashore* cover was a montage of boisterous, mocking cartoons titled "A Flying Stevedore's Furlough." Using comic-strip style simplifications and exaggerations, the cartoon parodied the navyman's pretensions, naiveté, and weakness for effeminate domestic pleasures upon return home. The cartoons fell in line with *Afloat and Ashore*'s other sparse illustrations, which consisted mostly of clumsy light-hearted cartoons poking fun at naval life. However, Rockwell's *Afloat and Ashore* cartoon bore even more striking similarities to the self-deprecating humor of college humor magazines. They were similar in style, playing liberally with anatomy and slapstick movements. They were even more strikingly similar in content, mocking the eccentricities and ordeals of the navy camp's developing men, many of whom had actually left college mid-studies to enlist.[16]

Afloat and Ashore recalled the college humor magazines in many ways. With no national syndication, the amateur magazine primarily addressed a cloistered audience of young male enlistees ranging between 16 and 35 years of age.[17] As with college humor magazines, many of *Afloat and Ashore's* readers fell within the volatile period of adolescence. As with the college campus, the isolated naval yard was regarded as an American forge for hardening boys into men. Published with the header "A Newspaper for Men in the Service and Their Home Folk," *Afloat and Ashore* also understood it delivered a picture of encampment life to family

[16] See "The Colleges Go to War" in David Levine, *The American College and the Culture of Aspiration 1915-1940* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1986), 23-44.
[17] By Fall of 1918, the minimum drafting age had dropped from 21 to 18 and the legal cut-off for voluntary enlistment was 16.

members, often directly soliciting their support through war bonds. Like college humor magazines, *Afloat and Ashore's* self-deprecating humor was palatable to outside readers. Unlike college humor magazines, however, *Afloat and Ashore* was not primarily a comedic outlet. Comics inserted amiable levity amongst articles, often solicited or reprinted from outside contributors, that seriously analyzed subjects such as physical development, character building, and local and national news. Lodged within the general purpose naval magazine, Rockwell's college humor-style shenanigans could pack an unsuspecting critical edge.

The radically warping anatomy in his cartoon "Rare Birds" exhibits Rockwell's ability to play with strong, abstract shapes to easily categorize his comedic jabs.[18] This cartoon crafted a grotesque coterie of American Anglo-Saxon masculine types found within the naval camp. Here Rockwell's lollipop headed sissy boy, long-faced hayseed, trapezoidal skulled militant recirculated long-established visual stereotypes. Other caricatures played upon more recently established parodies of upper-class social pariahs. "U. R. Noebodie" evoked over-civilized and over-privileged ineptitude whereas "I. Knoitaul", a gawky adolescent with acne and an adam's apple, echoed the pathetic bravado of college lowerclassmen. Although it seems out of character, Rockwell's mastery over the college humor genre should not be surprising. Rockwell's professional success was due to his chameleon-like ability to adapt his style to both his client's various commercial goals and a captivated audience's desires.

This tried-and-true comparative format shows Rockwell was not only versed in the caricature-driven parodies of popular humor magazines but also with how they were recycled

[18] *Afloat and Ashore*, October 16, 1918.

by college humorists. Traditionally based on racial difference and presented to the white urban flaneur, such cartoons drew from a narrow menu of simplified features and played on the reader's ability to recognize ethnic shorthand. In the hands of college cartoonists such as C. H. Walcott, this format narrowed its sample to white Anglo-Saxon types, exploring white American masculinity as a farcical flop. Rockwell's lineup similarly derided the products of America's masculine training and its investment in Anglo-Saxon superiority. On the college campus, such cartoons destabilized the college's promise to cull and nurture the nation's best and brightest. As for Rockwell's "Rare Birds", the title itself suggested the majority of navymen fell within more acceptable categories of masculinity. Here derision has the potential to be an admonitory and rectifying force. Rebecca Zurier's research demonstrates how such humor could serve as a surreptitious bonding mechanism by joining readers in their ability to recognize and decode the misfit types.[19] The evocative subtitles of "Rare Birds" spoke directly to the naval reader, prompting him to recall annoying speech patterns and properly codify social oddities.

Despite Rockwell's reputation for clumsy boys and jolly geriatrics, the navy capitalized on Rockwell's talents by syphoning his energy into crafting American war heroes. Rockwell was quickly commissioned to paint portraits of naval officers.[20] He also composed elegant illustrations in *Afloat and Ashore* soliciting war bonds. For these Rockwell adopted a tightly rendered illustrative style reminiscent of glossy publications. In Rockwell's "His Gift to Her," a white-haired woman gazed blissfully at a portrait of her deployed grandson as she raises a

[19] Rebecca Zurier, *Picturing the City: Urban Vision and the Ashcan School* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2006), 205-207.
[20] Rockwell, *My Adventures*, 121.

liberty bond against her heart.[21] A diagonal rift in the composition allowed the distant sailor to transcend space and savor the uplifting effects of his gift. Deep, extensive shadows were executed with laborious cross-hatching. The imagery played upon assuaging chords of American family values and a peaceful homefront.

Rockwell's campaigns also sold faith in national victory by picturing effortless American masculinity. Rockwell's men echoed an archetype that had already been perfected by *Saturday Evening Post* illustrator J.C. Leyendecker. In May 1917, Leyendecker placed his glossy college athletes into uniform and continued to deploy this character throughout America's participation in the war. Leyendecker's soldier could throw a grenade with the same precision and solemn confidence as the American football hero. His classical strength, smooth-featured fierceness, and youthful optimism embodied not only American masculinity but also a national perception of a nation newly matured. Rockwell's "All for one – one for all" leveraged this same angular masculinity to urge donations to United War Work.[22] Here four men with even, strong physiques reached from across the compass points of the page to reflect national solidarity.

In contrast to his donation campaigns, Rockwell's cartoons directly thwarted countrywide reassurance by actively toying with the navy man's physiognomy. The sequential cartoon "Mail Line" tracked the physical and moral degradation of a seaman as he waited 2 hours for a letter that never arrives.[23] As the seaman relaxes from "fine form" to "begins to

[21] *Afloat and Ashore*, October 16, 1918.
[22] *Afloat and Ashore*, November 13, 1918.
[23] *Afloat and Ashore*, November 11, 1918.

weaken" and "legs begin to give way", the cartoon figure recalled the binary comparison Rockwell created for a morale boosting, highly realistic illustration "Is this you?" Also appearing in *Afloat and Ashore*, Rockwell's admonishing "Is this you?" contrasted a sulking, slouched navy man, underwritten with "Don't dream of Peace", to an active and resolved fighter, underwritten with "Work and fight for it!"[24] Rockwell's "Mail Line" seaman tugged on this simple binary by continually oscillating between the models of fatigue and resolve. In the cartoon, military deportment became an affected performance (such as when the seam "must jump to salute officer") rather than a mental state.

Like "Rare Birds", "Mail Line" borrowed an established comic strip trope. Victorian obsessions with the analysis of movement fed into the sequential slapstick strip, a popular cartoon form at the end of the 19th century. Typically, these strips explored an escalating crescendo of chaos often instigated by a disruptive outside force, visualizing what Benjamin Singer describes as the shocks and jolts of modern life.[25] Rockwell's "Mail Line" veered from this model by avoiding a predictable escalation and opting for a pulsing, wavering model of fatigue. Internal worry and sentimental false hope replaced the outside destructive force. The city-bred nervous disorders that military life was supposed to quickly cure continued to fester. The manly physique promised by army life, and apparent in the initial broad-chested "fine form" figure, evaporated as the character slumped into a series of rubbery bends. By the end of the cartoon, the character's sunken chest, lanky limbs, and giant ears recalled the uneven gawkiness of youthful adolescence.

[24] *Afloat and Ashore*, October 30, 1918.
[25] See Ben Singer's "Sensationalism and Urban Modernity" in *Melodrama and Modernity: Early Sensational Cinema and its Context* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 59-99.

In younger juveniles, a lanky, pliable anatomy continued to symbolize American liberty at its most jubilant and irreverent. Indeed, Rockwell's preference to depict seamen as scrawny rubber-jointed youths echoed the standard depiction of immigrant juveniles. Like college humorists, Rockwell imported the antics of immigrant cartoon characters into his adolescent enlistees and thereby channeled their inextinguishable good humor and resilience. Yet political analysts and social commentators had loaded adolescence as a heavy and fraught political metaphor. Essays and editorials frequently portrayed the country's rapidly changing social climate in terms of the "storm and stress" of a national adolescence.[26] By World War I, adolescent bodies that were attenuated or malformed presented troubling harbingers of America's future. Only a smooth transition into masculine adulthood, however uncharacteristic of adolescence itself, provided reassurance of a successful national maturity.[27] This guarantee rested on the physically strong, psychologically resolute Anglo-Saxon leadership.

Many of the articles in *Afloat and Ashore* followed this prerogative. A dedicated "Sports" section regularly analyzed how sports training conditioned physical development and prepared men for combat. On August 7, 1918, an article about the importance of athletics described how the naval athletic director, aware that he needed to "prepare boys coming from farms, schools, and offices properly," sought athletics as a "finishing process" to make them "clean of mind, keen of eye, and strong of body." Yet many of Rockwell's *Afloat and Ashore* cartoons antagonized these claims with pinpoint accuracy. Rockwell's cartoon cover

[26] Kent Baxter, *The Modern Age: Turn-of-the-Century American Culture and the Invention of Adolescence* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2008), 19-20.
[27] Ibid., 52.

"Detention Days" hyperbolized the scale of the athletic director's challenge.[28] The image showed incumbent seamen, one huge and one pygmy, in ill-fitting uniforms. Rockwell's cartoon tribute to "Messcooks" further exaggerated anatomical deficiencies specific to the adolescent body.[29] With a projecting Adam's apple, receding chin, and diminishing hairline, Rockwell's messcook ("the least loved and hardest worked men in the camp") is the visual antonym of J. C. Leyendecker's granite-chiseled soldiers.

In comic strips and even in Rockwell's own "Rare Birds," grotesque caricature often helped separate the subject of derision from the reader. Rockwell instead intentionally collapsed the naval reader with the cartoon. Rockwell's October 9 cover "Flying Stevedore's Furlough" confronted the reader with a mirror image of "how you will look" upon visiting home. Far from the heroic physique, the image highlighted boyish hesitancy through the pigeon-toed feet, lanky physique, and disturbingly elongated giraffe-like neck. The cartoon's rebellious and undercutting potential was amplified by the fact it appeared two weeks after an extensive article claiming to diagnose America's national character and codify the "American fighting face."[30] According to the "fighting face" article, the archetypal face presented "a prominent brow, with width between the eyes and width between the outer curve of each eye," which embodied the fighter's keen mental vision and well-developed "organ of order." With an air of scientific accuracy, the article assembled the archetypal fighting face with composite photography pulled from four types of American fighters: the Marine, the Aviator,

[28] *Afloat and Ashore*, October 30, 1918.
[29] *Afloat and Ashore*, November 13, 1918.
[30] "The American fighting face – psychological study of composite picture of four types of American fighters shows why they'll oust the Hun," *Afloat and Ashore*, September 25, 1918, 6.

Sailor, and the Yank. In fact, Rockwell's patriotic cover for *Life Magazine*'s November 2 1918 issue "Are we downhearted?" appear closely based on these anatomical models.[31] In contrast, the aberrant physiognomy of Rockwell's cartoony "navy seaman" marked an intentional and flagrant departure. His sailor's ears are not "well-proportioned" or a "good vestibule" for catching sounds. His mouth is not "firm, positive, and tenacious," but rather hesitant or gawkish. Eyes float in the skull rather than being deep-set to "express strength of character, intensity of mind, and fervor of spirit."

Afloat and Ashore regularly discussed the "American fighting face" as the cornerstone of manly physiognomy. Articles approached the face as "the mirror of the mind" whose features, once hardened into adulthood, functioned as fixed symbols of character. Another article published September 4 covering the American "fighting face" embedded Hall's concepts about adolescent development alongside the idea that masculine countenances were "self-made" and transparently reflected the individual's efforts and success.[32] In this article, the fighting face included quiet strength, determination, and aggressiveness that reflected moving past "the period of willful youth" (pre-adolescence) toward the watershed moment where the male "is confident of his control over himself and knows that discipline is necessary for the individual as well as for the organization" (late adolescence and manhood). The article also echoed debates over the education of late adolescence by considering how naval service could advance cognitive development competitive with a college degree or the business world.

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[31] See *Life Magazine*, November 28, 1918. "Everywhere you went during the war – in bars, trolleys, meetings – somebody would yell, "Are we downhearted?" and everyone would chorus '*No!*'" Rockwell, *My Adventures*, 121.

[32] *Afloat and Ashore*, September 4, 1918, 5.

For the readers of *Afloat and Ashore*, Rockwell's "Is this you?" visualized this promised transformation in face and character. Both figures sport reassuringly bulky physiques and angular features, shifting focus toward their resolved countenance. Yet in the same issue as "Is this you?," Rockwell inset a small, surreptitious cartoon on the cover cartoon "Detention Days" that breached the protocol of the military mug. Rockwell's drawing of two faces, labeled "before" and "after", mocked articles in *Afloat and Ashore* that contended that military life could, quite literally, mold the American face. The "before" face is weak-chinned, unsure, and gawkish while the "after" face is a different person altogether, full of manly mirth. Rather than inspiring, the dramatic transformation looks ridiculous and unachievable. This directly japed articles in *Afloat and Ashore* that contended military life could, quite literally, mold the American face.

In the cartoon "Navy Seaman," Rockwell further discredited the assertion that the military face was fixed at all.[33] Using an established comic device, the cartoon derived its humor by comparing how family members and colleagues each "see" the naval man differently. Rockwell radically morphed the navy officer's stance, physique, and even age depending on the viewer. Whether encountered by his officers, his sweetheart, or his mother, the cartoon seaman's body vacillated from a bull-chested hero, to a knob-nosed laggard, to a bobble-headed adult. The cartooning style jumped, quoting high-brow illustration and low-brow comic strip bums to show where the soldier fell in the mind's hierarchy. To illustrate how the seaman "really looks," Rockwell confronted the reader with a flat-footed, spaghetti-armed adolescent. The limp-limbed figure stood as inert material, brimming with plastic potential yet disturbingly

[33] *Afloat and Ashore,* November 20, 1918.

static. Here American manhood hovered as an inherently unstable state that fluctuated between the heroic and the ridiculous by the whim of perception.

"Navy Seaman" suggests that developing males did not buy the propaganda of the "fighting face" wholesale or at least that they did not necessarily see themselves reflected in that model. A tongue-in-cheek image of how the seaman "sees himself" merely redrew the uninspiring adolescent in "how he really looks." The "How he sees himself" figure was much more animated, holding an admiring girl flat into his chest and giving a jovial wink to the viewer. The sly, direct nod towards the audience recalled Yellow Kid, Buster Brown, and other irreverent comic strip characters who assumed familiarity with the reader. As social pariahs, such characters could act as comrades to their empathizers and threats to superiors. In this cartoon, Rockwell shifted stable patriotic representations of the male body and face to a sentimental outsider perspective. Both the navy seaman's "sweetheart" and "little brother" equipped their image of the heroic soldier with a broad chest and bold chin. Here Rockwell exposed uplifting representations of masculine development as wishful fictions, concocted to assuage anxieties about monitoring the adolescent's development and, by association, American national dominance.

Rockwell's cartooning work accorded with an essential animative aspect of early 20th century cartoons that Scott Bukatman terms "plasmatic possibility."[34] Bukatman uses "plasmatic" to describe the cartoon figure's transformative, metamorphic freedom, an

[34] While this thread is explored throughout Bukatman's text, see especially Bukatman, *The Poetics of Slumberland: Animated Spirits and the Animating Spirit* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2012), 20.

animating quality that denoted its very sentience. Bukatman asserts that the allure of plasmatic possibility stemmed from a contradictory modern notion of time. At the turn of the century time was "unbound, mutable, and multiple" while also "rigid, deterministic, and mostly insistently bound to linear coherence."[35] Kristen Hatch's work on contemporary adult silent screen actress Mary Pickford identifies this strange confluence of time in Pickford's high-grossing portrayal of young children. Hatch describes how Pickford's ability to transform in a little girl "offered a fantasy of interrupting this forward flow and reversing time's progress."[36] Rockwell's adolescent-aged cartoons inculcate Bukatman's concept of time as physical growth was inextricably intwined with temporal measurements. Rockwell's cartoons elasticated time, portraying the progression of adolescence as rocky and jolting as a Coney Island rollercoaster. Unlike Pickford, Rockwell's cartoons did not cushion the adult body with the sentimentality of childhood. Rather Rockwell's sketches wielded the cartoon's plasmatic potential to upend a discourse that mapped masculine development into a steady, predictable progression.

Yet it is unlikely that Rockwell's underhanded cartoons comprised a revolutionary over-throwing of ideals. Rockwell's images appeared within a government regulated publication distributed for consumption among soldiers. His autobiography described fellow navymen visiting his station in the North Carolina camp and chuckling at the unpublished strips.[37] The pages of *Afloat and Ashore* indicated sentimental hero rhetoric was as popular among soldiers as mocking caricatures. An article announcing Norman Rockwell's arrival cited his standout "big

[35] Ibid., 31.
[36] Kristen Hatch, *Shirley Temple and the Performance of Girlhood* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2015), 33.
[37] Rockwell, *My Adventures*, 124.

hits", which included two World War I themed covers: *Life*'s "Till the Boys Come Home" and *Judge*'s "A tribute from France."[38] In the former, a Neoclassical arrangement of brooding fashionable young ladies waited on the beach for their beaus to return across the Atlantic. "A tribute from France" depicted their American war hero overseas receiving a wildflower in his buttonhole from a tiny French girl in wooden shoes.[39] Despite his shredded uniform sleeves and the souvenir German helmet, Rockwell's soldier evoked the helpful, strapping lads Rockwell used to illustrate 1913 *The Boy Scouts Hike Book*. This combination of dreaming young girls and fantasies of soldiers as grown-up boy scouts was almost exactly what the cartoon "Navy Seaman" parodies. Cartoons like "Navy Seaman" and "Flying Stevedore's Furlough" fantasized about physically transforming one's anatomy merely through attitude and social performance. Rockwell's humor suggests cartooning was accepted and integrated as providing relief for seemingly impossible paradigms.

Mirth continued to be prized as a national characteristic in 1918 and was even featured as a particular branch of the "American fighting face", endemic especially to navy men. Mirth equaled resilience by helping "sailors and soldiers to go into battle with a smile on their faces and a song on their lips", as expressed both by Rockwell's "Are we downhearted" cover for *Life Magazine* and the broad circulation of smiley-faced servicemen posters. Yet mirth could easily cross into destabilizing dissidence. A small inset cartoon in Rockwell's *A Flying Stevedore's Furlough* presented two contrasting heads: the "in-camp" face and "going home" face. The squared-chinned "in-camp" mug was stalwart and determined whereas the moon-faced "going

[38] *Afloat and Ashore*, September 11, 1918.
[39] *Judge*, August 10, 1918.

home" expression cracked into an open-mouthed dopey laugh. With its half-witted expression, the "going home" sailor appeared as the antithesis to the in-camp American "fighting face." The army's rhythm of active duty and furloughs produced a cyclical, not linear, time scale. Here self-made man was not a stable army product but a metamorphic creature, able to relapse back into adolescent glee.

Despite the anarchical and plasmatic inferences of Rockwell's cartoon "going home" face, a 1919 Victory Liberty Loan poster utilized a similar dopey-faced soldier to celebrate American Victory. Designed by Rockwell's studio mate Clyde Forsythe, the poster showed an American soldier striding across a bombed-out landscape, three German helmets in hand. The solider broke out into an unusually uninhibited ear-to-ear laugh next to the tagline "And they thought we couldn't fight." The design grated against the Liberty Loan's preference for more reassuringly masculine and family-oriented advertisements (see Alfred Everitt Orr's "For Home and Country"). Nevertheless, it showed how easily the popular rebellious spirit of cartooning could be recruited for propaganda.

Early 20th century American illustration often exhibited a tidal nature, with radical undercurrents quickly reabsorbing into popular waves. By the end of World War I, college humor magazines and their self-deprecating depictions of cackling teenage males rose as a fashionable prototype.[40] Cartooning techniques that originally applied counter-pressures became synonymous with mass entertainment, so much so that they could be reissued as

[40] This is demonstrated by the introduction of the *College Humor Digest* in 1921, a compilation of college humor published across college humor magazines. The enormous popularity of John Held, Jr.'s illustrations of college boys and flapper girls also points to this phenomenon, discussed later in this chapter.

political propaganda. By World War II, pro-war comic book heroes like Captain America regularly joked through life-threatening situations, equating humor with a uniquely American brand of unflappability.[41]

Rockwell is tricky to trace through this quagmire as he constantly played to both sides of America's visual rhetoric. While Rockwell's cartoons in *Afloat and Ashore* jabbed at the myth of self-made masculinity, many of his illustrations were actively reconstituting this ideal. Rockwell regularly accepted commissions during and following his enlistment from high-end magazines for stable, sentimental visions of returning soldiers. In his June 14, 1919 cover for *The Literary Digest* ("Back to his Old Job") a demure young woman rubbed a young soldier's bicep. Political cartoons frequently depicted Americans using their biceps to intimidate and even deflect Germans, cementing anatomical muscle as national strength. Rockwell's scene recalled strongman Eugen Sandow's macho displays and provocative invitations to touch. However, the artist's image replaced the Herculean ideal with a flush-cheeked late adolescent. Youthful maturation supplanted godlike achievement in this new vision of American masculinity, endorsing rather than subverting pressures placed on the developing male body. Rockwell's career-long relationship with the Boy Scouts of America refined this idea through multiple decades as he illustrated Troop guidebooks and Scout calendars.

Yet Rockwell understood how to diffuse the very ideals that he helped construct. Rockwell only occasionally returned to the simplified cartooning style he used for *Afloat and*

[41] Deborah Clark Vance, "Racial Stereotypes and War Propaganda in Captain America" in *The 10 cent War: Comic Books, Propaganda, and World War II*, eds. Trischa Goodnow and James J. Kimble (Jackson: University of Mississippi, 2016), 142-143.

Ashore in small, wily marginalia created for books. However, he regularly infused his oil painted cover images with a cartooning ethos that both couched and masked their radical suggestions. His rawest explorations of slapstick and caricature were crafted for that periodical juggernaut, *The Saturday Evening Post*. Unlike much of his work for other employers, Rockwell's *Post* covers used a comic strip aesthetic to poke holes in the American template of self-fashioned masculinity.

ILLUSTRATING BOYS AND ADOLESCENTS FOR THE *SATURDAY EVENING POST*

Rockwell's covers for the Curtis Publishing Company's *Saturday Evening Post* not only established his fame but crucially became the template where he forged a unique amalgamate style. His preference for attenuated youthful physiques and slapstick comedy traced back to the irreverent, destabilizing world of cartooning. By fusing the artificial, phantasmagoria of cartooning with classical painting techniques, Rockwell invented a shockingly hybridized image. Rather than eulogizing the American experience of growing up, these early images often presented it as a visceral, carnal encounter. Thus, Rockwell's images often pushed against and satirized expectations for adolescent development. The popular consumption of these images implied approval from a broad reading American public at the center of these pressures.

Illustrators working under Horace Lorimer's direction recognized the profitable powers of cartooning long before Rockwell broke onto its scene. A comic-narrative approach to the

cover went hand-in-hand with an upsurge of child-themed covers.[42] Although Rockwell's autobiography implied that his art initiated "the vogue for Post covers of kids", that trend had launched a decade before his arrival.[43] Prior to 1906, the *Post* cover illustrations usually featured only one child-themed cover, an annual treat for the Christmas season. Instead, cover illustrations typically illuminated whatever business topics or short stories appeared within, all targeting their clientele from the male business class. As child-themed covers increased, they gravitated toward ingrained purposeful categories. Images of impoverished urbans youths played upon the familiar chord of social reform. Rosy cheeked country school children gave reassurance of America's sturdy heartland stock. Plump, pre-juvenile figures recalled Victorian childhood innocence. J.C. Leyendecker's version of Buster Brown from December 1, 1906 perfectly coiffed in a red velveteen suit, rescued the incorrigible boy from the comic strips by restructuring the middle-class domicile as a haven for culture and tranquility. All these images peddled reassurance of stabilizing, prosperous middle-class values.

By 1908, children accounted for roughly 25 percent of covers, and their art revealed a seismic shift toward humor. These images progressively bore more rambunctious behavior and sardonic content associated with newspaper comics. Sarah Sitwell-Weber specialized in slightly mischievous middle-class girls emerging exuberant, even disheveled through play. A year after George Bellows exhibited *Forty-two Kids*, Worth Brehm channeled the tenement comic strip

[42] Judy L. Larson and Maureen Hart Hennessey discuss the prominence of comic-narratives at the *Post*. "Norman Rockwell: A New Viewpoint" in *Norman Rockwell: Pictures for the American People*, eds. Maureen Hart Hennessey and Anne Knutson (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1999), 36.
[43] Rockwell, *My Adventures*, 107.

into glossy cover art in "Boys Peering Through fence at Baseball Game."[44] Many other illustrators followed this example by rendering gap-toothed and doe-eyed boys misbehaving in class or setting up baseball games. These images claimed important antecedents in the fine art market genre of boisterous country-bred children.[45] However, the *Post* often went beyond these Victorian themes to channel R. F. Outcault's comic strip tropes. Covers poked fun at adult conceits by reenacting them through children. For example, J. C. Leyendecker's "Girl Under Mistletoe, Boy with Gift" appeared two weeks after Harrison Fisher's cover showed a voluptuous modern woman gazing longingly at a spring of mistletoe.[46] Leyendecker's image contrasted Fisher's sultry mood with a prim, expectant little girl presenting her cheek to a frightened, perplexed little boy.

As childhood cover images started to predominate in the 1910's, their boys' ages shifted closer toward late juvenility and pre-adolescence. Charles A. MacLellan's March 28, 1914 subject for his cover "First Pair of Long Pants" specifically placed his serial red-head character at the onset of puberty.[47] Signature divisions between class categories also began to relax. Bare feet, disheveled clothes, and sandlot play became synonymous with an unbridled boyhood that included the suburbanite middle classes. Here juvenile savagery functioned as a social leveling mechanism to support Lorimer's nineteenth century conceptions of America as a classless

[44] *Saturday Evening Post*, June 6, 1908.
[45] See Sarah Burns, "Barefoot Boys and Other Country Children: Sentiment and Ideology in Nineteenth Century American Art," *The American Art Journal*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (1988): 24 – 50.
[46] *Saturday Evening Post*, December 26, 1908.
[47] Darryl J. Gonzalez, *The Children Who Ran for Congress: A History of Congressional Pages* (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2010), 83.

society.[48] It also echoed visions of rugged boyhood published in photographs that appeared in the cover art of *American Boy magazine.* The Curtis Company's publishing guidelines forbid "unjust" discrimination against race or "sectionalism" (upholding one state over another) in their entertainment. Gags adhered to this policy of "broad toleration" by largely gravitating around what editors saw as politically neutral (ie. acceptable) stereotypes based on region, occupation, and age, with white boyhood rising as a popular favorite.[49]

These thematic changes on *Post* covers coincided with Lorimer's aggressive 1908 campaign to boost circulation. New female readership was especially crucial to Lorimer's 1908 marketing scheme, which depended on increased advertising to maintain the magazine's low cost. Increased female readership attracted advertisers peddling new lines of domestic products. Yet, as historian Jan Cohn emphasizes, Lorimer had to expertly balance this appeal while preserving his target audience of American businessmen.[50] The turn toward comic-strip inspired images of childhood freedoms and bloopers seems in retrospect like an odd solution. Indeed, the decision seemingly gainsaid the core principles of modern magazines, who were often the loudest decriers of comic strips as a corrupting force.[51] By the turn of the 20th

[48] The history of the *Post* as the nation's most widely circulated periodical arguably begins when its owner Cyrus H. K Curtis, hired editor Horace Lorimer in 1899. Lorimer would successfully mold the magazine's identity around his constantly evolving concept of the average American. See Jan Cohn, *Creating America: George Horace Lorimer and the Saturday Evening* Post (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1989), especially "1897-1907: "The Greatest Weekly Magazine in the World," 21-59.
[49] The *Post*'s policy did not exclude covers, advertisements, and stories full of derogatory ethnic stereotypes, particularly of African Americans and Chinese. J. C. Leyendecker's "mammy" figures and Cream of Wheat ads featuring "Uncle Rastus" proliferated racist stereotypes to uphold the *Post*'s focus on "everyday" humor of white, middle-class life. Throughout its publication and particularly during the 1920's, editorials meditated on race with social Darwinist arguments.
[50] Cohn, *Creating America*, 71.
[51] W. Joseph Campbell, *Yellow Journalism: Puncturing the Myths, Defining the Legacies* (Westport: Praeger, 2003), 63, 69.

century, the aesthetics of yellow journalism and their signature comic-strip humor, based on hysteria and truant impulses, waned under public condemnation. In contrast, high line newspapers and glossy magazines adopted cleaner, streamlined aesthetics and strove to function as a new American art form. Yet the sensational aesthetics of yellow journalism and comic strips had set in motion an unstoppable fad. W. Joseph Campbell's study of yellow journalism exhibits how periodical publishers at the turn of the century were conflicted between following layout guidelines for decorum while also needing their periodicals to jump out from the stands.[52]

As Lorimer vied for wider circulation, covers began to disassociate from the magazine's content and perform as both self-contained narratives and flashy *Post* advertisements. The 20th century reading public was already well versed in disassociating text from image. Magazines forced readers to continue stories into back pages where columns of text became sandwiched between advertising's flashy fonts and bold illustrations.[53] For the first couple decades, the *Post* contained almost no political, editorial, or gag comics within its pages. In a reversal of humor magazines like *Puck*, the *Post* raised the lowly slapstick gag, originally interior-page fodder, to cover art material.

By the early twentieth century, comic strips proved to be an undeniable cash cow that increasingly merged with middle class consumerism and its visualization of childhood. Ian Gordon's examination of the Buster Brown phenomenon exposes how comic strips rose as a

[52] Campbell, *Yellow Journalism*, 63.
[53] "[A Story] may be given a fairly formidable appearance at the front of the magazine, and then peter out into a long, dreary little tail coiling its way among tomato cans, and tobacco, and beer, at the back." Max Eastman, "What is the Matter with Magazine Art," *The Masses*, January 6, 1915, p. 15.

transformative cultural force, inextricable from the modern culture of consumption.[54] Despite a vocal "recall" of comics from children's consumption, Katherine Roeder's examination of Winsor McCay demonstrates how by the 20th century comics had begun blending indistinguishably with children's literature.[55] By 1905 Winsor McCay's *Little Nemo in Slumberland* pioneered a unique blend of controlled flat outlines describing delicate contours and unnerving warped sensations of time and space. This merged highbrow with lowbrow by planting the illogical phantasmagoria of comic strips within the sophisticated visual language of high-end book illustration and relegating hysteria to the liminal space of the child's imagination. The same year that Lorimer began his circulation campaign, Fred Thompson's massive theatrical production of "Little Nemo" debuted on Broadway with a script that urged businessmen to indulge in pleasure and play.[56] The *Post*'s turn toward comic strip conventions signaled an effort to appeal universally across purchasing powers. Yet this aesthetic turn required a master craftsman to harness the energy of comic strip reverie to middle-class experience and values.

Historian Jan Cohn shows that, although the Post employed 60 different illustrators between 1908 and 1913, it was J. C. Leyendecker and Harrison Fisher who accounted for 40% of its -cover art.[57] While Harrison Fisher perfected luscious Gibson-style girls, Leyendecker began introducing his child-themed covers, starting in December of 1906. Like his contemporaries,

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[54] Ian Gordon, *Comic Strips and Consumer Culture: 1890 – 1945* (Washington: Smithsonian Institute Press, 1998), 57-58.
[55] Katherine Roeder, *Wide Awake in Slumberland: Fantasy, Mass Culture, and Modernism in the Art of Winsor McCay* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2014), 66.
[56] Woody Register, *The Kid of Coney Island: Fred Thompson and the Rise of American Amusements* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 3-6.
[57] Cohn, *Creating America*, 65.

Leyendecker's children initially sported sweet, cherub proportions and spotless frocks. As the 20th century progressed, the Victorian ideal that parents could willfully mold their children into model citizens began losing relevancy to an increasingly independent population of young consumers. Historian Paul B. Ringel's research on youth magazines shows how a newfound "confidence in young American's ability to self-regulate" evinced in literary serials aimed at youthful readers.[58] In their narratives, youths operated independent of parental authority and navigated urban challenges with success. Both J. C. Leyendecker and fellow *Post* illustrators channeled these trends into their images of school-boys, farm-boys, and newsboys alike. New narratives depicted *Post* children of all classes channeling the tenement bravado and ingenuity of the comic-strip hero.

Post children frequently scraped out entertainment from whatever was on hand rather than playing with department store toys manufactured for parlor play. This included snowball fights, swimming hole escapes, and spontaneous dances in front of the "Gurdy Man." Leyendecker's "Children Playing Circus" from July 19, 1913 channeled the anarchy of R. F. Outcault's 1895 "At the circus in Hogan's Alley" with its flailing handstand, reluctant animal actors, and gallery consisting of a girl and youngster. Many illustrators meditated on middle-class schoolboys tempted to play hooky or break school rules. Although overtures to childhood innocence still abounded, they could pack a rebellious edge. Leyendecker's July 6, 1912 "First Aid for Fourth of July" provided a homespun vision of a grandmother in conservative Victorian garb dressing the wounded finger of an obedient youngster in a Buster Brown suit. However, a

[58] Paul B. Ringel, *Commercializing Childhood: Children's Magazines, Urban Gentility, and the Ideal of the Child Consumer in the United States, 1823-1918* (Boston: University of Massachusetts, 2015), 179.

pile of fireworks in the margin connected his injuries to traditions in both comics and literature that equated pyrotechnic injuries with youthful nerve and autonomy.

A number of the *Post*'s illustrators specialized in boy humor, with prolific output by artists Leslie Thrasher and Charles A. MacLellan. Together with J. C. Leyendecker their subjects, narratives, and humor followed these national shifts in the commercial culture of children. These artists also participated in larger pictorial shifts that began heightening the drama and immediacy of cover art. Characters shattered the "third wall" by directly confronting the viewer. Dramatic foreshortening virtually propelled action off the page. This print strategy added punch to editorial illustrations and advertisements. However, it also verged on impertinence and indecency when performed by juvenile actors. Many of these boy illustrations from the Progressive Era feel more aesthetically indebted to traditions in fine art and oil painting. Artists hinged their anarchic play to juvenile bodies with solid, balanced bodies that rationally respected the laws of gravity. J. C. Leyendecker stood out from peer illustrators by forging new visual amalgams that deepened his repartee with the illogical physics of comic strips.

Moving into the second decade of the 20th century, J. C. Leyendecker veered toward a flatter, graphic style that used the contrasting white of the page to highlight the boisterous actions of his characters. He swapped modelled tones for slippery painterly hatching. These slashes of paint operated similarly to comic strip action lines. Just as these marks lent masculine force to his athletes, they hyperbolized the spastic actions and meaty volumes of his idiosyncratic American types. For years the *Saturday Evening Post*'s covers tried to jump from

the newsstands with illustrations that overlapped and broke up their masthead. However, Leyendecker's characters, being both graphic and volumetric, were able to simultaneously inhabit and violate this given space, much like the comic strip characters of the newspaper's Sunday pages. Sharp-edged football players appeared to leap in front of the masthead text for a catch. A baby suffragette purposefully waved her protest sign in front of the masthead for attention. Soft domestic scenes molded deep, comforting spaces with cast shadows. His vignettes rarely faded off the page like a phantasmal painting. Like a comic, his images existed totally within the cover or were sharply cropped by a framed panel. When Leyendecker included a black border along the bottom edge, characters often established this as a groundline by treading against it with heavy, gravity-filled steps. In total, the effect recalled Winsor McCay's famous 1905 "Little Sammy Sneeze" comic strip where Sammy sneezes so hard that it shatters the panel's boundaries. Like Sammy Sneeze, Leyendecker's characters appeared not merely encased in the space but possessing a meta-awareness that this was their own possessable, malleable universe.

By 1908, J. C. Leyendecker began importing the comic strip body into his oil painted illustrations. Much like George Bellows, Leyendecker morphed 2-D caricatures into an undeniable 3-D plasticity through paint. Whereas as Bellows explored their subversive potential, J. C. Leyendecker's approach creatively reshuffled the protocols of glossy cover illustration. His innovative technique followed trends in early films, vaudeville, and elaborate theatricals that worked on relocating beloved cartoon characters into a palpable reality.[59] His

[59] The massively expensive production of Little Nemo (see Woody, *The Kid of Coney Island*) and the traveling theatrical *McFadden Flats* and *Buster Brown* based on R. F. Outcault's comics were widely

children adopted the stringier anatomies, animated faces, and dynamic poses honed by late 19th centuries comic panels of immigrant children. However, Leyendecker's children were frequently towheaded and clearly demarcated from the massive surge of immigrant groups newly arriving as these covers were published. Leyendecker's survey of spunky childhood presented middle class children and scrappy street waifs as part of a uniform, rosy cheeked culture.

Cartoon proportions allowed Leyendecker to easily configure his youths into the spastic gymnastics of juvenile anarchy. Gradually, he pushed the cartoony overtures by pairing over-sized heads with shrunken bodies (see Leyendecker's 1915 covers "Fire Hydrant Shower" and "The Old Swimming Hole"). The nude figures of his August 19, 1911 cover "Skinny Dipping Boys" particularly reveal these anatomical liberties. In the stripping boys, identifiable back muscles convincingly flexed and stretched, but along impossibly attenuated torsos. Coupled with Leyendecker's tactile depictions of flesh and correct references to muscular anatomy, his incongruous anatomy is alarming.[60] However, the repetition of these images implies the popularity and acceptance of this irrational comic-strip physique.

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advertised and reviewed. Vaudevillian ethnic sketch routines shared the same punchlines and mannerisms as cartoon ethnic panels. Louis Lumiere's 1895 short film *The Sprinkler Sprinkled* and many other short films took their gag routines from the comic strips. See Lance Rickman, "Bande dessinee and the Cinematograph: Visual Narrative in 1895", *European Comic Art* (January 2008): 1 – 19.

[60] Most contemporaries I show these to find them immediately repulsive. Jennifer Greenhill provides a more academic analysis of Leyendecker's disturbing "twisted" combination of the cartoonish, the cute, and fleshy corporeality in his "anatomically challenged" approach to his 1941 New Year's baby. She relates this to the "queer resistance" that pervaded his imagery of young men. Jennifer Greenhill, "How to Make it as a Mainstream Magazine Illustrator; Leyendecker and Norman Rockwell Go to War," *Winterthur Portfolio* 52, no. 4 (Winter 2018), 220.

Rockwell's illustrations for the *Post* reflect the impact of J. C. Leyendecker's novel combination of comic strip and illustrative conventions. Like Leyendecker, Rockwell leveraged the *Post*'s white covers to emphasize his character's sharp diagonal movements and gravity defying stunts. Both artists layered faces with bulging muscles and puckered folds so that every emotion, from glee to petulance, registered to the extreme. Both understood the slapstick staple of using contrasting desires and states of mind to heighten humor, and both deployed an inconceivable amount of creases in clothes to heighten the tension and compression behind every impulse.

Other cartooning affectations proliferate throughout Rockwell's figures.[61] Denying the scientific breakdowns of movement made available by stop motion photography, many of Rockwell's figures strode with legs fully apart and feet extended at 45 degree angles. Photographs from Rockwell's studio showed models with front toes and back heels propped with books to affect this unnatural gait. Rockwell's 1913 illustrations for the *Boy Scout's Hike Book* chapter on "how to walk", with one specifically labeled "right posture in walking", demonstrate he clearly understood the logical anatomical synchronization of walking.

However, Rockwell significantly departed from Leyendecker's model by committing to his atelier-trained painting techniques.[62] Rockwell's brushstrokes were imperceptible and his

[61] Christopher Finch remarks that Rockwell's style is "not easy to define" because of his "quasi-photographic realism" and concludes his style is "made up of small but significant deviations from the photographic and academic norms." Finch, *Norman Rockwell*, 11.
I argue here this can be easily explained by exploring how Rockwell mixed cartooning norms from comic strips into academic painting conventions. Christopher Finch, *Norman Rockwell: 332 Magazine Covers*, (New York: Artabras, 1994), 11.

[62] See especially Karal Ann Marling's description of how Rockwell applies color and modelling in the 1921 Post cover "No Swimming." Karal Ann Marling, *Rockwell* (Los Angeles: Taschen, 2005), 12.

anatomical structures plausible, at least on initial glance.[63] A comparison between the two artists' "watering hole" themed *Post* covers demonstrate this contrast. After his 1911 "Skinny Dipping Boys", J. C. Leyendecker addressed this subject a second time with a more dynamic approach on May 22, 1915, including one boy mid-dive. Rockwell's iconic "No Swimming" from June 4, 1921 is today a top-running choice for the artist's monographs. Both relocate the polluted urban swim of comic strip precedents to a refreshing countryside dip, evidenced by a grassy bank and (in Rockwell) a straw hat and polka-dotted handkerchief.[64] In Leyendecker, the air born boy's splayed legs and sharp boney bends echoed the irreverent poses and malnourished physiques of George Bellows' *Forty-Two Kids*. Yet, the boys' heads sport flushed full cheeks, up-turned noses, and long lashes, branding these children with middle-class cuteness and innocence. Leyendecker adopted a radically collaged approach with incongruous sutures. Everywhere bones are shrunken, muscles simplified, and limbs shortened or extended to generate the correct blend of cuteness and cheeky rebellion.[65]

Rockwell's approach smoothed and rationalized this amalgamation. His central child, painted after model Franklin Lischke, ranged closer to pre-adolescence. His lanky anatomy harkened back to comic-strip proportions but was also normalized as a growth spurt. In George Bellows' lithographs of wharf loungers, boys on the cusp of adulthood seethed with threats of truancy and unchecked sexuality. Rockwell mitigates these threats with the boys' naive

[63] In his autobiography, Rockwell points out how he belatedly realized he painted two pairs of legs on the left figure in "People Reading Stock Exchange", *Saturday Evening Post*, January 18, 1930. Rockwell, *My Adventures*, 257.
[64] For a prototypical "polluted" urban swim, see George Luks' "Hogan's Alley Kids at Hogan's Bath", *New York World*, May 30 1897.
[65] Jennifer Greenhill has analyzed the prevalence of this technique through both Leyendecker's fashionable men and later his New Year's babies as a method for constructing queer resistance. Greenhill, "Mainstream Magazine Illustrator," 224.

expressions that betray surprise and gullibility, extinguishing any hint of bravado. A ubiquitous model throughout the 1920's, Lischke's proportions permitted Rockwell to import the spastic elasticity of comic-strip anarchy without breaking with the body' anatomical limits.[66] In her biography of Norman Rockwell, Deborah Solomon acknowledges technical criticisms of this image by art critic Charles Rosens. Solomon summarizes that Lischke's left leg "extends behind the boy and stretches on for so long that if he brought it forward it would be twice as tall as his right leg."[67] The critique is right. The bundle of clothes conserved the boy's modesty but more crucially masked where Rockwell has hyperbolically extended the pose to increase momentum and impulse.

Rockwell also masked these incongruities with another trademark: his hyper-sensitivity to textual details that enhanced character and narrative. New crops of freckles on shoulders indicated the recent sun exposure and sudden interruption of the swim. The fat boy's deep breath and puffed cheeks implied his physical struggle to sprint. Telling details evince in unlikely, nearly imperceptible places. Rockwell rendered his boys' nipples with the soft flesh of undeveloped chests, in contrast to Leyendecker who stamped his boys' shrunken chests with the same style nipples he used for adults. These techniques significantly reversed the relationship Leyendecker presented between the comic strip and the real. In Leyendecker, cartoons and illustrations from the printed sphere appeared to launch into our lived, tangible

[66] Frank Lischke reflected on Rockwell's paintings of his body, "There's a lot more exaggeration. After he started using photographs it seems to me he exaggerated a lot less." Interview with Frank Lischke, December 15, 1890, Archives of the Norman Rockwell Museum, Stockbridge, MA.
[67] Solomon, *American Mirror*, 108.

realm. Rockwell images, however, claimed that the spastic stereotypes and laughingstocks of the strips derived from living prototypes wandering among us.[68]

This metaphysical concept also depended on Rockwell constructing more complex, emotionally driven narratives that pushed beyond quick gag reads, such as Rockwell's job-winning inaugural cover image for the Saturday Evening Post, "Baby Carriage." Rockwell's May 20 1916 "Baby Carriage", which has become synonymous with the artist's brand of comic-narrative, reproduced the same subject and punchline from MacLellan's August 2, 1913 cover "Boy pushing baby carriage."[69] Deborah Solomon records how pro-Leyendecker fans admonish Rockwell for stealing Leyendecker's concepts.[70] Yet Rockwell arguably founded his *Post* career by cannibalizing the boyhood narratives not by Leyendecker but rather by MacLellan.[71] MacLellan was one of the first illustrators to capitalize on exploring a serial character, a rowdy red-headed boy that he explored over half a decade. MacLellan abandoned his character only 4 months after Rockwell began publishing his own redhead based on twelve-year-old model Billy

[68] This point may seem to corroborate Rockwell's comments about J. C. Leyendecker's commitment to technique and indifference to "flesh and blood people." Jennifer Greenhill explains how Rockwell's comments may be seen as both reductive and derogatory, a possible product of homophobia which elides the queer dynamics In Leyendecker's representations of young men. Practitioner banter is often cryptic and does not always equate to a personal philosophical or inner motivation. I do agree that J. C. Leyendecker's style experiments with the visual language of comic strip and print culture, and prefers painterly and linear abstractions over stable, illusionistic renditions of flesh and space. Greenhill, "Mainstream Magazine Illustrator," 230.

[69] John Fagg writes on Rockwell's indebtedness to MacLellan's illustration and further acknowledges how Rockwell's dependency on ingrained illustrative practices and tropes is rarely acknowledged in his scholarship. John Fagg, "'The Bewhiskered Rustic, Turned Orator': Robert Robinson's Old Men, Politics, and the Saturday Evening Post", *American Art* 27, no. 2 (Summer 2013), 70.

[70] Solomon, American Mirror, 123.

[71] Rockwell mentioned MacLellan by name as an artist who illustrated "kids" for the *Saturday Evening Post*, thus boosting his decision to compose a kid-themed cover for his own first submission. Norman Rockwell, unpublished interview, Compact Disc 2, Archives of the Norman Rockwell Museum, Stockbridge, MA.

Payne.[72] In both covers, a petulant boy pushed a pram forward toward the left edge of the composition. MacLellan's boy stared outward, falling in line with many *Post* covers that constructed their images as an encounter between viewer and subject. Rockwell reissued MacLellan's composition with the addition of two mocking peers, interjecting a familiar comradeship now under tension. This addition not only adds complexity but expanded the instant into a narrative, allowing the reader to imagine a crescendo of emotions before and after the humiliating meeting. Like a complex single panel comic, the image wordlessly constructed a complex sequential reading that was also primed for immediate consumption.

Authors like Eric Segal have deeply analyzed the competing concepts of masculinity and normative boyhood operating in this image. More specifically, Rockwell's amendments to MacLellan's original concept set these concepts into play. MacLellan's character cast a sulky glare toward the viewer, something his character often did on covers when women were forcing him to perform domestic tasks. This positioned the viewer as an empathetic yet unhelpful onlooker, appropriate for the father or businessman who could enjoy a self-affirming laugh at the boy's insolence toward the household matriarch. Rockwell increased the domestic tyranny by swapping MacLellan's boyhood attire for a miniature adult suit. This shifted the theme from enforcement of despised chores to the enforcement of genteel adulthood. The other two boys mocked their peer by performing the affected gestures of upper-class heterosexual coupledom, recalling J. C. and Frank X. Leyendecker's pretentious *Post* cover couples. A gentlemanly boy doffed his cap with a pinky extension. Mirroring a *Post* cover

[72] A number of other illustrators began exploring tussled hair serial boy characters before Rockwell came to the magazine, such as Leslie Thrasher. In "stealing" MacLellan's character, Rockwell was also participating in a *Post* practice.

girl, the ladylike boy demurely rested his index finger on his chin with cap fashionably angled over one eye. The mockery was perfectly calculated to further entrap the boy in middle-class respectability.

Like MacLellan, Rockwell's narrative pivoted on the problem middle-class boys faced by living within two incommensurate spheres: the female dominated domicile and the cutthroat guild of savage boyhood. Yet because Rockwell's narrative changed the viewer from participant to witness, the image invited the viewer to identify with, rather than regulate, the various characters. This complicated the image. A traditional comic-strip read would invite adult viewers to feel temporarily rejuvenated by identifying with the baseball players. Yet viewers must also face the reality that the miniaturized adult attire mirrored their own current existence. Throughout Rockwell's oeuvre of *Post* cover art, his images packed a similar undercutting edge and unraveled the conventional self-affirming reads that his images seem to initially promise.

EXERCISING, INVERTING, AND INVENTING THE AMERICAN BOY

Perhaps Rockwell's most cartoony and grotesque manifestation of the hapless juvenile was "Cousin Reginald." First developed in the midst of World War I for the *Country Gentleman* in 1917, Rockwell's "Cousin Reginald" narrative pivoted on the contrast between a city-bred youth and his energetic country kin. Cousin Reginald epitomized the American stereotype of the "sissy", essentially the youthful American counterpart to the British Dude. Eric Segal has

closely analyzed how Rockwell constructed his sissies as foils to true red-blooded American boyhood.[73] Throughout the visual culture of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, sissies appeared as well-dressed men attached to outdated formalisms, rendering him out of step with contemporary masculinity. As a schoolroom character, the intellectual prowess of the "sissy" ran counter to the masculine nature bent on action. The sissy's anglicized dress (expressed particularly by the bowler hat) demonstrated not only the overbearing and feminine presence of the domestic sphere but rendered the "sissy" a foreign presence in the American institution of boyhood.[74]

American magazines delighted in short fiction pieces about ineffectual sissies who, only through repeated degrading humiliations and a climactic scene of physical abuse, emerged cured into resilient adolescence. In *American Boy*, C. H. Claudy's 1917 story "Curing Miss Nancy: He Who Runs May Turn and Fight" embedded derogatory labels and the hard-knock solution in its very title.[75] Its lead character Harvey was humiliated both by a threatening bully who chases him through the school and a disgusted roommate who detested Harvey's "disgrace" of Radford Preparatory School. This narrative wallowed in Harvey's persistent self-loathing, describing his "worry, anxiety, and distress" as well as "personal shame." A teacher cured Harvey of his cowardice by enlisting another boy to pummel him, thereby inducting Harvey into fisticuffs and demonstrating that "a punch on the jaw doesn't hurt – it numbs."

[73] See Eric Segal, "Norman Rockwell and the Fashioning of American Masculinity", *The Art Bulletin* 78, no. 4 (December 1996): 633-646.
[74] Ibid., 637-638.
[75] C. H. Claudy, "Curing Miss Nancy: He Who Runs May Turn and Fight," *American Boy* 18, no. 8, June 1917, 10.

Following a common motif in stories about sissies and intellectuals, Harvey was confused as he secretly coveted his enemy's brawny body and admired his "good nature."[76]

Aimed at both youths and adults, these stories proliferated in the magazines where Rockwell was employed and even providing their illustrations. For example, Rockwell illustrated Booth Tarkington's installments of "Ramsey Milholland," which ran in *American Magazine* in 1918. When a timorous Ramsey begins courting a "cow-eyed fat girl" below his social class, Tarkington invited the reader to empathetically chastise him with the "lurking jocosity" of his brother-in-law and through his father's pejorative descriptions: "He looked like a red-gilled goldfish that's flopped itself out of the bowl." One of Rockwell's first major book illustration projects was the 1914 *The Boy Scouts Camp Book*. The instructional book taught about the camping "spirit" and its technicalities by visually transporting the reader into several potential camp life narratives. Indicating both the proliferation and endorsement of hazing practices, the book legitimized a hazing ritual for the reader by explaining the how humiliation leads to comradeship. A neophyte scout (aka "Tenderfoot") was discovered to have packed pink pajamas and then "sentenced" under a mock trial to wear them inside out. Prompting the reader to imagine themselves as a fellow scout, the author recorded how "sympathy for the prisoner, amusement, and amazement swiftly alternate in the control of your thoughts." The

[76] Desire was regularly wielded as a powerful, productive force for transforming boys into men throughout the articles, stories, and images published throughout the *Post* and other magazines. This strategy adopted homoerotic tones and connects to historical work exploring the links between masculinity, consumerism, and desire in early 20th century commercial culture. J. C. Leyendecker's ubiquitous Arrow Collar men simultaneously stood for the masculine heterosexual ideal and queer identity. See especially Dan Gaudagnolo, "'A Superb Example of the Common Man': J.C. Leyendecker and the Staging of Male Consumer Desire in American Commercial Illustration , 1907-1931" *American Studies* 58, no. 4 (2020): 5-32.

author led the reader to accept shaming rituals by realizing all are "chums" performing their parts in jest and play.

As one of his most contorted and repulsive figures, Rockwell's Reginald character similarly prompted the viewer to join Reginald's country cousins in chastising the sissy.[77] As seen in the inaugural August 1917 cover "Cousin Reginald goes to the Country," Reginald's constitution was incapable of handling the reckless abandon and drive for sensation and spontaneity that seem to compel his companions. Reginald's hesitancy contorted his body into stiff or effeminate poses, which his cousins actively provoked and ridiculed. In "Cousin Reginald goes swimming," Reginald mirrored female bathers in his belted bathing costume by daintily dipping one toe into the water.[78] He gently pulled back the trunks and shorts, mimicking drawing back petticoats. With floatation pads tied under his arms and two fingers delicately touching his chin, Reginald evoked the accoutrements and affectations of society women, especially when compared to his bare-chested submerged companions.

Reginald's unappealing petulance and smugness helped to repel sympathy. In such images a composed Reginald stood abnormally rigid with arms pulled in and feet pivoted out in a ballet stance.[79] Only the cousins' pranking managed to fling a reactive Reginald into the

[77] Addressing Reginald, Rockwell said "About the only subject which an illustrator for young people's magazines was permitted to treat humorously was rich, sissyish kids . . . The readers all identified with the regular fellows . . . and laughed with them at the conceited, pompous sissy." Quoted in Pero, *American Chronicles*, 49.
[78] *The Country Gentleman,* September 8, 1917. This gesture may have been inspired by Sarah Stilwell-Weber's August 25 cover for the *Saturday Evening Post* "Three Little Girls at Beach." Here three very young girls extend their legs and point their toes into the barely visible froth of a receding ocean wave. One wears a one-piece red bathing costume similar to Cousin Reginald's.
[79] See "Cousin Reginald Spells Peloponnesus," *The Country Gentleman*, February 9, 1918. See also "Cousin Reginald is cut out," 1917.

dynamic, air-born stances reminiscent of comic-strip play.[80] Rockwell's story conformed to other sissy narratives by confirming the curative properties of his hazing in the April cover "School play (deed to the house)."[81] Before an audience of peers, Reginald was almost unrecognizable, leaping into the scene with brandished sword as the play's hero. This scene contrasted directly with Reginald's role half a year prior in "Cousin Reginald plays pirates," where the captive Reginald knelt submissively before his costumed pirate tormentors.[82]

The longevity of this series suggests that audiences enjoyed how Reginald affirmed normative boyhood. Rockwell rarely followed a recognizable character through multiple covers in a connective narrative sequence. Months after Rockwell concluded the series, *Afloat and Ashore* remembered Rockwell's cover "Cousin Reginald under the mistletoe" as one of the artist's renowned career "hits."[83] Revealingly, this particular cover marked one of Reginald's most humiliating social failures and physical convulsions. Too shy to kiss an unceremonious girl, Reginald wrung his hands and bit his lower lip with a stupid, cowering expression and deep blush.

The Country Gentleman itself prompted readers to find affirmation of their core values within these cover images through the inclusion of detailed annotations. Upon Reginald's first appearance, the *Country Gentleman* encouraged readers to bond with the characters and storyline in the article "Watch the New Cover Series." Advertising a series "full of the real

[80] See "Cousin Reginald catches the Thanksgiving turkey," *The Country Gentleman*, December 1, 1917. See also "Cousin Reginald goes fishing," *The Country Gentleman*, October 6, 1917 and "Cousin Reginald plays tickly bender", *The Country Gentleman*, January 19, 1918.
[81] *The Country Gentleman*, April 6, 1918.
[82] *The Country Gentleman*, November 3, 1917.
[83] *The Country Gentleman*, December 22, 1917.

stuff", the article detailed the full names of the characters, including "Patsy" the dog, and explained how the tormenting cousins "can't let the chances for some fun go by. Watch 'em." In 1919 Rockwell revived the Cousin Reginald dynamic with different boy models. He often built these stories over two covers to a predictable punchline, as in his June 1919 set titled "One more week of school and then . . . " and "Vacation!".[84] The Country Gentleman included a discussion of "Vacation!" that prompted readers to identify with the ecstatic country boys who "know where the fish are biting and where there are trees to climb and robbers' caves to find – 'n' all sorts of things." Poking fun at the disappointed "lad with the diploma" who "evens hates Saturdays in winter because he can't go to school", the article asked the reader "Which were you when you were a boy?"

Flattering visions of the American agrarian businessman were embedded throughout the magazine's articles and advertisements that aligned country life with quintessentially American qualities. These solutions relied on a blend of contradictory tactics that were dependent on navigating domineering visual stereotypes. Advertisements referenced class prestige by showing well-appointed homes with genteel occupants enjoying middle-class luxuries. Yet advertisements also aligned that consumers to pictures of heroic, brawny working men in advertisements like U.S. Rubber Footwear's address "To the outdoor works of America." Meanwhile editorial cartoons worked to rewrite derogatory stereotypes of country "hayseeds" by portraying them in a victorious position over inept city problem-solvers. The magazine's images leaned equally heavy on portrayals of coveralled country boys who seamlessly blended farm work with play. This contrast between rough and tumble country life and stifled city

[84] "Vacation-Who's Glad?", *The Country Gentleman*, June 21, 1919, 32.

existence pointed toward a decades-old longing for a return to a rural past as a remedy for modern ills. The humiliating antics of Cousin Reginald supported this moralizing and culturally ingrained position of the "barefoot boy."[85] He also points to the importance and omnipotence of cartoon images as a truth index to American society.

As standardized images of boyhood and Americana became more ubiquitous, the relationship between original and referent became garbled. For example, on June 21, 1919 *The Country Gentleman* ran an article bemoaning the "The Epidemic of Elocution" in schools, comparing these lessons in formal speaking to a "noxious bacteria."[86] The article included a photograph of a boy with mouth wide open, brow furrowed, and an arm dramatically thrown upward. Norman Rockwell concocted nearly the exact same pose and expression for his June 1917 cover of *American Boy*, complete with a grandmotherly figure plugging her ears. Likely based on an earlier referent, this exaggerated expression was continuously recycled and gradually became indoctrinated as personifying any ear-splitting boyish performance. As similarly stereotyped depictions surfaced amongst different publications, flitting between both illustrations and photographs, advertisements and covers, editorials and comics, pictures became inextricable from truth. Leaning on Hans Belting's conception of picture and image, these migratory images resonated with the embedded mental images of their viewers.[87]

[85] See Sarah Burns' study of the popularity of rustic "barefoot" boys in the nineteenth century. "Barefoot Boys and Other Country Children: Sentiment and Ideology in Nineteenth-Century American Art", *The American Art Journal* 20, no. 1 (1988): 24-50.
[86] American Boy 18, no. 8, June 1917.
[87] See Hans Belting, *An Anthropology of Images: Picture, Medium, Body* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011).

The Country Gentleman thus adopted proactive and interactive methods for formulating a flattering picture of "the greatest institution in this great country – the American farm." This necessitated devaluing derogatory stereotypes of farmers. A piece titled "What a Farmer really looks like: Cartoon and comment by Edwin Marcus of the New York Times" attacked portrayals of agriculturalists by urban cartoonists with seething sarcasm.[88] Beneath the image of an archetypal straw-chewing hayseed, an irate "Edwin Marcus" defended the veracity of his image despite admitting "I've lived in New York City all my life" and "It's true that the movies are responsible for my thorough knowledge of the farmer." At the end, he claimed to have visited farming country to make his sketch from life, but failing to find his subject, he presented "a drawing of the farmer type I could not find, but which, of course, exists." Indeed the "farmer type" existed, but as implied by *Country Gentleman*, only as a fantasy of the sequestered urbanite.

While debunking the truth-value of Edwin Marcus, *The Country Gentlemen* endorsed the veracity of Rockwell's visions with a competition open to *Country Gentleman* sales boys. First place entry won a modeling job with Norman Rockwell, completing the circuit of reciprocal images. Rockwell's painting of boy holding two puppies on the March 18, 1922 cover visually accorded with his anonymous archetypal lads, but this figure was specifically identified as content winner George Hamilton of Binghamton, New York. In that issue, the magazine also published photographs of various runner-up entries strategically selected to represent all national regions. Each boy was positioned outside and doing his best to play with farm-yard pals or exhibit their unquenchable spirit. Text affirmed that these "are America's boys, strong-

[88] "What a Farmer Really Looks Likes," *The Country Gentleman*, November 19, 1921.

limbed and clear-eyed, on the alert." Like *The Country Gentleman*, the youth magazine *American Boy* also used mail-in photo and drawing competitions to endorse this same vision of country boyhood to its practitioners. Magazines leveraged the contest submissions to help sell and standardize their ingrained cultural vision. Not surprisingly, the winners of *American Boy*'s June 1917 "cartoon contest" largely parroted current comics and their constructions of boyhood: a puppy ruined a sandlot baseball game and a boy dreamt about moving closer to summer vacation in a chariot pulled by a snail. Participatory stunts like this collapsed illustration with lived experience and personal perception with consumer culture. Within these endless feedback loops lurked affirmation of a definable "Americanness."

Yet participatory consumers also generated dialogs that influenced and shifted the visual culture. Photographic portrait contests in *American Boy* invited its readers to compete as icons of American boyhood. Predictably, most of the winners from its July 1917 photo contest sported barnyard backgrounds and puppy dog friendship. However, a number of winning entries struck a more garish guise with dopey gap-toothed grins and tussled hair. This look harkened to a bawdy "mischievous boy" archetype, similar in appearance to Yellow Kid, that had appeared ubiquitously through cartoons and advertisements since the late 19th century. In 1914, Harry S. Stuff copyrighted his own version of this archetype paired with the "Me – Worry?" smart-alecky pop-culture phrase of the 1910's.[89] Not only did Stuff's figure provide the inspiration for *Mad Magazine*'s Alfred E. Newman, but his character, coined the "Eternal Optimist", helps us understand the original significance and appeal of this unattractive icon.

[89] Sam Sweet, "A Boy with No Birthday Turns Sixty", The Paris Review, March 3, 2016, https://www.theparisreview.org/blog/2016/03/03/a-boy-with-no-birthday-turns-sixty/

Blogger Peter Jensen Brown compares the "I should worry" slang craze of the 1910's with the 21st century's viral memes.[90] Appearing throughout comics and visual media, the phrase and its red-head tussled-haired mouthpiece marked its followers as hip and joyfully irreverent. The popularity of this outside fad and its embrace by youth culture contributed to the decline of Victorian solutions to boyhood. *American Boy* produced these images for the same conservative audience that wearily chastised this fad, indicating that, to survive in the illustrative industry, images could not simply dictate culture but must keep in step with America's evolving self-image. During the war years and beyond, this comic-strip-inspired image of boyhood with its cackling smile moved from the periphery to a central standard, epitomized by Clyde Forsythe's 1919 image of a World War I soldier.

Rather than straightforwardly endorsing or mocking the "I should worry" fad, Rockwell's engagement seemed to conscientiously flag the gravity of the change happening in American culture. Rockwell's August 10, 1918 Post cover "First Haircut" displayed a juvenile boy having his long, childhood curly locks shorn as a weeping mother in fashionable modern dress looks on. The subject is anachronistic, referencing a hairstyle that was more widespread at the turn of the century and on younger boys. Yet the boy's sleepy eyes and ear-to-ear grin closely evoked the very contemporary "I should worry" poster boys. Rockwell's image thus constructed a double overthrow of babyish sentimentality. In the narrative, the haircut signaled a transformation from childhood to juvenility. As a national symbol, it also implied a

[90] Peter Jensen Brown, "Wurra-Wurra, I Should Worry! And Billikens – a Proto-Neuman Worry Warrior", October 16, 2017, https://therealalfrede.blogspot.com/ and "What? Me Worry? Isch ka Bibble and Alfred E. Neuman", March 13, 2013, https://therealalfrede.blogspot.com/2013/03/what-me-worry-isch-ka-bibble-and-alfred.html

cultural sea change by inserting of gawkish, impudent youth culture into the magazine's polite adult subscribers.

The droll nature and childhood banter of Rockwell's work tends to repel deeper readings. However, if "First Haircut" is interpreted as a wartime image rather than a boyhood image, the expulsion of Victorian sentiment and insertion contemporary cheek premeditates the massive cultural changes that would launch at the close of the war. Furthermore, this cover appeared less than two weeks after Rockwell enrolled in the U. S. Naval Reserve Force. Even with the knowledge that covers were conceived on average four months before publication, the sheering of locks loomed as a potent metaphor for enlistment.[91] Rockwell would use this same sleepy, grinning face for depicting navymen in *Afloat and Ashore* two months later. The classic "I should worry" expression, reminiscent of snickering at a private joke, may be doing just that.

Rockwell did more than simply perform an impressive tightrope walk between modern fad and Victorian dictate with masterful, professional ease. Rockwell's navigation of slippery American archetypes seemed to be the very subject of his work, particularly in his pieces composed for the *Saturday Evening Post*. The early "gag" format of Post covers permitted punchy experimental narratives despite the conservative content inside. On close inspection, Rockwell's work seems full of sly jabs at the protocols of illustration.

This stratagem even applied to Cousin Reginald, who on the surface fully endorsed the commercial representation of red-blooded boyhood. Reginald and his country cousins closely

[91] Deborah Solomon recounts that, although Rockwell's autobiography states he enlisted in June 1917, government records record his first enlistment attempt as July 30, 1918. Solomon, *American Mirror*, 86.

resembled “Innocent Ike and the Fizzle Boys,” a comic strip that appeared in the *Chicago Tribune* in 1902. The *Tribune*’s comic echoed both Katzenjammer Kids and Foxy Grandpa. Each week the two country boys attempted to prank the fussily-dressed and naïve Ike, only to have the prank backfire and conclude with a reprimanding spank. There is no direct evidence that Rockwell was quoting the comic, but the similarities in tone and visuals are striking with the exception that Rockwell’s series created a role reversal, giving Reginald the monthly comeuppance instead of the country cousins. This aligned with *The Country Gentleman*’s prerogative of reversing negative cartoon stereotypes of country folk and would presumedly have deepened the countryman’s satisfaction at Reginald’s blunders.

Rockwell reversed the roles of Reginald and the country companions *again* in “Pardon me,” a festive middle-school dance scene which appeared on a *Saturday Evening Post* cover January 1918.[92] Here, the red-headed country cousin guffawed, apologizing with a dopey slack-jawed expression after trodding on the foot of the exact same girl who intimidated Reginald in *The Country Gentleman*’s December cover “Cousin Reginald under the Mistletoe.” Reginald, presumably trained in dancing, appeared in the background successfully twirling a female companion and laughing at the blunder. In the *Saturday Evening Post*, the social graces of the sissy urbanite rallied Reginald to success, a narrative designed to appeal to a patron base of metropolitan businessmen. Rockwell undermined a stereotype for one publication while emboldening it in another.

[92] “Pardon Me”, *Saturday Evening Post*, January 26, 1918.

HOW ROCKWELL UNRAVELED ILLUSTRATION'S CONVINCING FICTIONS

The mass dissemination of magazine art sparked arguments over the principles of American illustration before Rockwell ever inserted his voice. An article from January 1915 published in the left-wing magazine *The Masses* decoded why a "business art" was destined only for "profitable mediocrity."[93] Titled "What is the Matter with Magazine Art," Max Eastman's article decried photographic and slick illustrative styles as being devoid of any feelings other than "the obvious and conventional ones of average people with coins in their pockets." Suffering under the imperative of "ever attracting a new constituency without alienating the old," magazine art would, according to Eastman, only transcend toward "a great era in popular art" once free from the tyranny of profit-seeking editors.

Paradoxically, that June of 1915, J. C. Leyendecker seemed to have crafted a response by fulfilling Eastman's nightmare: Leyendecker remade a *Masses* cartoon into a slick *Post* cover. Both Leyendecker's cover (*Saturday Evening Post*, June 12, 1915) and the original cartoon by Cornelia Barns (*The Masses*, September 1914) depicted an exhausted male beau, slight of build, struggling to row his fat female companion across the lake. Whether or not it was intentional, the transfer insulted *The Masses*' presumption to high art. The illustration predated a mocking jingle with a similar sentiment that jabbed at the progressive magazine's social proclamations:

> They drew nude women for the Masses,
> Denuded, fat, ungainly lasses,

[93] Max Eastman, "What is the Matter with Magazine Art," *The Masses*, January 6, 1915, 15.

How does that help the working classes?[94]

Leyendecker and Cornelia Barns appeared to have a reciprocal relationship during their illustrative careers. Barns' September 1915 *The Masses* cover "Dancing School" closely emulated Leyendecker's 1912 cover "Hurdy Gurdy Man," but with the sketchy technique that Eastman aligned with individuality, freedom, and the "creative act of perception." Her drawing also replaced Leyendecker's crisp background and composition with rowdy tenement squalor and play. Perhaps for Barns this was an intentional rescue of the tenement children from the commercial into the real, or in Eastman's words, the "tonic chord of ordinary humane feeling" into "passions which are deep and elemental."[95] The visual tennis match between Leyendecker and Barns points to a battle over illustration as an American art form that raged within the structures and medium of illustration itself.

The financially independent *The Masses* endeavored to model its vision of a new cultural era by delivering "great art" to the disenfranchised populace. This reformation included rethinking the art of the political cartoon and lambasting weary stereotypes. The 1911 article "Arthur Young draws a funny picture for The Masses that isn't funny and writes a joke that isn't a joke" upended cartoon stereotypes through a laborious and heated textual analysis.[96] Rebecca Zurier describes how *The Masses*' core contributors, many from the Ashcan school, shifted the magazine's artistic focus toward raw, scathing satire.[97] The Ashcan school

[94] Quoted in Rebecca Zurier, *Art for The Masses: A Radical Magazine and its Graphics*, 1911-1917 (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988), 115.
[95] Eastman, "What is the Matter," 14.
[96] *The Masses* 10, October 1911, 12.
[97] Zurier, *Art for the Masses*, 125.

quest for the "real" inspired loose sketches that attempted to reinvest working class caricatures with pathos and gritty tangibility. These images often literally skewered working-class caricatures with horrific violent acts to topple their complacent roles as comic relief and forefront persecution. Zurier demonstrates how these techniques shifted practices of reading, creating consumers that "were no longer regarded as a passive audience but as fellow conspirators."[98]

Rockwell offered a similarly radical dynamic for the observant *Saturday Evening Post* consumer by harnessing the language of comics. However, Rockwell's "radical" was calibrated to the conservative middle-class spectrum of the *Post*'s readers. Unlike art created for *The Masses*, Rockwell's visual subterfuges survived the auspices of high profit publishing while seeking out its pressure points. Scott Bukatman discerns that comics have "readers" rather than "viewers."[99] If the incongruencies in Rockwell's work are read for content rather than viewed for entertainment, they reveal cracks in reigning ideals of conservative Americana. Deborah Solomon aligns with many Rockwell scholars when she defines a Rockwell painting as "literary as much as it is visual."[100] Read like a comic rather than an illustration, Rockwell's stories manifest narratives that not only told a complex story, but forge complex, transitive relationships through caricatured stereotypes and stale plots.

In early 20th century commercial illustration, the tyranny of images and their pantomime as truth reigned by erasing their referent. Rockwell embedded flat stereotypes with personal

[98] Idem.
[99] Bukatman, Poetics of Slumberland, see especially 195-200.
[100] Solomon, *American Mirror*, 7.

histories and contingencies. This not only made them more visibly "real" but also destabilized their fixed symbols. His technical process of starting with quick, punchy sketch and pushing toward a tangible result embodied this very concept of fleshing out the caricature. Rockwell's work did not overturn Max Eastman's condemnation that the trick of cartoon expression was that "any idea that is not radically displeasing in itself – gives a slight pleasure to almost anybody."[101] Rather, it examined why this truth is so. By humanizing characters that were often the comical "losers" of the middle-class American dream, Rockwell's humor pivoted from castigation to empathy.[102] Personal failures were less self-contained gaffes and came to symbolize the operational failures of reigning ideologies.

Much historical and material evidence circulating around Rockwell contradicts this idea. Foremost is *Post* editor Horace Lorimer's declaration that he defended America's core conservative values, a manifesto expressed through editorials, interviews, and his management style. Arthur Guptill's 1946 monograph on Rockwell's magazine art production and studio practice, published at the peak of Rockwell's *Post* career, recounted this, paraphrasing Rockwell's cautionary that "the young artist is often amazed at the prohibitions upon which editors must insist."[103] Guptill characterized the *Post*'s reading public as easily "upset by anything that flouts convention or is in questionable taste. And no matter how careful the

[101] Eastman, "What is the Matter," 14.
[102] John Alexander addresses Rockwell's focus on the American loser. Within the caricatures, Alexander detects "mute evidence of the half-hidden smiles of derision, stifled laughter, and possibly even the jeers." Yet Alexander concludes ". . . Rockwell didn't see them as funny, he sees them as part of the ineluctable richness of humanity. There is no message. Just the simple truth: We are all one." I would assert Rockwell is deliberately using them to question American hierarchies that encourage and sanction such jeers. John Alexander, "Rockwell Loved a Loser" in *Norman Rockwell Memory Album* or *The Saturday Evening Post Album* 1, no. 1 (1979), 35-36.
[103] Arthur L. Guptill, *Norman Rockwell, Illustrator* (New York: Watson-Guptill, 1946), 194.

artist is, certain people will read sinister or hidden meanings into his pictures."[104] Laudatory fan correspondence sent to Rockwell and the *Post* affirms this conservative picture. Rockwell's "supercritical" readers relentlessly scrutinized over his "mirror" images of America for anything amiss. For instance, Rockwell recalled a fan asking why his 1946 "Charwomen in Theater" "failed to show chewing gum beneath the seats."[105] As historian James J. Kimble has observed, many of these letters ignored the highly constructed nature of Rockwell's images and attempted to interact with Rockwell's characters as living people, recalling the fan letters written to R. F. Outcault's Yellow Kid and Buster Brown.[106] These letters corroborate scholarly accusations that a Rockwell cover satisfied nostalgic longings.

The majority of scholarship denies that Rockwell was capable of cultural critique.[107] Christopher Finch describes Rockwell as "the great master of the obvious."[108] According to Finch, Rockwell's art clung to faith in human decency, innocently driven by "the assumptions and concerns of his contemporaries and of the editors who employed him."[109] When an exhibition on Norman Rockwell opened at the Guggenheim in 2002, Donald Kuspit declared

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[104] Idem.
[105] Ibid., 55.
[106] See James J. Kimble, "Character sketches: The curious propaganda careers of Mary, Jane, and Willie," *The Communication Review* 20, no. 2 (2017): 142-161.
[107] In the catalog that accompanied the 2000 traveling exhibition "Norman Rockwell: Pictures for the American People", Ned Rikfin, Laurie Norton Moffatt, and many of its contributors urged for a reconsideration of Rockwell. The enormity of the task is evidence in their prefaces, which lists the number of ways Rockwell is dismissed, ridiculed, and rejected by art history. In her monograph on Norman Rockwell, Karal Ann Marling notes that in 2005 Rockwell was still mostly "overlooked or openly denigrated by critics of the fine arts." Her introduction addresses the various criticisms of Rockwell levelled by his detractors. See especially Ned Rifkin, "Why Norman Rockwell, Why Now?" and Laurie Norton Moffatt in "The People's Painter" in *Norman Rockwell: Pictures for the American People*, eds. Maureen Hart Hennessey and Anne Knutson (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1999), 17-20 & 23-27. Marling, *Rockwell*, 7.
[108] Finch, *Norman Rockwell*, 14.
[109] Ibid.

rather apocalyptically that it signaled "the bankruptcy of contemporary critical and curatorial imagination as well as America's self-delusion and self-deception."[110] He exposits on Rockwell's "blind faith in himself" and concludes, "Too bad Rockwell didn't have the self-doubt and uncertainty necessary to make insightful and innovative art in modernity."[111] Even those willing to reconsider American realism and magazine illustration as provocative art forms invoke Rockwell as the art historical Beelzebub. In her review of the Whitney Museum's exhibition on Grant Wood, Sue Taylor defended Wood against naysayers that took him "unreflectively for Norman Rockwell."[112] Even John Fagg's pioneering examination of Robert Robinson's "old codger" character, which placed the character straddling a political dialog "between nineteenth-century genre painting and twentieth-century commercial illustration", cautiously distanced his subject from Rockwell.[113]

Richard Reeves definitively states of Rockwell's work, "all its impact, the whole sentimental story, is in the first glance."[114] Historian Thomas Hoving repeated this same idea ("We can understand them in a flash") as a complement.[115] Both scholars are correct. Yet other scholars have attempted to "read between the lines", a phrase Claire Sisco King used to explain her analysis of Rockwell's constructions of gender through the lens of feminist queer theory. King explores how his images of young girls upset easy binaries, constructing gender as

[110] Donald Kuspit, "Norman Rockwell at the Guggenheim: What Does It Mean?", Art New England 23, no. 3, (April/May 2002), 10.
[111] Ibid., 11.
[112] See Sue Taylor, "Regional Unreal," *Art in America*, June 1, 2018, https://www.artnews.com/art-in-america/features/regional-unreal-63522/
[113] Fagg, "The Bewhiskered Rustic," 71.
[114] Quoted in Segal, "Norman Rockwell," 635.
[115] Thomas Hoving, "The Great Art Communicator" in *Norman Rockwell: Pictures for the American People*, eds. Maureen Hart Hennessey and Anne Knutson (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1999), 29.

a performance enacted "through ongoing, unstable, and often interstitial performances."[116] Rosie the Riveter became an especially hot subject for feminist scholars in her uneasy role representing contemporary female resistance. Melissa Dabakis deeply examines how Rockwell's use of gendered signifiers, perhaps imperfectly, reconstituted femininity in terms of strength.[117] A number of scholars have creatively psychoanalyzed Rockwell's images for Freudian peeks into the artist's dark, repressed psyche. Richard Halpern's *The Underside of Innocence* reflects how a psychological examination of Rockwell's work is more valuable for understanding its popular reception than Rockwell's intimate psyche, mining how Rockwell's "anxieties and conflicts are our own."[118] My own scholarship on Rockwell most closely models John Fagg's examination of *Post* cover artist Robert Robinson.[119] Robinson's simultaneous employment by the socialist *The Masses* prompts Fagg's close read on Robinson's "Old Codger" comic-narratives, which reveals hidden socialist ideologies. By contextualizing caricatures that appeared on the *Post's* covers with their deep, conflicted lineage, Fagg demonstrates how a *Post* cover artist smuggled secretive meanings into asinine caricatures.

My own attempt to "read between the lines" of Rockwell tries to understand how his covers performed as critical cartoons. Within the cartooning world, the "perverseness" that scholars like to exhume from Rockwell's work is not only commonplace but actually the beating heart of the medium. I contend that, like the many master comic strip artists working under

[116] Claire Sisco King, "American Queerer: Norman Rockwell and the Art of Queer Feminist Critique," *Women's Studies in Communication* 39, no. 2 (2016), 167.
[117] Melissa Dabakis, "Gendered Labor: Norman Rockwell's Rosie the Riveter and the discourses of wartime womanhood" in Gender and American History Since 1890, ed. Barbara Melosh (New York: Routledge, 1993), 195-201.
[118] Richard Halpern, *Norman Rockwell: The Underside of Innocence* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), x.
[119] See Fagg, "The Bewhiskered Rustic," 68-93.

intense commercial pressures, Rockwell often laced "first glance" reads with unnerving double meanings. At the same time, Rockwell was a premiere cover artist whose livelihood and reputation were tied to the visual politics of commercial illustration. Thus, as letters from his editor reveals, he was constantly walking the knife-edge between constructing a meaningful image and an image that would receive editorial rejection. In her attempt to reconstitute Rockwell's work for a contemporary audience, Claire Sisco King frames the challenge of reading Rockwell within the scholar's own preconceptions: "A suspicious reading might, therefore, argue that these images do not fully address intersectionality or disrupt the hegemony of whiteness or middle-classness, while a reparative reading may suggest that the homogeneity of Rockwell's characters actually makes such race and class privilege visible."[120] My read is less reparative, but more a curious "theory of everything" approach which attempts to rationalize the deep contradictions throughout his work. One of the most puzzling contradictions is why Rockwell stands out from the mountainous production of sentimental American cover illustration and anachronistically still endures.

While my own evidence is based primarily on close reads of Rockwell's images and their relationship with print culture, there are also historic conditions that support this complex take on his covers. Foremost is the complexity of the *Saturday Evening Post* itself. Rockwell's cartoon rebellion relates primarily to his *Post* covers. For other magazines and assignments, Rockwell generally settled on more conservative middle-class fantasies. As a self-proclaimed manifestation of middle-class America, the *Post* (and its bourgeoisie cover subjects) faced the challenge of keeping pace with the middle-class society's rapidly changing and multifarious self-

[120] King, "American Queerer," 170.

image following World War I. Magazines were included amongst the cultural casualties of the 1920's, with many of the high-line "glossies" folding at the start of the decade. Unlike its brethren, the *Post* survived and even thrived with a curiously hybrid cultural position.

Even as Horace Lorimer steered editorials to launch a conservative rescue of American values, the *Post* thrived on sensuous, desirous advertising and modern authors.[121] Historian Robert Sklar characterizes these advertisements as presenting "to its middle-class audience a congenial definition of themselves and their society" that was rife with contradicting values: "progressive yet traditional, innovative yet steady, daring yet conventional, comfortable yet hard-working, light-hearted but serious, practical-minded but not without a generous, redeeming streak of sentiment."[122] Sklar's analysis of the 1920's and its radical, decentered cultural change traces its origins back to middle-class disillusionment. Sklar identifies genteel middle-class values, enforced through a constant hum of critiques over America's social morals and cultural products, as the main coagulant for national culture prior to World War I. The post-war dissolution of genteel middle-class culture happened internally when its most influential and hard-hit adherents, the educated middle-class, rejected its own values:

> "The quality of their [genteel middle-class] culture, and the broad acceptance of its values by all American classes before the war, had been their pride. But when the emotions and social turmoil of war had passed they found their cultural leaders had debased their language and their values by linking them with the most mindless and least sophisticated forms of political opportunism, rural resentment, and ethnic and religious prejudice."[123]

[121] Cohn, Creating America, 9.
[122] Robert Sklar, *The Plastic Age, 1917-1930* (New York: George Braziller, 1970), 98.
[123] Ibid., 8.

Rockwell's atelier illustrative technique embodied pre-War conservatism. Yet he often wielded this style to destabilize, not reinforce, genteel ideals.

Rockwell's annual April Fool's Day covers, launched in 1943, were a specialty for the *Post* which laid bare his interest in fusing charming genre scenes with surreal mix-ups and visual non sequiturs. The obsessive nature of these puzzling and even disturbing juxtapositions reveal how easily Rockwell could reshuffle his symbols. Peter Rockwell reflected on "the possibility of mysterious meanings" in the 1948 "April Fool: Girl with Shopkeeper", which included unnerving reappearances of the girl's head and shopkeeper's head in busts and dolls throughout the image.[124]

Yet Rockwell often framed the caricaturist's eye more as a coping mechanism than a revolt: " . . . if anything happened that was sad or horrible or anything, I'd try to look at it as Dickens looked at it . . . as something picturesque or interesting rather than letting it get down and make me suffer."[125] This perspective accords with Henri Bergson's 1912 essay "Laughter: an essay on the meaning of the comic," which contemplated how laughter constituted an "anesthesia of the heart." Bergson asserted that once a sympathetic viewer stepped into the role of the "disinterested spectator" then "many a drama will turn into a comedy."[126] Bergson's concept may explain why Rockwell chose to record one of his greatest personal tragedies with the structural slapstick of a Sunday comic in his 1943 "My Studio Burns Down".

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[124] Peter Rockwell, "Some Comments from the Boy in the Dining Car" in *Norman Rockwell: Pictures for the American People*, eds. Maureen Hart Hennessey and Anne Knutson (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1999), 76.
[125] Rockwell, *My Adventures*, 28.
[126] Henri Bergson, *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*, trans. Cloudesley Brereton and Fred Rothwell (Mansfield Centre: Martino Publishing, 2014), 5.

Rockwell often deflected questions about the origins of his *Post* cover ideas and their potential political content with naivete ("Gee, I don't know. It just came to me").[127] Yet Rockwell occasionally dropped a side comments that pointed to deeper motives. While readers were searching for chewing gum in "Charwomen in Theater", Rockwell inferred a different prerogative, musing that he wanted to portray "the poor little drudge who has to tidy up after more fortunate people have had a good time. I've been interested in the hotel maid, for instance, who has to lay out her ladyship's gown; in reality the maid may be more of a lady – but let's not get into the social angle." [128] In fact, Rockwell's insistence that he was not an artist but an illustrator, alongside other self-dismissals, was almost aggressively benign. His performance as the naïve illustrator echoed Andy Warhol's constructed persona as a cultural illiterate interested only in television and popular media. The 2017 exhibition at the Norman Rockwell Museum "Inventing America: Rockwell and Warhol" drew strong correlations between the two artists, proposing that Rockwell's humdrum public persona was similarly a performance.[129]

The equally "humdrum" persona of his covers can similarly be analyzed as a constructed performance. Many of Rockwell's covers unravel the fictional pleasures of American stability that had become synonymous with magazine illustration, albeit in subtle and disguised deliveries. Although my primary focus is on the male adolescent, Rockwell performs the work on both male and female subjects, with female covers often offering Rockwell's most glaring

[127] Quoted in Guptill, *Norman Rockwell, Illustrator*, 53.
[128] Idem.
[129] Andy Warhol identified Norman Rockwell as one of his favorite artists. Ned Rifkin, "Why Norman Rockwell," 20.

inversions. For example, Rockwell's *Post* cover published June 27, 1925 depicted a beautiful youthful woman who epitomized 1920's fashion, modernity and decadence. Lounging with her newspaper, she sported a bob haircut and black and red drop waist dress with a bold geometric pattern. Her chair was comparatively muted, floral, and old-fashioned. The image encapsulated a bold jazz age youth bankrolled by older and presumably more conservatively earned cash. Two weeks later, Rockwell's next *Post* cover sported another lounging fashionista with a newspaper, but one that harkened to collapsed pre-war prosperities. This older, jowly male figure wore the upper-class top hat fashion from a previous decade. A mismatched patch on his trousers, dilapidated shoes, and sagging spats all added to a desperate attempt at elitism: he rolled an abandoned cigar toward his chair with his cane.

The model, Harry Seal, arguably represented a caricature of himself. Rockwell recounted that this long time model "lived like a king" across Europe for around twenty-five years by cashing in on his father's half share in the Royal Baking Powder Company before returning to America broke.[130] As separate images, these two covers simply chronicled America's unique cast of characters with entertaining precision. As a pair, though, the girl's blasé fingering of chocolates and man's stealthy squirreling of a smoking butt generated "pathos" (Rockwell's term) in its meditation on the fate of two different generations after the "Great War."[131] They described the devastation and humiliation of pre-war speculation and ideals. Simultaneously, they suggested a vicious cycle of prosperity and loss, youthful

[130] Rockwell, *My Adventures*, 212.
[131] Ibid., 213.

arrogance fading into humiliating age, themes that would later haunt F. Scott Fitzgerald's writing upon the collapse of the jazz age.

Rockwell is famous for rendering nostalgic constructions of America's colonial and Victorian past. However, at least some of Rockwell's anachronisms functioned more as social critiques than as memory strolls. Rockwell's "Girl doing Sampler" from March 1, 1924 depicted a young lady from 100 years ago demurely pulling a thread through her cross-stitch. An inset image of her sample showed two girls labeled "work" and "play" with the poem "All little Girls should duteous be / And kind and courteous over / From frivolous thoughts deliver me / Until this Life I sever." Rockwell's cover may suggest a conservative harkening to the "good old days", but his model's prissy and aloof expression would not have easily won admirers. The message of "Girl doing Sampler" was a far cry from other old-timey females. W. H. D. Koerner's 1922 "Madonna of the Prairie" literally sacralized pioneer chastity and self-sacrificing endurance. "Girl doing Sampler's" overly stylized dress with heavy lace, an ornate rose pattern, and cascade of ruffles over a wide hoop skirt, seem purposely poised to repel the streamlined aesthetic sensibilities of its 1924 reader. She created a vivid contrast to Walter Humphrey's cover of a 1920's modern girl that appeared one week prior. The bobbed hair and drop-waist dress of Humphrey's model matched the reigning fashion for *Post* cover girls since at least 1921, as demonstrated by Rockwell's own flapper in "Fortuneteller." Humphrey's character petulantly contemplated the aftermath of a raucous party which include a litter of dirty dishes, half eaten cake, and melting ice cream. In Humphrey's image, the modern girl grated against the domestic housekeeping responsibilities assigned to her sex. Rockwell's image was more on

par with Alan Foster's 1925 "Hot Tamale Five" in which a Victorian ancestor, pictured in a daguerreotype, looked on horrified on the stick-flipping jazz band drummer.

As with previously discussed Rockwells, the message of "Girl doing Sampler" probes at the fragility of simplistic ideals by revealing their contradictions. This meditation on an outdated anachronism had a particular resonance for Rockwell in 1924 and may even carry autobiographical overtones. The autumn prior, Rockwell travelled to Europe and enrolled in the Calorossi's art school. While Rockwell was already aware his tightly rendered style was out of fashion, a particularly harsh sneer by a fellow American student catalyzed him to explore modern art.[132] When he attempted to integrate a modernist aesthetic into his next *Post* illustration, Lorimer adamantly rejected the attempt proclaiming, "I don't know much about this modern art, so I can't say whether it's good or bad. But I know it's not your kind of art . . . Now what is your next cover for us going to be? Which of the ideas you showed me in September before you went to Europe?"[133] Considering Rockwell's typical 4 to 6 month "conception to production" schedule, the weary, soulless, dutiful subject of "Needlepoint" would have probably been conceived shortly after this meeting.

Rockwell's March 9, 1935 "The Partygoers" was similarly anachronistic, pushing a tired trope into a social commentary. By 1935, the *Post*'s covers had gravitated toward more conservative narratives set with decidedly middle-class protagonists, small-town neighborhoods, and sporty day-time leisure. While the clothing of Rockwell's cover fitted the 1930's Hollywood set, its theme of a young couple partying obliviously until morning accorded

[132] Rockwell, *My Adventures*, 193.
[133] Ibid., 195.

more with the jazz age. John Held, Jr. addressed the same theme of a thrill-seeking couple greeting the milkman on their way home during the zenith of his popularity in the 1920's. Held filtered male bodies into bold, flat, chiseled shapes and transformed female bodies into an assembly of willowy limbs with heightened erotic details, such as knobby knees and panty-lace. In Held's illustration, this bold style as well as the jovial greeting between milkman and debonaire embodied the multiple sensual and artistic liberations of the 1920's. Rockwell's milkman, on the other hand, looked tired with a hunched back, slackening jowls, and a slightly peeved expression. His aging form, not the elegant couple, dominated the composition.

Rather than diagnosing Rockwell as pathological fuddy-duddy, I contend that his images intentionally captured the 1930's weariness with class-contingent pleasures. A 1933 review of "Young Novelists" by Matthew Josephson captured the post-Depression era outlook by castigating the "lost generation" authors who could not move beyond themes of self-psychoanalysis and self-fulfillment. Recognizing that many Americans "can't be drinking champagne from morning to night, can't ever go to Princeton or Montparnasse or even Greenwich Village for their finishing process," Josephson focused his attention on "objective" novelists who possessed "an increasingly clear consciousness of the whole of the society in which they live."[134] Shelly Armitage traces the eventual demise of John Held Jr.'s era-defining flapper girl, remarking how the "New Woman" of the 1920's "lost her energy for change" as well as her symbolic meaning as, through incessant repetitions, she transformed into a

[134] Matthew Josephson, "The Younger Generation: Its Young Novelists," *VQR* 9, no. 2 (Spring 1933): https://www.vqronline.org/essay/younger-generation-its-young-novelists

"commercial doll."[135] With the passage of Franklin D. Roosevelt's second New Deal that March, Rockwell's image suggests a foregrounding of working-class realities against upper-class fantasies.

In other instances, Rockwell appears to be wielding commercial illustration to poke holes in its own fabric. Rockwell's swansong cover for *The Country Gentleman*, the April 29, 1922 "The Auctioneer", was atypically aggressive and seedy. A local paper identified this cover simply as an auctioneer trying to get a good price for some household junk, but I believe that it performed a more metaphorical critique.[136] Rockwell's auctioneer gestured and spoke directly to the viewer. While the direct confrontation was a common motif in magazine illustration, it was surprisingly scarce in Rockwell's oeuvre. Surrounded by a hodge-podge of small decorative items, the auctioneer held up a small figurine in European pastoral dress, a collectible evoking cheap middle-class Victorian sentimentality. As the auctioneer shouted for bidders, it was easy to overlook that the figurine was missing its head. All illustrators understood the main purpose of a cover was to sell the magazine, and the collapse of the cover's purpose and subject (selling "household junk") seems inescapably intentional.

This cover appeared nearly two decades prior to Clement Greenberg's 1939 "Avant-Garde and Kitsch" essay that tagged Norman Rockwell's Post covers as capitalist anesthesia for

[135] Shelley Armitage, *John Held, Jr.: Illustrator of the Jazz Age* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1987), 92.
[136] Newspaper clipping titled "Two Rockwell Covers Make Hit Last Week," c. May 1922, no date or publication information provided, Archives of the Norman Rockwell Museum, Stockbridge, MA.

the masses, resulting only in "unreflective enjoyment."[137] Yet Rockwell's portrayal of an auctioneer flogging a headless piece of sentimental garbage seemingly acknowledged kitsch as the operative condition driving the magazine industry. Even a small Greek bust in the lower right corner, symbolic of high art, appeared to lower its head in shame. Susan Stewart identifies kitsch as offering a "saturation of materiality." In addition to popularizing antique collecting, for Stewart kitsch objects provide the consumer with souvenirs of their society's collective identity.[138] "The Auctioneer" literalized this concept with disdain. However, in other instances Rockwell's covers explored the gaps kitsch attempted to fulfill with less acerbic images. Just as Stewart aligns kitsch with adolescence as that "period of intense socialization," Rockwell also utilized the adolescent body to explore the American search for gratification.

BOYHOOD, THE IMAGINATION, AND PLASMATIC POTENTIAL

Rockwell utilized the anarchic play and the marginalized voice of comics to cast doubt on the sociological dictates of American culture. Similar to his work in *Afloat and Ashore*, the ductile adolescent male body was a crucial peg in this performance. The adolescent's radical encounter with pubescence permitted Rockwell to convincingly harness the plasmatic potential of the cartoon to his characters. The adolescent's latent potential to overcome obstacles made

[137] Clement Greenberg, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch", *Partisan Review* 6 (Fall 1939). Reprinted in *Art in Theory 1900-1990: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, eds. Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1992), 537.
[138] Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 167.

his body a less threatening vehicle for social foibles.[139] These images thwarted normative pressures affixed to the developing white male body and wedged in new, misfit models into the canon of manhood.

In his autobiography, Rockwell could be surprisingly unsentimental about sentimental visions of America. Nicknaming Frederic Remington a "Bronx boy," Rockwell surmised that only a city painter could make glamorous the factually drab life of a Western cowboy.[140] Rockwell reflected also on Mark Twain and accounts of those who knew the author back when he was a "sensitive kid." He reflected that what Sam Clemens "put into his stories were the things that he would have done had he been strong – things that he no doubt dreamed of doing."[141] Rockwell's own boyhood summer trips to a countryside farmhouse are often cited for inspiring his visions of small-town America. Yet Rockwell freely acknowledged the contingency behind his pleasure: "to the country boy, the country means work and he wants to go to the city. He wants to make his fortune in the city. To me, my ambition was to go out and live in the country and live on a farm and so on because I never had to do the farm work."[142] For Rockwell, desire and identity became intermingled in self-fashioning: "In my work I always paint these sort of Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn's, the carefree country boy. You won't very often find the

[139] Rockwell's illustrations for Booth Tarkington's 1918 story of *Ramsey Milholland* crafted the college adolescent as pathetic and contemptible as Cousin Reginald. Yet Tarkington's story concludes with Ramsey rocketing toward a redemptive model manhood when the character voluntarily enlists in the army.
[140] Rockwell, *My Adventures*, 35.
[141] Guptill, Norman Rockwell, 107.
[142] Norman Rockwell, unpublished interview, Compact Disc 2, Archives of the Norman Rockwell Museum, Stockbridge, MA.

real country boy that paints this. He comes to New York and wears spats and carries a cane and goes to night clubs."[143]

Rockwell's mastery over American nostalgia was thus founded on a deep understanding of its fiction. His images played to the sensations of longing he found embedded within these archetypal images. Susan Stewart's semiotic analysis of longing sees this state as embedded within the bourgeois subject, specifically narratives of self, meaning, and origin the subject exports onto material products.[144] Stewart pays close attention to the "social disease" of nostalgia and its "generalized desire for origin" within utopic narratives constructed about the past.[145] At the heart of this longing is the gap between signifier and signified, a gap that narrative, especially nostalgic narrative, seeks to close which authentic experience cannot. Using Stewart's definitions, Rockwell upset the mechanics of nostalgia by confusing the division between fictional narrative and a living subject.

Despite his reputation for "carefree" country boys, Rockwell explored suburban adolescence with equal force. Rather than dwelling on its pleasures, he tended to explore domestic-bound boyhood as an interminable state of longing. "Baby Carriage" meditated on how humiliation extended longing for the adolescent subject. Here an over-civilized boy appeared constricted and childish wearing businessman's clothing while the two boys in sports uniforms moved freely and openly: a classic advisory tale against the over-civilized sissy robbed of his savage pre-adolescence. Yet all three boys were modelled by Billy Payne, Rockwell's

[143] Idem.
[144] Stewart, *On Longing*, xi-xii.
[145] Ibid., 24.

model through the first half decade of his career.[146] Through gesture, expression, and costume, Billy Payne transmogrified between the city sissy, the yokel idiot, and the snarky athlete. Although a common illustrative practice, this sleight of hand raised the question about whether American boyhood formed a genetic predilection or a theatrical charade.

Eric Segal demonstrates how Rockwell explored this unstable idea of American masculinity as performance in his advertising work. By showing that masculinity could be "applied" by the purchase of modern commodities, Rockwell's images, according to Segal, relocated the "locus" of masculinity from physical prowess and personal discrimination to the "manufacturer's label."[147] Here I would like to explore other "loci" of masculinity in Rockwell's exploration of adolescence. Masculinity often eluded Rockwell's adolescents as a moving target. As the adolescents attempted to meet masculinity's contradictory criteria through their hyperbolized imagination and soft approach to logic, they frequently cobbled together absurd forms of masculinity. However, rather than sacrificing the American "loser" to the public demand for pleasurable castigation, Rockwell's images explored how adolescent sufferings, and their extension into adulthood, defined American identity.

Many of Rockwell's images of young adolescents teased at this conundrum by exploring concepts of childhood fantasy that fell outside regimented guidelines. Rockwell's second cover, "The Circus Barker," used masculinity as dress-up for both the method and the subject.[148] Like Leyendecker's "Children Playing Circus", the image evokes the circus pantomimes played out by

[146] Karal Ann Marling notes that the "clear similarities" between all three characters enhance the babysitter's isolation from his peers. *Norman Rockwell*, 10.
[147] Segal, "Norman Rockwell," 646.
[148] *Saturday Evening Post*, June 3, 1916.

Outcault's tenement kids. However, while Leyendecker focused on the rough-and-tumble faux acrobatics, Rockwell turned to Outcault's interest in how children approximated adult signifiers through costume. Rockwell's circus barker painted on a goatee and moustache to assume his managerial role. The aspiring strongman donned long underwear to simulate nudity and stuffs the biceps to simulate flexing muscle.

This pre-teen "Sandow" posed arrogantly in a feathered headband and impromptu sarong that imitated a fantasy of Native American attire. While the exotic costume channeled Sandow's penchant for posing in the guise of ancient heroes, Sandow preferred to simulate the half nude rippling bodies of Roman and Greek statues, not Native Americans. Native Americans were commonly inculcated as models of masculinity for juveniles and young adolescents. They were not intended as exemplars of male beauty, which would collapse theories built on Nordic manifest destiny, but presented as an ideal savage. The Native American model of physical fitness, self-reliance, and courage would presumably funnel the juvenile's savage inclinations toward productive skill building.[149] In Rockwell's image, the child's conflation of categorical ideals (the European strongman, the Native American, and the circus performer) demonstrates the fragility of their boundaries. Rockwell's image played on the whimsical theme of the child's imagination, its misconceptions, and its attempt to reconcile abstract concepts.

Rockwell's August 13, 1921 "The Funny Mirror" used an optical illusion rather than costume to fulfill fantasies of transformation. Here the pleasures of plasmatic malleability were not limited to cartoons but could be realized through a Coney Island funhouse mirror. The

[149] See Kent Baxter's chapter "Playing Indian: The Rise and Fall of the Woodcraft Youth Movements" in *The Modern Age*, 93-115.

innocuous subject of a boy laughing gleefully at his own distorted reflection grows more complex on closer look. His thick calves, chubby hands, and fleshy cheeks identified him as the "fat kid," a staple character of Rockwell's boyish gangs whose corpulent shape typically powered the humor. Boy model Billy Ogden originally fulfilled this role as the sweaty, hefty "Boy Asleep with Hoe" in 1919. The "Funny Mirror" model was likely Nicholas Yagar, the boy who huffs and puffs in "No Swimming" and is the pampered, sedentary figure in "Boy with Stereoscope." [150] In an article on Rockwell's favorite trio of boy models, Yagar stood out as the chubby comic relief. Yet in "Funny Mirror", he stared with delight at his transformation into a lanky kid with stretched legs and cackling grin, a figure more reminiscent of Rockwell's main protagonists modeled by the more svelte Billy Payne or Frank Lischke.

In 1915 *Post* illustrator John A. Coughlin also depicted a boy examining his mirror reflection[151]. However, Coughlin's youth took over his mother's mirror to practice his wind-up pitch and affirm correct form, anticipating his baseball mound glory. In contrast, Rockwell's humor swiveled on the same satirical axis as the "How he sees himself / how he actually looks" cartoons from the college humor magazines. Leapfrogging from one stereotype into another, Rockwell's boy before the funhouse mirrors almost appears self-aware of his pigeonholed "chubby kid" role as his momentarily escapes into another niche character. As this excerpt from Paul Klee's poem to a homely girl reflects, self-awareness was a necessary unthinkable for

[150] In the scrapbook of Frank Lischke, see newspaper clipping from the *Evening Telegram*, New York, July 9, 1922 on Rockwell's three models: Nicholas Yagar, Charlie McAloon, and Franklin Lischke. Archives of the Norman Rockwell Museum, Stockbridge, MA.
[151] *Saturday Evening Post*, April 24, 1915.

the caricatured loser, as their cognition comes at the expense of the viewer's enjoyment and contemplation:

> "Know you my laughter about you?
> Be glad you do not know;
> For it would burn you terribly.
> And now it burns only me."[152]

It is with hesitancy that I look toward Rockwell's biography to affirm this plasmatic interpretation of his work. Scholarship on Rockwell is haunted by attempts to psychoanalyze the artist's presumed inferiority complexes. In discussing his own life, Rockwell frequently veered toward stories that intersected with this idea of plasticity or the transformative body. Upon entering the navy, Rockwell fought against his underweight physique by stuffing himself with bananas, donuts, and water to tip the scales.[153] He recounted buying a female corset in a desperate attempt to shape a masculine silhouette that had refused to develop naturally.[154] Rockwell also described his own developing physique with disparaging overtones, noting his hunched shoulders and a turkey neck. I do not cite these biographic accounts to ponder Rockwell's latent insecurities. Rather, I see Rockwell applying the same exaggerated, cartooning techniques to the construction of his own identity.

This is especially evident in a series of private postcards that he drew and printed to mail home to family and friends during a trip to Europe.[155] This was one of the very few examples in addition to *Afloat and Ashore* where Rockwell adopted the raw exaggerations and

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[152] See Paul Klee, "Diary III: June 1902 to September 1906" in The Diaries of Paul Klee: 1898-1918, ed. Felix Klee (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1964), 128.
[153] Rockwell, *My Adventures*, 115.
[154] Ibid., 178.
[155] Rockwell describes these images in Guptill, *Norman Rockwell*, 127.

simplified deft pen-line of cartooning. These images illustrated Rockwell with his two travelling companions as cartoon characters attempting to adopt the cultural affectations of various countries. All three figures sport garish physiques, but Rockwell was especially distinguished by his lanky height, delicate boyish features, tiny chest and shoulders, and comparatively swollen abdomen. Rockwell's self-narration, both in oral and visual form, mapped doubt, insecurity, and conflict onto the wayward body as an inherently American experience. Because he pulled these exaggerations from traditions of cartooning, Rockwell inscribed this experience with celebratory, plasmatic potential that takes pleasure in violating regulatory norms.

Rockwell's "Boy Lifting Weights" cover from April 29, 1922 plotted these same physical aberrations and insecurities on an adolescent would-be champ, "a sort of self-portrait" Rockwell explained.[156] Painted from boy model Frank Lischke, the cover is in keeping with Rockwell's self-narrations as the boy attempted to mold his misshapen sprouting physique by subscribing to a mail-order fitness program. Catering to the physical culture craze, these program advertisements flooded popular magazines, including the *Post*. With "Be a Man" printed on the pin-up of the bodybuilder and "champ" on the adolescent's top, the printed word symbolized falsified promises. However, the humor of the image derived primarily from the impossible gulf between the youth's bent awkward body and the advertised physique.

On the one hand, this humor catered to a normative 1920's view of boyhood. The boy's uncertain, analytical temperament lacked "innate" boyish savagery and a proactive will, making him as ineligible for masculine development as George Bellows' atrophied businessmen (see

[156] Ibid., 159.

"Businessmen's Class." Yet the boy's gullible, earnest efforts also destabilized the concept that self-made manhood was an achievable dream, patriotic responsibility, and racial prerogative for white males. In 1918, the *Journal of the American Medical Association* discredited one of the most ubiquitous and outlandish mail-in fitness programs, the Swoboda system, as quack science and a commercial rip off. Swoboda's program promised a "Conscious Evolution", permitting rational self-control down to the cellular level.[157] Swoboda's system, which had been going strong for two decades, and imitation programs continued to feed not only the physical culture craze but also hopes for an evolutionary breakthrough of the Anglo-Saxon race. Rockwell's quip about his "Be a Man" cover ("be it ever so homely, there's no shape like your own") instead presented self-acceptance and flawed form as an inevitable reality.[158]

In "Boy Lifting Weights," "champ's" gaze turned toward the illustrated exercise regime and the pin-up poster of a flexing strongman. In line with contemporary practices, the early 20th century physical culture craze encouraged gazing at muscular male bodies and provoking desire as the first step toward masculine perfection. *Physical Culture Magazine* frequently published "before" and "after" images on their covers, promising a miraculous transformation from boney shoulders to brimming muscles. The very practice of deriving pleasure from a perfected muscular physique was entangled with the core definitions of aesthetics. Sir Walston, a British art historian, sought to give aesthetic principles scientific credibility by analyzing them through the biological principles of harmonism, the "instinctive" desire to seek out harmonizing principles in pursuit of truth. His research grounded this instinctive "aesthetic

[157] "The Propaganda for Reform," *Journal of the American Medical Association* 70, no. 11 (March 16, 1918): 799-802.
[158] Guptill, *Norman Rockwell*, 159.

sensibility" in the contemplation of nature, most notably admiration of "the finest shadings of the human form."[159] In accordance with recapitulation theories and biological racism, Walston described how primitive aesthetic impulses could only be cultivated into its "purest forms" (ie. pure aesthetic contemplation undiluted by other mental activities) by advanced cultures with enough surplus energies to fuel aesthetic delights, including "the physical pleasure of exercises and athletic games."[160]

In the *Journal of Philosophy*, Van Meter Ames defined art itself as an "athletic" experience. Its sensuous, plastic properties stimulated the body and refreshed his physical self "in the athletic and ancient sense of the animal organism."[161] Ames enmeshed the instinctual contemplation of beautiful bodies with the contemplation of art: "A boy naturally values athletic ability in his fellows, but when he sees an Olympic athlete his admiration is suddenly augmented by a glimpse of undreamed possibility. Then he may see a statue by Myron of an ideal Olympic athlete, with the consequence that an appreciation of art is born."[162] Like other aestheticians, Ames saw art as an awakening of a longing "which nothing on earth can allay" and thus a desire for attainment.[163] *Physical Culture Magazine's* February 1920 cover embodied this transition from admiration to longing as a catalyst for action. A nude, scrawny adolescent flexed before a mirror. His fantasy emerged in the confident sculpted form who gazed back with a bulging bicep.

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[159] Sir Charles Walston, *Harmonism and Conscious Evolution* (London: J. Murray, 1922), 136.
[160] Ibid., 137, 142.
[161] Van Meter Ames, "The Function of Esthetic Experience," *The Journal of Philosophy* 23, no. 22 (October 28, 1926), 606.
[162] Ibid., 608.
[163] Idem.

In exploring the early adolescent imagination and the practice of gazing at idealized images, Rockwell was intersecting a popular comic strip trope with a high stakes psychological stage. A number of comic strips pivoted on the unbridled animative potential of youths and the agitated imaginations of hallucinating adults. Most famously, Winsor McCay's "Nemo in Slumberland" generated rich worlds with altered laws of physics, creating fantastic mindscapes. George Stanley Hall distinguished puberty as the "birthday" of the imagination. This signaled a crucial developmental stage in which the imagination emerged as a "totalizing faculty", stimulating the faculties of higher thought and priming sensory faculties to new harmonies.[164] This springtime of the imagination was marked by more vividly coherent fantasies and a tendency to merge disparate facts by ignoring their logical limits. Such illogical leaps were crucial for physical fantasies as they propelled adolescents to achieve perfect physical forms previously thought unattainable.

Images of fantasizing oneself into a masculine form circulated as a healthy and even necessary activity for boys. Despite the unlimited plasticity of the adolescent imagination, illustrators tended to focus on daydreams that could constructively assist a youth's development toward manhood. In the *Saturday Evening Post*, Robert Robinson's "Schoolboy Hero" from 1918 and "Daydreams of Baseball" from 1925 demonstrated legitimate models for adolescent fantasy (Figs. 6.56 and 6.57). Both boys were depicted sitting at school desks and with books propped open as they fell into their daydream. The sedentary, cerebral indulgence was permissible because it allowed escape from the confines of school. Both boys imagined

[164] G. Stanley Hall, *Adolescence: Its psychology and its relations to physiology, anthropology, sociology, sex, crime, religion, and education* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1904), 313.

themselves in hero roles of a contemporary context, one as a World War I hero collecting enemy helmets and the other as a baseball legend. Although the boys retained his childhood visage and physique in each image, the clothes were fitted appropriately to the bodies in order to create a miniaturized, but not ridiculous, version of the heroes. The young boy projecting himself into the role of the war hero or baseball star represented a dream that would help inspire and discipline his embarkation to masculinity. These were popularly circulated and potentially attainable ideals of masculine courage and prowess.

Rockwell's November 10, 1923 cover "Boy Reading Adventure Story" stood diametrically opposed these productive and modern-minded examples. A young adolescent eagerly poured over a volume on knighthood. The domestic interior and sleeping dog suggested that these fantasies come at the cost of active outdoor play. His hunched posture, knit brow, tense grasp on the cover of the book, and even the rubbing points of his toes revealed his excitement over the all-encompassing fantasy projected behind. With his own young face mapped onto the unflinching body of a knight, in his fantasy he rode mounted on a steed, lance in hand, sword in hilt, and a beautiful damsel clutching from behind. Rather than ennobling, the fantasy displayed a comic incongruence between the boyish bespectacled head and the plumed helmet that dwarfed it. In fact, the head measured significantly smaller than the head of the woman, as if the boy miscalculated the scale of his fantasy. The boy's flesh colored face, particularly the rosy lips and blushed cheeks, set it apart from the illustration's chromatic grandeur, composed chiefly in muted grays and whites with distinct accents of red. As a result, the boy's fantasy symbolized the gap between the fantasy of masculine achievement and the means to practically achieve such glory.

H. W. Chase, Professor of the Philosophy of Education, warned that the ravenous adolescent imagination was vulnerable to yellow journalism, dime novels, and other ruinous entertainments. He urged educators and parents to satisfy their adolescents' cerebral needs by feeding them with the passions and impulses "that move the characters of literature."[165] Yet "Boy Reading Adventure Story" shows how small a margin of error operated on these qualifiers. The ornate costume and remembrance of chivalric codes harkened to the embellished practices of the dude and outdated conceptions of what comprised masculinity. Furthermore, the English heraldic crests indicated an old-world conception of masculinity no longer congruent with the liberation of the 1920's. Rockwell's young boy was now trapped in an unproductive sentimental reverie.

During the 1920's, Rockwell continued to explore the theme of unfulfilled or unfillable romantic fantasies through several adult male characters. Similar to "Boy Reading Adventure Story", Rockwell's individuals daydreamed or snoozed as their colorful fictions unfold behind. In the 1924 "Daydreaming Bookkeeper" a hunched, balding desk clerk with sullen face imagined a Spanish galleon ship plunging through the waves, clearly using fantasy for escape rather than as an adventure catalyst. In the February 16, 1929 *Post*, Rockwell depicted a middle-aged middle-class man snoozing before a fire with an open book titled "Chivalry" on his round stomach. His fantasy was filled with a chainmail procession of sleek knights, angelic damsels, mystical friars, and suffering captives. The fantasy replicated the sentiments of the editorial cartoon on page 26 titled "The Times Have Certainly Changed." This cartoon compared dragon-

[165] H. W. Chase, "The Adolescent Imagination: Its Significance for Education", *The North Carolina High School Bulletin* 2, No. 1 (January 1911), 24.

slaying medieval chivalry to a lounging contemporary youth responding to his sweetheart's request for a glass of water with "Get it yourself, gal. You're no cripple." Yet Rockwell's dreamer lacked the cartoon's smugness and categorized the medieval longings as sentimental escapism. The only gleaming metal came from a spoon atop a medicine bottle, speaking to middle-aged ailments and infantilized domestic care. Instead of a steed, a domestic cat with a giant red bow stood faithfully next to the man's slippered feet. The feminized, sedentary space cast his chivalric dream as a mawkish escape rather than an active urge.

At the start of 1920's, many of Rockwell's cover boys skewed older, more toward middle and late adolescence. The shift accorded with the rise of 1920's youth culture as key consumerist group and touchstone for jazz-age liberation. For a decade prior, college humor magazines had adopted the comic-strip juvenile delinquent as their celebratory symbol of college-aged irreverence and consequence-free stupidity. Illustrator John Held, Jr. famously raised this hapless cartoon youth into a hedonistic ideal. Historian Shelley Armitage emphasizes the persuasive power of this cyclical recycling of Held's style, which began collapsing cartooning with reality. This is captured by 1920's critic Corey Ford's reflection on Held's sway: "So sedulously did we ape his caricatures that they lost their satiric point and came to be a documentary record of our times."[166]

Held's college-aged adolescents were filtered into punchy geometries of rectangles and circles. Their circular faces and stick noses exaggerated the abstract shorthand used by cartoonists like George McManus while invoking contemporary abstraction. Like McManus'

[166] Quoted in Armitage, *John Held, Jr.*, 61.

Newly Weds and other lopsided heterosexual courtships, Held's hapless cartoon protagonists were inexplicably fawned over by fashionable females with sensuous tactile anatomy.[167] Like the college humor magazines of the 1920's, Held's *Life* covers hiked the sexuality of scantily-clad flappers.[168] Their insatiable lust for bobble-headed college boys seemingly required no masculine traits beyond slicked hair and a fashionable suit.

Yet just when Rockwell's plasmatic sensibility of movement aligned with jazz-age liberation, Rockwell increased the awkward, bumbling aspect of his jazz-age adolescents. Rockwell's heterosexual couplings could not achieve the liberated sexual pleasures of Held's youths. In the "Girl Reading Palm," an adolescent in a fashionable suit fretted and screwed his face as he tried to understand the flirtatious fortune delivered by his flapper companion.[169] In "Boy Hiding Under Couch Sneezing", a spying little brother interrupted an adolescent courtship with a game-stopping sneeze.[170] The carefully planned wooing, complete with a fashionable Chinese décor, halted just as the male youth was grasping the girl's waist and hand for a John Held, Jr.-like embrace. In Rockwell's before-and-after set "Cupid's Visit" and "Defeated Suitor," the model's sprawling limbs lacked jazz-age electricity and weightless. Instead, legs and arms

[167] Shelley Armitage performs an in-depth visual analysis of John Held, Jr.'s winning visual formula and how it played off concepts of the New Woman and reigning humorous and stylistic trends in magazines. Armitage, *John Held, Jr*. See also Carolyn Kitch on "The Flapper" in *The Girl on the Magazine Cover: The Origins of Visual Stereotypes in American Mass Media* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 121-135, especially 131.
[168] See Held's Freud-reading "Sweet Sexteen" girl for the "Freshman Number", *Life*, September 30, 1926 and the champagne-toasting and smoking flapper of "The Sweet Girl Graduate", *Life*, June 3, 1926. Shelly Armitage connects this to the growing fascination for sexually driven humor in *Judge*, *Life*, and *College Humor*. Ibid., 64.
[169] *Saturday Evening Post*, March 12, 1921.
[170] *Saturday Evening Post*, October 1, 1921.

bent awkwardly, inhibited by realistic joints, like so much anatomical baggage.[171] The two covers took on Rockwell's persistent theme of teenage romantic reverie and its rude dissolution. Rockwell's adolescents did not lead the cultural revolution, but rather seemed helplessly ensnared by it, forced to perform someone else's concept of pleasure and freedom.

In 1920 Rockwell explored jazz age courtship with a more high-stakes stereotype: the mature and handsome upper-class male. Rockwell had illustrated such strong-jawed men before, primarily in his World War I covers as proud returning soldiers. Now slender and suited, Rockwell's aqualine-featured character resembled J. C. Leyendecker's fashion idols who still appeared regularly within the *Post*'s advertisements. The foibles of Rockwell's prep school aged characters could easily be ascribed to inexperience. Arrow Collar men, in contrast, were seen as America's cultural apex and quickly became stand-ins for F. Scott Fitzgerald's popular protagonists. As with his younger adolescent models, Rockwell played with his stereotype, qualifying and undercutting the celebratory bravado of monied handsome youth. In "The Ouija Board", a conservatively dressed female played Ouija board with the dashing college boy.[172] As she asked her question, gazing toward the spirits in clairvoyant revelry, he leaned in, intentionally pushing her planchette toward "yes." As his legs cupped around hers pressing knee to knee, the courtship takes on an aggressive, coercive tone. The image heightened the imbalance of her innocence and his urgency. This was not John Held, Jr.'s giddy college boy awash in female sexuality but a direct seduction.

[171] See "Boy and Cupid," *Saturday Evening Post*, April 5, 1924 and "Rejected Suitor," *Saturday Evening Post*, October 7, 1926.
[172] *Saturday Evening Post*, May 1, 1920.

A nearly identical looking couple appeared 5 months later in a marital spat over a "Political Argument."[173] Although Rockwell frequently repeated this farce of the political domestic row, this first cover was remarkable for appearing only 2 months after the 19th amendment granted voting rights to women. The cover slipped in only a month before America's first presidential election with a widespread female voting demographic. The theme of the women's vote was not new to the *Post*. In 1911, J.C. Leyendecker's 1912 New Year's baby paid homage to the suffragette movement. On March 6 of 1920, Neysa McMein's cover depicted a "Women Voter" as the 19th Amendment was being ratified. McMein's female voter appeared confused by the ballot, chewing her pencil and unsure about her choice as she looked preferably upon the handsome, mustachioed candidate for congress. Rockwell, on the other hand, depicted a young woman confidently holding her campaign poster for Warren G. Harding.

Even more remarkably, Rockwell's depiction of the svelte young male voter flaunted the threats female suffrage posed to male autonomy and identity. The Arrow Collar man crossed his arms with brow furrowed and fingers clenched around a newspaper with "Cox" in the headline. Caricatured stereotypes needed to be recognizable to be inverted, and Rockwell's image struck a delicate balance between illustrating the male ideal and subtly recording its demise. As the woman glanced confidently downward, the male ideal relegated toward sulky adolescence. The cover's topic evidently plucked a nerve as less than a month later Yale's college humor magazine the *Yale Record* published a poem on the same theme. Illustrated with a pretty girl picture, the love poem promised its "Madeleine" that presidential candidates Harding and Cox differences would not destroy their affection, even though "politics may seem

[173] *Saturday Evening Post*, October 9, 1920.

to try / To part my heart from yours awhile."[174] The *Yale Record*'s response to female suffrage continued to grant authority and condescension to the male perspective. Rockwell did the opposite, creating an elite college grad that was petulant and pouting, slipping from slick illustration to comic relief, from manhood back to adolescence.

WILLIE GILLIS AND THE ADOLESCENT SPIRIT IN WORLD WAR II

Through the tumultuous changes of 1920's and the 1930's, juvenile and adolescent boy bodies continued to encapsulate American values of intrepidity and liberty. As a visual icon, the juvenile and adolescent male body manifested in contrasting idols. Boy-themed covers continued to proliferate in images that returned to small-town themes. These typically advocated a "husky" physique that would ensure robust development through the adolescent years. Eugene Iverd's July 21, 1934 "After a Swim" typified both the stronger, thicker physiques encouraged for young adolescents and the invitation to admire developing male bodies. During the 1930's, advertisements and articles in the health magazine *Hygeia* demonstrate a similar preoccupation with boy bodily development. Like "After a Swim", an advertisement for Cocomalt from May 1933 displayed a nude boy model with an identical physique, but here marked with labels to codify husky development. These include a "strong, straight back" and "fine, full chest" as well as strong teeth, muscle, and tissue development. Cocomalt's tagline "Are mistakes in diet robbing your child of a husky body like this?" implied that such an ideal was the default mode for middle class white American boys. The American boy's symbolism

[174] *Yale Record* 49, no. 3, November 3, 1920, 108.

was rock solid enough to qualify for E. R. Squibb & Son's advertising campaign, which waxed on about America's fundamental cultural truths.[175] Running on the slogan "What can a man believe in?," its 1941 advert of a robust boy leaping over a fire hydrant defined this American symbol in detail:

> "It's somebody you ought to remember. Leaping before he looks, as usual. But never a doubt about landing on his feet. To him, tomorrow is a wonderful thing; full of eager hope and anticipation. No pessimism here. No cynicism. Just a joyous excitement about all the things there are that need doing. Recognize him now? Of course you do. He's someone you can believe in, always. He's youth; our hope our future."

Alongside the husky juvenile, sprouting adolescents continued to symbolize American gumption and underdog bravado. A staple of Rockwell's oeuvre, this character also appeared throughout the illustrations of the *Post*. In Monte Crew's 1937 cover "Boxing Champ", a shaky, stringy adolescent with a black eye was proclaimed champion over his much thicker and shocked opponent. A similar figure, snow spiffed up, appeared in Frances Tipton Hunter's 1941 "First Date" with an attentive mother checking behind his ears. Old Gold cigarettes created a snub-nosed, self-confident college boy for its advertising campaign with the slogan "Something New has been added!" Like John Held's Jr. figures, the boy had just started sprout a chest, but his lanky limbs and pronounced Adam's apple were far from the manly ideal.[176] All figures performed with a self-confidence out of proportion with their pubescent physiques, but it typically carried them to triumph in the end.

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[175] E. R. Squibb & Sons were "Manufacturing Chemists in the Medical Profession".

[176] *Saturday Evening Post*, October 4, 1941. On February 7, 1942 the *Saturday Evening Post* ran an article on Charles Atlas featuring a photo of Atlas counseling a group of "small fry" or adolescents on how to become a man. This may be why the advertisement accompanied these large illustrated pictures with illustrated adult testimonials about the quality of gold cigarettes at the bottom. These illustrations showed older, more solid and stable figures settled into careers.

Rockwell imprinted the stringy, adolescent physique into America's cultural genetics with a series of long-limbed colonial period figures. The crash of 1928 sparked a sentimental resurgence of America's colonial period and traditional folklore. Alongside fellow illustrators, Rockwell imagined a cast of characters in breeches, tri-cornered hats, and horse-drawn carriages, which were especially popular on Christmas covers. Sometimes he imagined his own characters, such as the colonial sign painter making a new sign for the George Washington tavern, previously the King George tavern.[177] Other times he concocted visual archetypes to illustrate American nursery rhymes, such as "Yankee Doodle" and stories by Washington Irving.[178] Illustrators like J. C. Leyendecker imagined early pilgrims harboring the same bristling, hunky physiques of modern football stars (see "Thanksgiving 1628/1928").[179] However, Rockwell's figures evinced their courage and patriotism through inventive, quirky avenues rather than physical, athletic ones. Rockwell's failure to find a publisher for his proposal to illustrate a series of characters from American literature suggests that his model may have also been problematic.[180]

However, Rockwell launched this same gawky, ill-formed archetype into an unlikely, yet enormously successful, World War II hero. Named Private Willie Gillis, Rockwell's character cemented the unpresuming boyish adolescent as its own heroic and sexual ideal. His first published appearance on October 4, 1941 purposely emphasized his diminutive size and premature physique. In "Willie Gillis: Food Package", Willie stood, nearly a full head shorter

[177] "The New Tavern Sign," *Saturday Evening Post*, February 22, 1936.
[178] See *Yankee Doodle*, 1937 and *Ichabod Crane*, c. 1937.
[179] See J. C. Leyendecker's *Saturday Evening Post Cover* "Thanksgiving 1628/1928," November 24, 1928
[180] Guptill, *Norman Rockwell*, 122.

than his fellow enlistees, in a baggy uniform with rolled cuffs and sleeves. The surrounding masculine mugs recalled the square, handsome features and jovial temperaments *Afloat and Ashore* ascribed to the "American fighting face." With each soldier eyeing the package labeled "Food: No Delay", the pleasure of the image derived from each "fighting face" failing to suppress a contorted, covetous expression, driven by an irrepressible craving for the comforts of home. Unwittingly and warily, Willie Gillis found himself an object of desire and pursuit. This was an apt opening metaphor for the enormous fanbase Willie would soon collect.

While Rockwell had abandoned the soldier as subject since World War I, he was fresh off an ad campaign for Schenley's Cream of Kentucky Bourbon that similarly prompted readers to scrutinize facial features for character traits. Each ad presented the reader with a celebrity or type, labeling their facial features with winning character traits and personal ambition that could be satisfied with Schenley's Bourbon. Though long outdated as a scientific practice, phrenology still successfully drove reading practices in illustration and advertising. Readers could hardly miss that Rockwell had intentionally cast the antithesis of the American fighting face with 16 year old model Robert Buck's lineless forehead, freckled nose, and bow mouth.[181] Karal Ann Marling defines Willie Gillis as "everybody's idea of a younger brother, or the kid down the street."[182] Yet this begs the question: who would enjoy seeing their kid brother go to war?

[181] Rockwell recounts landing upon Robert Buck as his model when encountering him at a square dance in Arlington in Gupthill, *Norman Rockwell*, 182.
[182] Marling, *Norman Rockwell*, 43.

Willie Gillis was conceived during the confusing, indecisive months leading up to Pearl Harbor attack. Jennifer Greenhill's extensive examination of J. C. Leyendecker's New Year's babies reveals how Leyendecker embedded this sentiment into his 1941 January cover. She writes how the cover, "thrusting a squalling baby into the viewer's face" with a "giant metal fist", implied an "allegory of the American New Year dragged, kicking and screaming, into the foreign war."[183] The previous September the United States launched the Selective Training and Service Act, requiring all men between 21 and 45 to register for a lottery system draft. James Kimble's research into the early war bond drive of 1941 outlines the government's struggle to pave "the nation's psychological mobilization for war."[184] The Treasury lacked a suitable contemporary mascot for its war bond drive and eventually settled on image of the colonial Minute Man, based on Daniel Chester French's 1875 sculpture, as a philosophically stable logo.[185] While the bond drive helped circulate the idea of America's imminent combat, polls revealed weak participation in the bond program among individual wage earners.[186] Articles in the *Post* expressed uneasy confusion. On May 17, 1941, Garet Garrett's article "Out to Shake the World" asked bluntly "What are we defending? How is production supposed to respond?"[187] Calling the command for material preparation of war a "chaos of idea", he argued "It was taken for granted, as it had to be, that American industry could do miracles. It was forgotten that even miracles have to be prepared."

[183] Greenhill, "Mainstream Magazine Illustrator," 218-219.
[184] James Kimble, *Mobilizing the Home Front: War Bonds and Domestic Propaganda* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2006), 31.
[185] Ibid., 26.
[186] Ibid., 31.
[187] Garet Garrett, "Out to Shake the World," *Saturday Evening Post*, May 17, 1941, 9 – 11.

The idea of using an adolescent soldier as a stand-in for the American psyche circa 1941 had already been generated by Albert W. Hampson. The *Post* Cover "You're in the Army Now" from February 1, 1941 showed a bewildered teenager befuddled by a list of commands such as "Left Face!", "Dress Right!", and "Company Halt!" Like Willie Gillis, Hampson's character skewed too young both for the draft and, arguably, even for voluntary enlistment. Appearing plucked fresh off a sandlot game, he represented the American psyche rather than the American soldier, caught between a strong isolationist movement and the horrors of Hitler's attacks. Yet three weeks later, Ski Weld's *Post* cover depicted a handsome draftable college man breaking from his ski trip to doze before a fire. Throughout the first half of 1941, thoughts of combat seem absent from many covers of draftable gentlemen enjoying the highlife. By the summer of 1941, the *Post* only intermittently presented war themed covers, exceptional for their removed and secondhand perspective. A boat in dry dock, an air force photographer, and a Navy Signal Corpsman are all shown in extreme distance, often from low, oblique viewpoints. Ski Weld's "Boot Camp Reveille" of August 2 was arguably the first *Post* cover clearly envisioning contemporary Americans preparing for combat. The enthusiastic bugle man trumpeting before perfect rows of pyramidal tents embodied scoutmaster pride more so than war combat conviction.

Willie Gillis represented less the American "every man", than the persistence of America's juvenile self-image tentatively contemplating the prospect of committing to yet another European war. Willie Gillis reperformed many of the humorous tropes that Rockwell had illustrated for *Judge*, *Life*, and *Afloat and Ashore* between 1918 and 1919. Reflecting on his artwork during World War I, Norman Rockwell emphasized the naivete and "fakery" that

pervaded these early images, emphasizing how his World War II images were authenticated by deeper fieldwork and research.[188] It is true that Rockwell conducted onsite sketches at a paratrooper's training base and studied a machine gun crew to inform his wartime production.[189] Yet as a caricature, Willie's closest visual relation was arguably the hapless "Sea Man" Rockwell envisioned for *Afloat and Ashore*. He similarly was overwhelmed by the attention of worshipping American females, delighted in exotic cultural encounters, and relished his cozy furloughs. However, this time Rockwell released his dopey pen-line private, previously reserved for self-deprecating in-camp entertainment, onto the national stage fleshed out in oil paints.

Drawn when victory was either won or imminent, such cheerful, simple themes would have intentionally channeled the victorious afterglow of World War I and psychologically paved the way for warfare. Yet Willie's enormous popularity meant both readers and the *Post*'s art editor insisted that his persona continue throughout the war, even when aggressive, heroic constructions of WWII soldiers had become the *Post's* norm.[190] Rockwell continued producing Gillis covers even after his model Robert Otis Buck enlisted as a Naval aviator, and Rockwell was forced to conceive covers where Willie appeared simply as a photograph. Any termination of this serial character, now deployed overseas in Rockwell's narrative, could infer fatal termination for America's favorite kid brother.

[188] *Norman Rockwell Memory Album*, 94.
[189] Rockwell recounts his experience drawing from a squad of paratroopers, *My Adventures*, 328-333.
[190] According to Rockwell: "*No!* said the editors of the Post. You can't drop him; he's too popular." Ibid., 327.

Rockwell's rejected cover design for Willie Gillis, completed less than a month after the Pearl Harbor attack, indicates Rockwell contemplated taking the character in a very different, ominous direction. In *Willie Gillis in Convoy*, Willie flashed his most optimistic of smiles within the cavernous void of an army convey. Holding his gleaming weapon at a perfect vertical with a lucky rabbit's foot clipped to his button-hole, he gazed upward. Here young Willie combined the bravado of a pipe-smoking college sophomore (complete with initials engraved onto the pipe) with the wide-eyed, newly won independence of a college freshman. By contrast, his three male companions looked old at enough to have served in World War I or at least to have felt its impact as homebound adolescents. Reminiscent of the "scrappy kid, lanky kid, fat kid" trio from Rockwell's "No Swimming," they exuded weariness and boredom. One dozed in the convey. Another stared blankly as he shoved an apple into his mouth. The farthest companion echoed Willie with his protruding ears, cigarette, and wistful smile, perhaps reflecting on the excitement of his first enlistment. However, he was the darkest figure and visibly aged with worn physiognomy. The three older companions appeared aware of both the monotony and loss of warfare, while no such knowledge dimmed Willie's enthusiasm. The image created a profound reflection on America's awakening to the dreaded inevitably of World War II by deploying Willie as a hopelessly naïve and ill-prepared self-portrait.

When Pearl Harbor was bombed on December 7, 1941, Rockwell was working remotely in California. The Pearl Harbor attack dramatically brought the conflict to America's Western doorstep. The impact was felt by the *Post*'s Art Editor Pete Martin in his December 11 correspondence to Rockwell that expressed "I have been thinking about you and yours out there where the Japs are sailing around and wish you would get back to Arlington because you

are a very valuable Post property and a nice guy."[191] A majority of the December correspondence between Rockwell and Pete concerned the "third" Gillis cover, which had been in production at least since October, and was primarily concerned with the fashion Rockwell concocted for his USO debutantes.[192] The fourth design of the convoy conspicuously missing from these frequent conversations, especially given that Rockwell's finished painting would arrive at the *Post*'s office by the beginning of 1942.

Pete's rejection letter for *Willie Gillis in Convoy* was unusually conciliatory compared to other correspondences, communicating both in a telegram and letter that "I know you are going to take this hard" and expressing that he wished he could "soften the blow" in person.[193] Pete acknowledged that the office was "bowled over by the grand painting quality" and, in a letter a month later, recalled the painting as "was one of the best you have every done for us." However, he adamantly rejected it as a visual and narrative stinker. Using less sensitive language, Pete judged that the painting "would die like a dog on the newstands" because it had "no poster quality at all" due to its drab colors. He also accused the image as lacking in storytelling, stating that it was merely "a picture of Willie and some other guys riding down a road in an Army truck." Nowhere did Pete's correspondence acknowledge the image's pessimism and undertones of combat.

[191] See Curtis Publishing co 1942: Saturday Evening Post correspondence re: critique of Willie Gillis cover. Archives of the Norman Rockwell Museum. RC.2007.18.1.35. Letter dated December 1, 1941.
[192] This letter on December 11 acknowledges the "USO" cover as Rockwell's "third" cover, although it seems like *Willie Gillis in Convoy* would have technically been in line to be the third cover.
[193] See Curtis Publishing co 1942: Saturday Evening Post correspondence re: critique of Willie Gillis cover. Archives of the Norman Rockwell Museum. RC.2007.18.1.38.

Pete's letter made clear that Willie's position as an optimistic American war mascot was fixed. Fort Dix had already adopted Willie as a company morale booster and organized to have the original "Food Package" painting tour its base.[194] By the end of 1941, the *Post* decided to use Willie as a gratis favor to the government to promote the Defense Bonds campaign. Moreover, back in May Pete had already set a precedent by rejecting a Rockwell sketch for being "too grim." In this correspondence, he clarified Rockwell's function as *Post* property: "The populace read so much news of the world torn and tattered that they need Rockwell covers that will give them some pleasure and diversion." Pete reiterated this idea in his recommended fixes for *Willie Gillis in Convoy*: "What would have made a better story was a job symbolizing Willie rolling off to war. It might have helped had Willie been in the extreme foreground, perhaps with his legs dangling over the tailgate and strong light and attention focused upon him and the whole cover cleaner and brighter and if possible more colorful."

Rockwell's April 11, 1942 Willie Gillis cover "Hometown News" followed Pete's advice to the letter and Pete rewarded the effort with kind, yet somewhat self-congratulatory, acknowledgements: "The more I look at the Willie Gillis paring the green applies, the more I think it is one of the finest posters we have ever published and you have definitely licked the problem of combining human interest with strong brilliant color effects."[195] Here Willie performed a clear job - K.P. duty. Isolated on a blazing red background paring green apples, he appeared inexplicably enraptured by his hometown newspaper, sent via care package.

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[194] Described by one solider as such: "I guess every camp has to have its mascot and Willie Gillis is ours." See Curtis Publishing co 1941: Saturday Evening Post correspondence re: exhibition of Willie Gillis cover at Fort Dix, Archives of the Norman Rockwell Museum. RC.2007.18.1.36.

[195] See Curtis Publishing co 1942: Saturday Evening Post correspondence re: critique of Willie Gillis cover. Archives of the Norman Rockwell Museum. RC. 2007.18.1.40.

Rockwell would never again launch Willie as a contemplative vehicle. In retrospect Willie Gillis stands out as a bizarre figure who is difficult to reconcile with the cultural atmosphere of World War II. I see him as a relic from 1941 that, due to public and editorial demand, had to persist despite his asynchronous presence within the escalating conflicts of World War II.

James Kimble's research on the fan "correspondence" to Willie Gillis demonstrates Willie's overriding sense of "authenticity" for *Post* readers, implying a character that lived beyond the *Post* page.[196] Many wrote extensive letters to inquire about Willie's well-being and even composed poetry for Willie's amusement. Kimble explores where writers insisted they knew Gillis personally, referencing conversations with him or acting convinced they had met.[197] Women even treated him as a 'pin-up' figure. As per usual, Rockwell's extensive detail also attracted faultfinders. An army air corpsman complained when Willie showed up to K. P. duty wearing his khaki clothes instead of his fatigues. His letter threatened Rockwell would "get the guardhouse" if he did not "make sure his soldiers were properly clothed."[198] So established was Gillis' Army togs narrative that the *Post* announced model Robert Otis Buck's enlistment in the Navy with a dramatic warning: "We hope your illusions are good sturdy fellows, able to take it on the chin when we report, as we feel bound to do, that Gillis is leading a double life."[199] Multiple correspondents noticed Willie's "homely army private's status," to which a perturbed Mrs. H. W. Smith wrote concerned about why Willie, after three months of service, was not yet awarded a ranking. Her letter from June 28, 1943 remarked her 2nd Lt. husband had "gone thru

[196] See Kimble, "Character sketches."
[197] Ibid., 151.
[198] Fan correspondence, incoming re: Willie Gillis, 1942-48, Archives of the Norman Rockwell Museum.
[199] Quoted in "Thanks, Robert Buck. Goodbye, Willie Gillis," *Saturday Evening Post*, May 28, 2011. https://www.saturdayeveningpost.com/2011/05/robert-buck-goodbye-willie-gillis/

Willie's experiences, expect foreign service, which is now imminent."[200] However cartoonish Willie's behavior, he functioned as a genuine touchstone for at least some Americans facing overseas service.

Jennifer Greenhill and James Kimble contextualize Willie Gillis' plucky, boyish spirit within the federal-controlled visual rhetoric of World War II. The Magazine Bureau of the OWI would not be formed until June 1942, after the majority of Gillis' covers had already seen print.[201] Yet correspondence with Rockwell shows the *Post* was already in dialog with government campaigns by the end of 1941.[202] Greenhill contextualizes Rockwell's upbeat images within the Office of War Information's careful management of distressing photographs from the front and its relationship to restrictions placed on films produced under the Motion Picture Production Code of 1930's.[203] Kimble approaches from a different angle by exploring the government's strategic and frequent use of violent images in propaganda. He connects Gillis' imagery to a specific branch of cheery domestic propaganda filtered through U. S. Treasury's *War Victory Comics* and other war-themed comic books.

War propaganda comic books narratives focused on youthful, civilian Nazi-hunters. Kimble's analysis of *War Victory Comics* demonstrates how the comic's narratives mobilized the "everyman" to victory to help supplement the nation's flagging sense of invincibility: "In accordance with the comic books' fantastical logic, humble youngsters could become

[200] Idem.
[201] Dabakis, "Gendered Labor," 192.
[202] See Curtis Publishing co 1942: Saturday Evening Post correspondence re: request for Willie Gillis drawing for defense bond campaign. Archives of the Norman Rockwell Museum. RC. 2007.18.1.37.
[203] Greenhill, "Mainstream Magazine Artist," 234.

formidable forces on the battlefield, while lovable goofs and ordinary civilians could bravely blunder their way into capturing enemy spies. The resulting characters were on part classic everyman (or everywoman) and one part heroic overachiever – figures well suited to inspiring both the imagination and the behavior of young readers."[204] Deborah Clark Vance's analysis of *Captain America* further identifies humor as a secret weapon that kept American comic book heroes adaptable and spontaneous.[205] This comic book propaganda filtered directly into the *Post* through Howard Scott's cover from February 27, 1943. Here a barber and his boyish client poured over a comic that illustrated air bombers and gunners. The accidental buzz-cut delivered by the distracted barber generated humor but also implied the ultimate military goal of such comic: to catalyze boys into men and future protectors of American values.

Willie bore an enigmatic relationship to these fixed propaganda machines. While affable and humorous, his narratives were bizarrely devoid of any reference to combat, victory, or model behavior. Instead, he seemed tailor cut to bridge the *Post*'s contradictory wartime prerogatives. A survey of the *Post*'s covers between 1942 and 1945 produces a schizophrenic experience, bouncing between dark soldiers dodging explosions, cheery soldiers opening lackluster gifts, puppy dogs, glamorous pouty-lipped models, and children enjoying small town treats. This smorgasbord of themes assured Americans, both at home and deployed, of their fighting metal and the perseverance of what they were fighting for: American comforts. Advertisements in the *Post* pivoted on these same themes. Having long relied on images of

[204] James Kimble, "War Victory Adventures: Figurative Cognition and Domestic Propaganda in World War II Comic Books" in *The 10 cent War: Comic Books, Propaganda, and World War II*, eds. Trischa Goodnow and James J. Kimble (Jackson: University of Mississippi, 2016), 204-205.
[205] See Vance, "Racial Stereotypes."

children, adverts continued to pedal images of young boys to assure America both of its future and the healthy developed men fighting the war. Northwestern Mutual Life insurance presented a chipper juvenile watching an army troop boarding with the tagline "They're fighting for you, young man!" Many adverts often needed to alter only a few words to lasso wartime emotions into their campaign. Before the war, Ipana toothpaste simply showed a picture of a boy with a "Winning smile" with the tagline "Do you see Young Tommy? No, I see a Doctor of 1964." By Summer of 1942, the advert ran with "Do you see little Billy? No, I see the future Captain William Steers . . He has Courage and the Respect of his Men. His smile inspires Confidence." As a young adolescent, Willie straddled the perspective of boy and soldier, a role emphasized in his 1944 genealogical cover sporting a photo of Willie autographed as "Your son."

Through his narratives, Willie strangely manifested boyish fantasies about army life. For instance, war acted as a pretext Willie's steamy romantic scrapes. In February of 1942 he was doted on by two curvaceous USO workers. In June, a blackout provided a chance to sidle cheek-to-cheek with another red-lipped fashionista. In September, two hometown girls with matching love letters battled over Willie's affections. Yet the bold, flat color backgrounds of all these covers subdued the war-time premise and dial up the graphic properties of the magazine cover. Greenhill connected Rockwell's minimal design to the *Post*'s insistence on modernizing under the new editor Ben Hibbs. The approach was atypical for other World War II posters, which always placed the solider in situ. These bold color-scapes shifted the Gillis narratives from "The Front" to the world of the magazine. "Blackout" in particular recalled the *Post*'s history of isolating beautiful female heads on the cover, a concept Rockwell had already started

playing with in his famous 1941 cover in which a *Post*-reading teenage girl unwittingly replaced her head with the haughty cover girls. Looking at "Blackout" in the context of the cover girl headshot, the unsupposing young enlistee appeared entranced that he got to share the cover space with a prototypical *Post* beauty. Yet the *Post* was keen to curb Gillis' sex appeal, as recorded by a letter rejecting Rockwell's original sketch for "USO." Rockwell's original concept submitted in October 1941 appeared to have pictured Willie with a cluster of cuddling females, an idea resoundly rejected in the effort to avoid shifting Gillis "into a Clark Gable type."[206] As Post property, Gillis was carefully monitored and edited.

Another dominant theme was Willie's homesickness. The April 11, 1942 cover showed Willie on K. P. duty in his offending khakis captivated by his hometown newspaper. The entire document had been underlined and annotated by a caring relative, circling a picture of "Dad" on the defense board. Rockwell presented him as bound to local news as his relatives would be to world news (such as Rockwell's 1943 "Armchair General"). Emotional *Post* subscribers read homesickness into the July cover depicting "Willis Gillis in Church", noting his isolation and distant gaze.[207] This reciprocity between the deployed and the American home front characterized the reassuring feedback loop promoted within the *Post*'s cover art and advertising. The Prudential Insurance company honored home front sacrifice with the line "Take heart, little lady. America's future is safe in your arms." A photo of an enraptured woman holding a baby with a photo of her deployed husband in the background depicted war and loss as ever on her mind. Gillis's homesickness helped complete this emotional circle,

[206] See letter dated October 31, 1941. Curtis Publishing co 1941: Saturday Evening Post correspondence re: critique of Willie Gillis sketch. Archives of the Norman Rockwell Museum. RC. 2007.18.1.35g.
[207] Fan correspondence, incoming re: Willie Gillis, 1942-48, Archives of the Norman Rockwell Museum.

especially as his adolescence implied dependency on home and family. With no significant ranking or stature as a private, Willie could express these reciprocal feelings without damaging America's militant poker face.

Despite his popularity, Willie Gillis was an outlier among the *Post*'s more aggressive war heroes. The trajectory of *Post* cover art followed the progressively violent campaign images for the government's Defense Bond campaign. James Kimble hitches this trajectory to the psychological impact of prolonged warfare on the soldier.[208] By 1942, a number of *Post* illustrators began illustrating various service men in more active service with deliberate references to ammunition and weapons of war. Mead Schaeffer began mastering his World War II images of soldier heroes with low viewpoints with dramatic dark palettes. These bulky figures with resolute jaw lines performed their duties in progressively hazardous situations. By 1944, Schaeffer's figures were administering first aid amidst exploding bombs and actively brought down enemy aircraft. At the start of the North African campaign in June of 1943, Schaeffer dispatched one of his burly fighters to an aircraft carrier to stalwartly guide an aircraft over a black sea (6.77). A month later, John Falter's "New Naval Officer" presented a boy about the same age as Willie standing proudly with a body made strong and angular by his new uniform. Yet between these covers Rockwell dispatched Willie to a local bazar to entertain a sheik with cat's cradle (6.79).

At the end of the war, Norman Rockwell safely returned Willie to American soil and deposited him in college on the GI bill. In this October 5, 1946 cover Willie had noticeably

[208] See Kimble, *Mobilizing the Home Front.*

matured with an expanded chest and new height that barely fit his windowsill study spot. Studying inside a dormitory with a war helmet and Nazi arm band hanging over his window, the image completed and rewarded Willie's service with a stable, prosperous reintegration into civilian life. The college campus promised to reconstitute his traditional adolescent rites of passage, despite his fully developed manhood. While Willie could be depended on to represent the unflappable American spirit, Rockwell explored the cracks in the wartime and post-war American psyche through several other wartime characters. These included Willie's homebound love interest, Rockwell's "Lady Liberty", and a returning red-headed soldier. Rockwell continued to probe the relationship between American heroism, anxiety and vulnerability that first appeared in *Willie Gillis in Convoy*.

WILLIE'S GIRLFRIEND, LADY LIBERTY, AND THE HOMECOMING GI

Rockwell contrasted Willie's girlfriend, Lady Liberty, and the red-haired veteran against more stable, normative constructions of wartime femininity and masculinity by inscribing their bodies and their attitudes with adolescent traits. This application of adolescent anxieties to the female experience was a relatively recent development in Rockwell's work. Several conditions of the war years may explain why Rockwell transitioned this subject during World War II. Rockwell's covers typically dissected the pressures of navigating American life under the contradictory demands made by American image culture. However, during wartime American men were abroad and preoccupied by the international effort. Meanwhile the growing reliance on female labor relocated women to the center of heroic discourses on national

prosperity and muscular work ethic. At home with the women, Rockwell may have had heightened awareness of the pressures mounting on their identities from a relentless print culture. Rockwell continued to forefront female adolescence in his work following the war, suggesting that Rockwell's constructions of adolescence were less ingrained in genetics and more in cultural pressures. Rockwell wielded adolescence as a vehicle for accessing the insular worlds of his characters, which following the war would gradually expand beyond white male youths.

In her first appearance as Willie's girlfriend on September 5, 1942, Rockwell cast his 16-year-old model Lee Schaeffer, daughter of fellow *Post* artist Meade Schaeffer, against an aggressive, arrogant blonde bombshell. The stand-off emphasized Lee's aesthetic distance from the prototypical *Post* girl. Petulant, upset, and with a scrawny clenched derriere, the "Lee" character did not exude the lusty self-confidence of her heavy-lidded rival. She instead appeared distinctly adolescent, with a slender stringy physique that frequently betrayed confusion and self-doubt, yet also a determined self-reliance.

The pairing of these two competing types recalls a quote from the October 1943 issue of *Women's Home Companion* that historian Mary Anne Schofield uses to set the stage for wartime's visual culture: "American men, bless them, expect their women to be (a) useful or (b) beautiful, but seldom both at once. To many of them there's the type of girl they dream about when they're growing up and the type they marry . . . the girl the boys overseas are engaged to

and the girls whose pictures they use to adorn the walls of their tents."[209] A cartoon in the May 30, 1942 *Post* echoed double allure by illustrating servicemen flocking to a Double Feature titled "Love's Flame" and "My Best Girl."[210] When Rockwell said in his 1960 autobiography "Somebody once said that I paint the kind of girls your mother would want you to marry," he was acknowledging a Dickensian contrast deeply ingrained within American magazine illustration.[211]

For the 1944 New Year's cover, Lee Schaeffer made her second appearance as Willie's faithful sweetheart. Lee appeared home asleep as the clock struck midnight with Willie's letter on her body and three watchful exuberant Willie photographs enjoying her doze. Her self-restraint triggered memories of her blonde glamorous rival, who was presumably exploring other pastures on New Year's Eve. When Willie's model, Robert Otis Buck, enlisted with the Navy in 1943, Rockwell also distanced Willie Gillis, who now only appeared vicariously through photographs.[212] Jennifer Greenhill reads the image as a network of sublimated desires that "folds procreation into his optimistic, future-oriented tableau, inviting Post viewers to envision the future family that will contribute to the nation's postwar growth." Greenhill contextualizes Rockwell within the self-validating narratives of OWL's propaganda machine that reassured with "the ostensibly timeless values of small town America."[213] However, when "New Year's

[209] Mary Anne Schofield, "Miss America, Rosie the Riveter, and World War II" in *The Politics of Sex, Beauty, and Race in America's Most Famous Pageant*, eds. Elwood Watson and Darcy Martin (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004), 53-54.
[210] *Saturday Evening Post*, May 30, 1942, 90.
[211] Rockwell, *My Adventures*, 34.
[212] Ibid., 327-328.
[213] Greenhill, "Mainstream Magazine Illustration," 240.

Eve" is contextualized within the larger visual scheme of the *Post*, Rockwell's cover elicits a more ambiguous, even licentious read.

Rockwell followed the 1944 "New Year's Eve" cover with two covers focused on the lusty wartime escapades. "Tattoo Artist" poked fun at a sailor's tattooed string of lovers that are listed, then crossed out, on his arm (6.83). This soldier sported a garish, uneven physiognomy. Despite his pristine gift and attempt to slick his hair, his bulbous, flushed body used a long-established cartooning shorthand to imply unchecked testosterone and poor self-control. Furthermore the list of female names – Rosietta, Ming Fu, Olga – implied that he acquired a new worldly sweetheart with each military campaign. The newest name, Betty, right after "Sing Lee", had an American ring. The image threw into question whether the well-seasoned soldier had successfully exorcized his voracious sexual desires overseas or was now an ill fit for the American nuclear family.

Rockwell's next cover "Little Girl Observing Lovers on a Train" was even more destabilizing (6.84). A juvenile girl turned backward in her seat to study the interlocked bodies of a soldier and his bare-legged teenage lover. Clair Sisco King describes a "disquietude" in this scene that "depicts an act of voyeurism that is both specular and speculative."[214] Every surrounding seat was occupied by a young soldier and woman in a robust ear to ear embrace. The juvenile's gray-haired chaperone either did not notice or had given up on censuring the display of pent-up sexual drives releasing all around her. The young girl's intense studied gaze exacerbated the impact of the lesson she received, whether that lesson was, according to King,

[214] King, "American Queerer," 164.

"heterosexuality as a compulsory cultural institution" or the liberation of sex under wartime duress.[215] Either way, the train tutorial echoed and perhaps parodied the sexual lessons readily available within the pages of the *Post*. Just the inside cover there was often a Palmolive soap ad, which typically depicted a steamy nude female bather or a clothed femme fatale with military man snacking on her neck.

Neither "Tattoo Artist" nor "Little Girl Observing" acquiesce easily to the "potent mythology" of small-town America, questioning whether "New Year's Eve" acted as antidote or companion to these scenes of World War II naughtiness and ambiguity. A colorful mistake in Rockwell's "New Year's Eve" image recorded how the cover resonated with overseas soldiers. In his drive for authenticity, Rockwell listed the real mailing address of its teenage model on the discarded envelope. Although intended as an insider secret that would be indecipherable on the cover, enough overseas soldiers were driven to infatuation to decode the address. To her mother's alarm, Lee began receiving a stream of love letters from soldiers overseas.[216] Perhaps the lovesick soldiers were motivated by a desire for a productive nuclear family. However, Rockwell's character also introduced the "girl next door" as a powerful alternative sex symbol. Rockwell was not so much sublimating prurient desire in the Willie photographs as acknowledging, more so vicariously inviting, overseas soldiers to enjoy a peek into her bedroom. Unhindered by sleep, Willie's girlfriend relaxed into beautiful cover girl material. Historian Dave Hickey has already connected what he termed "Rockwellian blend of tolerance

[215] Idem.
[216] David Apatoff, "The Art of the Post: The Rockwell Cover that Lead to a Marriage," *The Saturday Evening Post*, November 22, 2017, https://www.saturdayeveningpost.com/2017/11/art-post-rockwell-cover-led-marriage/

and disobedience" to Hugh Heffner's invention of "girl-next-door domestic eros."[217] Willie Gillis' girlfriend blended the two incompatible spheres of womanhood, the dream girl and marriageable girl. She did not overturn female stereotypes but rather reshuffled them and contradicted them using the instability of adolescence to springboard this change.

Even before the creation of Gillis' girlfriend, Rockwell began experimenting with formulas to poke fun at and undercut the tedious dominance of the *Post* cover girl. In "Two Flirts" from July 26, 1941, Rockwell's proto-Marilyn Monroe lost some of her superiority while stuck at a traffic light. She used her disinterested, sexualized leer as a method not to attract attention, but to ignore the obnoxious mock flirtations of two working class men. Through a variety of covers and illustrations Rockwell started constructing the unchecked bravado of the female juvenile and mysterious contemplative interiority of the awkward female adolescent as foils to the bombshell's constructed allure.[218] It is unsurprising then that, with the character Willie sentenced to arrested development, Rockwell chose to channeled wartime heroics through two female leads: Rosie the Riveter and Liberty Girl. Although both covers were constructed from the same model, Mary Doyle Keefe, Liberty Girl is virtually ignored while Rosie the Riveter has received waves of scholarly attention.[219] These two covers operated as compendium pieces, but scholarly dismissal of "Liberty Girl" misses her potential to personify frustration with impossible icons of femininity.

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[217] Dave Hickey, "The Kids Are All Right: After the Prom" in *Norman Rockwell: Pictures for the American People*, eds. Maureen Hart Hennessey and Anne Knutson (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1999), 128.
[218] See " "Marble Champion" (September 2, 1939), "Home from Camp" (August 24, 1940), and "Hatcheck Girl" (May 3, 1941).
[219] For more on Mary Doyle Keefe, see Mary Kennedy Knight, "Rosie the Riveter", *The Saturday Evening Post*, July 1, 2013, https://www.saturdayeveningpost.com/2013/07/rosie-the-riveter/

By the 1940's the *Post*'s female ideal had finally consolidated into a dense package of highly sexualized Hollywood glamour. Her body had lost the glib girlishness of the 1920's and hometown sweetness of the 1930's and was now packed with mature curves. The 1940's female icon channeled the progressive era's Gibson girl with her confidence and flair yet strutted with more self-awareness as the subject of the desirous gaze. She actively invited such gazes with pouty-lipped neediness and a drowsy lust that assured America's prosperity. During war time, the *Post*'s cover girl swapped ball gowns for service uniforms, but her glamor girl priorities remained largely unchanged. Two back-to-back *Post* covers published in March 1943 illustrate this phenomenon. In each image, a Red Cross volunteer and Miss "Shamrock Chapeau" both pin and adjust their themed hats (Red Cross and St. Patrick's Day respectively) with a self-satisfied gaze. The May 1943 cover "War Widow" even showed a Gold Star wife glamorizing her widowed status, head held haughty and smiling in a fashionable mourning hat as other grievers look on in admiration.

The visual trends for depicting women on the Post's covers accord with Mary Anne Schofield's scholarship on World War II advertising and poster campaigns. Schofield demonstrates how images depicting women performing men's work foregrounded femininity, constructing feminine beauty as a democratic privilege.[220] In the debates over women entering masculine occupations, *Post* cover fodder primarily reassured that home front women continued to lead the leisurely, carefree lives of pre-war time. Domestic themes of fashion, flower-arranging, and sewing dominated. Meanwhile, perspiration and muscular force were attributes of testosterone, placing men in the role of protector over the country's economic

[220] Schofield, "Miss America," 56-57.

and political future. Thus, in the *Post*, Meade Schaeffer's men administered aid on an active battlefield while smiling female nurses lit cigarettes for their lounging patients.[221] In Russel Patterson's October 1943 cover "How to Operate a Power Plant", a curvaceous worker in high heels lounged against a rail, flummoxed by the powerplant manual that she attempted to decipher. Another distant curvy worker in the background of the empty power plant scratched her head in seeming confusion. The image was far cry from Robert Rigg's "Tank Factory" published month later where hard-cut men busily labored amongst a shower of sparks and smoke, an assembly line of tanks ready to go in the background. Rockwell's 1943 "Rosie the Riveter" and "Liberty Girl" both upset these visual protocols.

Liberty Girl needs to be understood as a counterpoint to Rosie the Riveter, who is quite the academic powder keg. As a potential icon for the feminist movement, Rosie the Riveter has undergone intense scholarly scrutiny for her ideological strengths and shortcomings. Compared to the heady symbolism of the *Four Freedoms*, Karal Ann Marling sees Rosie as embodying American values "in a direct, down-to-earth manner which continues to make Rosie a powerful symbol for working women 60 years after the fact."[222] However many historians, including Marling, point out Rosie's deficiencies as a model for women's liberation. While her Irish features signaled an immigrant working class status, her whiteness conformed to a campaign that excluded representation of diverse ethnicities in the workforce. Mary Anne Schofield's study of Rosie contextualizes her within the models of femininity that drove the Miss America pageant. Schofield conscribes her hint of lipstick and make-up compact as

[221] see Jon Whitcomb's cover "Lighting His Cigarette," *Saturday Evening Post*, October 23, 1943.
[222] Marling, *Norman Rockwell*, 40. See also Karal Ann Marling's discussion of Rosie the Riveter in *Norman Rockwell* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1997), 100-101.

placating to the national campaign that aligned feminine beauty with American liberty.[223] Melissa Dabakis' pioneering examination of Rosie analyzes her in terms of binary visual symbols that characterize her body as either "heroic masculinity (which signified resistance and empowerment)" or "attributes of femininity (which signified submission and containment)."[224] Rosie's restful pose, the fact she is eating lunch, and the phallic and umbilical implications of the riveting gun construct the "message that noted women's return to domesticity after the war."[225] Rosie is roundly criticized for failing to represent the pressures of working married women (many authors have examined her for a wedding ring) yet also for the maternal cradling of the riveting gun that, according to Dabakis, relegated her to "the realm of reproduction rather than that of production."[226]

The tornado of opinions on Rosie begs the questions of what criteria is being used to constitute her meaning. Dabakis contrasts Rosie's homogenizing attributes to Dorothea Lange's powerful photographic representations of female war workers, demonstrating how Lange's work produces a "visual world that refused to acknowledge conventional sexual difference and class bias."[227] However, Dabakis' comparison highlights the gulf between the visual worlds of photography and the magazine cover as well as fine art and commercial art. Performing as both documents and images, photographs were expected and commissioned to open gritty windows onto brutal new truths. By contrast, magazine covers were expected to quote recognizable stereotypes to formulate an instantly readable sentiment. Even inside the

[223] Schofield, "Miss America," 57.
[224] Dabakis, "Gendered Labor," 197.
[225] Ibid., 198.
[226] Idem.
[227] Ibid., 195.

conservative *Post*, violent and disturbing photographs of dead and suffering foreign victims regularly appeared. Articles depicting corpses and decimated cities were often sandwiched between saucy short fiction accompanied by slick illustrations of lusty beauties. The jarring contrast implies how easily *Post* editors expected its readers to shift from one visual framework to the next.

One crucial but often overlooked context is Rosie's role as the 1943 Memorial Day Cover Girl. The *Post* did not always emblemize Memorial Day, which was conscripted to May 30 and would not be moved to the last Monday of May until 1971. Only after World War I did Memorial Day extend its honors beyond Civil War heroes to include Americans who died in all U.S. Wars. Yet even in 1935 Maurice Bower's June 1 cover tribute to the holiday only includes three drumming Civil War veterans. Their weary expressions and hunched aging bodies implied the day's fading relevance. Yet by Memorial Day of 1942 a short editorial in the *Post* stressed the holiday's renewed importance as Americans celebrated not with "faded war memories" but with "new potential heroes all around us."[228] The editorial imbued the day with thoughts of "danger and death in defense of a cause", reminding readers to conceive of the current world war in terms of people, rather than in the more pervasive "terms of production, transportation, diet, strategy, organization, or some such abstraction." Yet poetic tribute to the dead in the same issue by Robert D. Abrahams titled "Memorial Day – 1942" expressed an aversion to the customary traditions of military mourning. Speaking for the dead, Abrahams reflected "They want no sounding taps, no loud parade."[229] Instead, he brought meaning to loss with the

[228] *Saturday Evening Post*, May 30, 1942, 18.
[229] Ibid., 40.

continuance of American valiance: “This year they need to garland but our lives; / We offer these – thus all they were survives.” This same sentiment perhaps inspired artist Ruzzie Green’s 1942 Memorial Day issue’s cover, “Homecoming Kiss”, which rewarded separated military couples with a steamy virtual reunion. A man in military uniform lounged with eyes closed to kiss his smartly dressed sweetheart. The virility of the image carried symbolically through the woman’s matching red outfit, red lipstick, and red nail polish as she smiles with delight at the viewer.

One year later, Rosie the Riveter would humorously merge a number of the binaries presented by the 1942 Memorial Day issue, collapsing people with production, testosterone driven virility with feminine fertility, and the *Post* glam girl with the war hero. Marling points out that Rockwell’s very approach to Rosie, updating Michelangelo’s Sistine Chapel fresco of Isaiah into a buxom American mechanic, created a sardonic commentary on how to cobble together an American icon.[230] Marling detects a “wry”, liberated humor in Rockwell’s wartime covers after 1943 which she attributes to the recent completion of his exhausting *Four Freedoms* project. In returning from history painting to the *Post* cover, Rockwell seemed to embrace the experimentation, wild amalgamation, and freedom from weighty social topics permitted by the less formal sphere. This conglomerate approach certainly rings true of Rosie. Many scholars have addressed how Rosie creatively reconstitutes fashionable femininity into masculine terms through her pose and dress – even the brown loafers were a shoe popular among both men and women.

[230] Marling, *Norman Rockwell*, 40.

By 1943 the visual lexicon of World War II had cemented military heroism with danger and violence. Norman Rockwell's own depictions of heroic World War II soldiers accorded to this ideal. His 1944 Independence Day *Post* Cover and his 1945 painting for the Lincoln Shrine both featured a disabled soldier at their center. Rockwell composed his most violent and disturbing World War II image, "Let's give him enough and on time", in 1942 for the Liberty Loan campaign. The dark image depicted a hunched machine gunner, with elbows braced inside his knees, blasting his last magazine. His shredded shirt was ripped open, revealing a glossy hard torso, a brightly lit form that appeared vulnerable within the image's dark tones. His face was pressed into the weapon and merged into the darkness with a trickle of blood barely visible on his brow. Echoing Meade Schaeffer's formula for World War II covers, soldier's faces were frequently obscured or, if readable, only portrayed deadpan resolution.

Rockwell's strategy for Rosie in many ways acted as a foil to his Liberty Loan gunner, constituted in the resounding terms of survival and production that, in 1942, had adhered to Memorial Day. The hard, muscular treatment of flesh in the gunner, a rarity in Rockwell's oeuvre, is echoed by Rosie's arms. However, Rosie's arms appeared confident rather than vulnerable as Rockwell borrows Michelangelo's dynamic strategy of projecting an elbow into strong foreshortening. While often read as a phallus or surrogate child, Rosie's riveting gun more directly echoed the volumes and patina of the soldier's machine gun. However, unlike the machine gunner, Rosie's "weapon" could be put to rest and then later activated for creation rather than destruction. Just as Rosie borrowed a Michelangeloesque form to gain superhuman strength, she adopted the haughty glance of the cover girl to embody an easy self-confidence that had come to symbolize American advantage. The elevated, glorified position channeled a

Superman heroism as portrayed in the opening credit sequence of Max Fleischer's Superman cartoon. As a woman imbued with comic book style invincibility, Rosie was removed from the impeding connection between wartime sacrifice and death. In essence, she channeled Memorial Day's celebration of patriotic grit and sacrifice while diverting attention away from painful loss and death.

Whereas Rosie kicked off the summer of 1942 with Memorial Day, "Liberty Girl" concluded it as the Labor Day cover girl.[231] Although the Monday holiday was usually celebrated as a final send off to summer vacation, Rockwell used the holiday to foreground the theme of Women War Workers whose insignia appeared bottom right. Like Rosie, Rockwell based Liberty Girl on the model Mary Doyle Keefe, but here denied her a Herculean transformation. Keefe had a naturally wiry figure and here Rockwell drew attention to her unimpressive stringy biceps, casting an adolescent silhouette despite her maturity. Liberty's facial expression was both peevish and determined, resonating with the adolescent petulance that Rockwell explored through other pre-pubescents and teenagers. Unlike Rosie the Riveter, whose working-class signifiers made her an uncomplicated fit with physical labor, Liberty Girl's saddle oxford shoes implied middle-class resources. Dressed in the same stars and stripes getup as Rockwell's 1928 Uncle Sam, she visibly struggled with a drop of sweat falling down her face. Her lug of rattling equipment symbolized a variety of jobs and victory projects. The hoard included mechanical tools, gardening equipment, cleaning supplies, switchboard operator equipment, milkman's bottles, schoolbooks, nightwatchmen's clock, and a coin dispenser. Simultaneously wearing a Red Cross hat and conductor's hat, her will appeared in a battle with

[231] *Saturday Evening Post*, September 4, 1943.

her stamina as she undertook a ridiculous backlog of tasks. Unlike Rosie's riveting work, these were the unglamorous low-paid jobs that the majority of working women. Unlike Rosie, she was not ennobled by the new tasks but hindered and humiliated.

Most scholars were unimpressed by Liberty Girl's struggle. Richard Halpern interprets this as a "somewhat condescending image" and several scholars align it with "the norms of the middle-class propaganda campaign."[232] Yet Liberty Girl's enigmatically angry expression was out of step with a campaign that Mary Anne Schofield demonstrates merged cover girl beauty with coveralls and machinery. *Post* covers generally steered clear of the new female work force, preferring to cover the phenomenon within photo-illustrated articles. In the debates over women entering masculine occupations, *Post* cover fodder primarily reassured that home front women continued to lead the leisurely, carefree lives pre-war time. Fashionistas and timeless country girls continued to dominate untouched by any hardships or shortages of wartime. The week before "Liberty Girl" graced the cover, the *Post* ran Alex Ross's "Card Game at the Beach." Four women in fashionable bathing costumes lolled idle and bored about on the sand. One exhaled a loud yawn. No wonder Liberty Girl was pissed. In fact, Rockwell's reference photographs for Liberty Girl showed that he contemplated a variety of facial expressions for Keefe. These included poses that exuded more wide-eyed optimism and will power. In one she was even actively talking into the mouthpiece of her telephone headset. Yet in another she screwed her face into an exaggerated grimace with bottom lip protruding. The final cover was a combination but veered decidedly toward those photographed expressions emphasizing struggle.

[232] Halpern, *Norman Rockwell*, 60.

As one of the Post's only cover representations of working women, Liberty Girl appeared to bear the entire symbolic weight of representing home front sacrifice and perseverance. The image debunked the reassuring myth of Rosie the Riveter, assuring the nation that American women were capable of a Superman metamorphosis. Rockwell's preparatory sketches reveal his originally intention to include frisbee-sized swastikas and Japanese flags pelting Liberty Girl from all directions. The motif recalled J. C. Leyendecker's 1943 New Year's baby, who, equipped with both bayonet and army helmet, both dodged and shattered these German and Japanese symbols. As a continuation of this onslaught, Liberty Girl's steady endurance belittled the national threat and promised national perseverance. However, unlike Rosie's definitive crush of Mein Kampf underfoot, Liberty Girl appeared to endure the onslaught with mild annoyance, like an adult walking through a snowball fight. I am tempted to read Rockwell's abandoned motif of flinging swastikas and Japanese flags as embodying not foreign powers but America's wartime dialog that heaped contradictory anxieties and expectations onto womanhood. Rather than reading Liberty Girl's hardship as condescension, I interpret it as acknowledging an impossible visual lexicon that reassured women could effortlessly maintain American production and dominance without transformation or hardship.

At the conclusion of the war in 1945, Rockwell introduced a number of young returning soldiers in addition to Willie. While most images were celebratory, Rockwell contemplated the war's psychological scars through an adolescent red-head who debuted in one of Rockwell's most famous covers, "The Homecoming" (6.92). The soldier, seen only from the back, sported Rockwell's signature attributes of a lingering adolescence, including large feet, a scrawny neck,

and protruding ears. The U.S. Treasury was partially responsible for this cover's celebratory reputation when it selected the painting as the official image for its final war bond drive. Yet Alexander Nemerov's intense investigation of this painting looks beyond its accrued patina of hope and triumph.[233] Nemerov describes the soldier's physical and psychological distance from the onslaught of joy. Nemerov's analysis uncovers "the sadness of Rockwell's painting," which is "that the veteran has returned, glum and changed, to the place where he grew up."[234]

Nemerov contextualizes his interpretation of the psychologically transformed GI with other "downbeat homecomings of that era" that proliferated through movies, illustration, and literature. The image powerfully resonated with first-hand accounts and service manuals, such as "Psychology for the Returning Serviceman", that spoke directly to the veteran experience.[235] Rockwell actually participated first-hand in one such campaign addressing the difficulties of reintegrating scarred veterans back into their American homes. In 1945 Rockwell composed a series of homecoming illustrations for a Listerine ad, all on the theme of "incorrectly" welcoming a veteran home. Rockwell contrasted the "tsk tsk sister" and "No nonsense" welcome to the "First Class" American greeting, marked by the mother's open arms and unconditional smile. "The Homecoming" mirrored this model, even including the detail of a father having just removed his pipe to grin. As per usual, Rockwell structured the advertisement with symbols of middle-class constraint and comfort, whereas the *Post* cover

[233] Alexander Nemerov, "Coming Home in 1945 Reading Robert Frost and Norman Rockwell," *American Art* 18, no. 2 (Summer 2004): 58-79.
[234] Ibid., 62.
[235] Ibid., 61.

permitted a more cartoon release of emotion. However, uncharacteristically for Rockwell, the artist set his cartoon homecoming celebration in a disheveled lower-class tenement setting.

The "The Homecoming" domicile is reminiscent of R. F. Outcault's Hogan's Alley. Signifiers of poverty abounded. The dirt lot yard was scattered with broken debris. The brother's repair job to the porch roof used crooked, uneven slats of wood. Rockwell arranged a large amount of reference photographs for the crumbling apartments, implied the importance of their impoverished details. Furthermore, this was an ethnic ghetto. The red-headed parents bore features long used to denigrate Irish immigrants. The excited families leaning out of windows and porches also bear immigrant signifiers pointing to Italian and Jewish identities. The children scrambling dangerously high in the trees channeled the chaotic antics of the Yellow Kid, and his ethnically diverse entourage, here including an African American boy and a possibly Chinese boy. The Irish family's service flag bore one blue star, indicating that their family is now complete. Yet other windows bore service flags, one with three blue stars. No gold stars were present, but as this cover appeared four days before Memorial Day, a soldier's presence upon the end of the war likely would have also conjured the loss of those who could not return.

Rockwell's red-headed soldier reappeared on October 13, 1945 in "Homecoming GI" with a similarly working-class milieu. Here he was returned to his original place of employment in a mechanic's garage. We know this because a newspaper clipping titled "Garageman a Hero" was pasted on the wall alongside a service flag and his monogrammed overalls in a makeshift shrine to "Marine Joe." The cracked windows were fogged with grime, a far cry from Willie

Gillis' pristine dormitory window with its view of trees and college bell towers that would appear in October 1946. Fellow garagemen, two children, and a municipal worker gathered on crates to hear Joe's war story. Their leaning attentive postures, the Japanese flag gripped in Joe's hands, and the "hero" newspaper article all guaranteed that it was a good one.

Alexander Nemerov describes this image as a "benign" pendant to "Homecoming GI", presenting "a solution to the downbeat energies" of its predecessor.[236] I find this conclusion odd as Nemerov so convincingly compares GI Joe's discomfort to contemporary photographs and films that highlighted veteran anxiety under the overwhelming and oblivious attentions given by civilian "well-wishers." Yet Nemerov ultimately argues that Rockwell "softens and ennobles the uneasiness" by prioritizing the triumph of community and assimilation.[237] The all-male gathering, the guarantee of employment, and even the close proximity of child and veteran reassured that the soldier "keeps in touch with youth." Nemerov evocatively calls out disturbing signifiers of death and bloodshed encrypted in the Japanese flag, Joe's nervous fingering, and even the limp overalls. However, Nemerov removes these shades of darkness from Rockwell's intentions, explaining that Rockwell's wartime rhetoric was inherently "more unwieldy, less straightforward, than [Rockwell] might wish."

Based on Nemerov's ground-breaking symbolic analysis, I would claim that Rockwell deliberately constructed the dark and depressing implications of this image with painstaking precision. Here I supply a few additional details to Nemerov's description. Foremost is the unusually squalid conditions of GI Joe's home and employment. Whereas as Willie was granted

[236] Ibid., 68.
[237] Ibid. 72.

economic advancement through the GI Bill, GI Joe's guarantee of employment seemed to eliminate opportunities for economic advancement. Nemerov cites how Rockwell's decision to let the veteran speak distanced the image from the silence and reticence many veterans felt about the horrors they witnessed. He concludes that "Rockwell's marine improbably makes the slaughter of the South Pacific a fit subject for little boys to hear."[238] Yet GI Joe was not speaking as his mouth was definitively closed with brow deeply knit into a disturbed expression.

Joe did not engage with his companions, but only locked eyes with the placid, calm face of the older boy dressed in his high school sweater. Rockwell's oldest son Jarvis modelled for this figure and would have been close to 14 years old, at the entry of adolescence. He was the only figure not craning forward in eager anticipation and seemed to be processing the story on a different level than his companions. Rockwell positioned his son directly below Joe's the two photographic portraits, prompting a comparison between the prep school boy's long-lashed gaze and the jaw-clenched expression of Joe in the "Garageman Hero" article. Nemerov sees Joe's double likeness on the wall, one big and one small, as an emblem of a "change that is really no change at all." However, the faces between the two photographs did show a transformation, walking backwards from hard bitten war hero ("Garageman") to fresh-faced cadet (smaller photograph), unable to fathom such a horrific future.

I do not agree with Nemerov's ultimate conclusion that the cover emblemizes "flags and headlines and patriotic awe – Rockwell's accustomed métier." Rather, I believe Rockwell deliberately constructed a narrative of veteran trauma and lost innocence, reconstituting the

[238] Idem.

narrative arc denied to Willie Gillis. I also believe Nemerov perfectly summarizes the driving content of this painting in his interpretation of Joe's empty uniform, a "sagging cipher of 'Joe'" that functioned as "a stark acknowledgment that [Joe} might never have come back to fill them; or that, even though he has come back, the person who wore that set of clothes is forever missing."[239]

Perhaps this is why Rockwell's work was so powerful, accruing cult-like levels of worship and aversion. In the end, one can convincingly unweave and reweave Rockwell's mountain of details and narrative arcs in order to construct a prismatic spectrum of America's prevailing and failed ideals. In this light, a *Saturday Evening Post* Rockwell cover is very much like the early 20th century adolescent body itself. It is heaped with the nation's pressures and anxieties to conform to the identity one judges will set the nation right. In this sense, I am humbly struck by how this current chapter is not so different from Rockwell's enormous collection of obsessive fan mail. In some ways I have penned just one more aggravatingly detailed piece of fan mail insisting I know what Rockwell's images mean. If anything is truly American about Rockwell, I would argue it is his ability to formulate visual vehicles that beg to be inhabited and transformed differently by each generation.

[239] Ibid., 73.

Chapter 7

EPILOGUE

> "We live in a time where the old model of masculinity has been thoroughly discredited and yet no new model has emerged that is convincing enough to be embraced and shared by the larger culture . . . This transition [from boy to man] is one of the most powerful times in a boy's life and one that has virtually been dismissed as nothing more than growing pains, idiocy, and something that will pass."[1]

American painter Eric Fischl articulated these thoughts for a 2010 interview about *Corrida in Ronda*, his painting series exploring a contest of machismo between matador and bull. One of the so-called "Bad Boy" artists who rose to fame in the 1980's, Fischl discussed how his paintings explored the tensions that arise from relationships, particularly in the contest of "male versus masculinity." Within Fischl's work and across public discourses, this anxiety-ridden subject has played out especially on the dysphoric adolescent body. Since its invention in the late 19th century, adolescence presented as a worrying, fragile chrysalis of nationhood. As a national metaphor, adolescence provided a framework for contextualizing America's turn-of-the-century growing pains as a "storm and stress" period on the journey toward cultural and political adulthood.[2] As a branch of psychology, adolescence provided a platform for monitoring this national maturation through the guided development of youth, giving biological

[1] Jill Connor, "January 2010: Eric Fischl's Corrida in Ronda: a Discussion", White Hot Magazine of Contemporary art, January 2010. https://whitehotmagazine.com/articles/s-corrida-in-ronda-discussion/2005

[2] Kent Baxter, *The Modern Age: Turn-of-the-Century American Culture and the Invention of Adolescence* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2008), 5.

rationale to methods for disciplining gender, racial, class, and political identities. Adolescence simultaneously generated a vibrant counter-discourse, one in which individual adolescents meditated on their bodily transitions as both intimate and convulsive experiences.

With the power to publish and purchase, adolescents, and adults identifying with adolescent mindsets, created physical consumer goods designed to serve and resonate with their ostracized experiences. By the Great Depression science fiction and comic books surged in popularity and generated thriving subcultures.[3] Both accrued an intense fan base who began to formulate their own social networks via their published fan letters.[4] Reading communities formed regionally at first, and then linked across broader geographies as fans wrote to the magazines and then to each other. Participants excluded from mainstream teenage cults of masculinity could now find community in their shared imaginative interests in comics books and science fiction. As frequent fearmongering over these products suggested, comics books and science fiction provided rites of passage that grated against the cultural regulators designed to steer adolescent bodies into acceptable masculine development.

Since their very inception, concepts of adolescence were forged and processed through the comic-strip body. The adolescent's hapless humor and unapologetic clumsiness was, in the space of the comic panel, retooled to unfetter imagination and construct positions of transgressive strength. Not surprisingly, many of the cultural products that became

[3] In 1929, the pulp magazine *Science Wonder Stories* adopted the title 'science fiction.' This name came to embody a genre of writing that had already begun tantalizing adolescent boy readers of the magazines *Amazing Stories* and *Weird Tales*.

[4] Gerard Jones' *Geeks and Gangsters: The Birth of the Comic Book* (New York: Basic Books, 2004) offers an intense study of this phenomenon through interviews with individuals associated with the early comic book industry and surveys of published fan-mail.

synonymous with adolescent development both directly and indirectly inculcated the spastic action, hyperbole, rude humor, and plasmatic elation of the cartoon body. The historic correlation between comics and adolescence paved the eventual popularity of superhero comics that arose as an adolescent staple during the 1940's. Superhero narratives imported the sensationalism and racy action associated with dime novels and pulp fiction, allowing surrogate thrills in outlandish fields of masculinity. As comics historian Gerard Jones explains, "Superheroes allowed adolescents and adults to slip back to the confidence and inviolability of that last moment of childhood before the anxiety of pubescence."[5]

Superman himself was a product of two late-adolescent Jewish imaginations. After formulating their character for nearly half a decade, co-creators Joe Shuster and Jerry Siegel debuted Superman in *Action Comics* in 1938. The first Superhero to enter comic books, Superman hyperbolized the masculine discourses that had long ambushed the wayward adolescent body. Echoing the sardonic tactics used by college humorists, Superman's effortless transformation from Clark Kent to Superman parodied the magic mutations advertised by Charles Atlas and other physical culture gurus who promised masculine hope for the "90 pound weakling."[6] The hero's ability to both attract and repel Lois Lane by simply applying a pair of glasses did more than generate a rhythmic character arc.[7] It parodied an entrenched masculine discourse set on repeat ever since the late 19th century that castigated non-athletic males. As comics historian Arie Kaplan discusses, Superman's status as an alien masquerading as a human

[5] Ibid., 232.
[6] Ibid., 179.
[7] Ibid., 232.

also connected him to the immigrant experience.[8] Embedded with Jewish signifiers, Superman invested the position of the outsider with magnificent capabilities able to restructure social order, creating a faint overture to the appeal of that original immigrant troublemaker, the Yellow Kid.

In the realm of painting, American adolescents are often presented less for joyful identification and more for a relentless analysis of America's unmentionables. Eric Fischl also drops his adolescents into alien environments, but his visions of dystopic surburbia are unequipped to tolerate the adolescent's anamorphic status between child and adult. One of Fischl's earliest career pieces, the 1979 *Sleepwalker*, amplified these tensions with a young adolescent arriving at a solo sexual awakening in a paddling pool. *Sleepwalker* participates in the pictorial tradition of using swimming and bodies of water to contemplate adolescent transgressions. R. F. Outcault's Coney Island day trips, Rockwell's swimming holes, and Bellows' wharf plunges all deployed bodies of water as uneasy sites for viewing developing bodies with full displays of their distortions and transgressions. Harkening to this tradition, one of most reviewed pieces from Eric Fischl's 2016 series *Late America* displays masculine identities unraveling at a poolside. Also titled *Late America*, this painting presents a young boy wrapped in an American flag and holding a teddy bear arriving to bug his dad, who is inexplicably naked and curled in a fetal position at the edge of an upscale suburban pool. Sunburned, laying on the bare concrete, and with testicles pressed between his thighs, the burly middle-aged body appears emasculated and paralyzed. *Late America* focuses on the gulf, rather than transition,

[8] Arie Kaplan, *From Krakow to Krypton: Jews and Comic Books* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2008), 14.

from juvenility to deflated adulthood, and reverses expectations of who should be nude and exposed. The adult's rude foreshortened view and tender rubbing toes make an uncanny allusion to the surgical patient in Thomas Eakins's 1875 *The Gross Clinic* (Fig. 7.1). If *Late America* is analyzed as a contemporary *The Gross Clinic*, the analogy suggests Fischl lays out the "surgical patient" of the aging white male for a conceptual dissection of class and racial privilege.

Thomas Eakins' painting performed literal and metaphorical "dissections" on a variety of bodies, often placing the adolescent body at its visual fulcrum. This happened most grotesquely within the dissection theater of Eakins' *The Gross Clinic*. The youthful, anesthetized patient's naked legs bear adolescent markers of slender thighs and bony buttocks, their pasty exposure accentuated by the blue socks. Eakins' writings revealed he contemplated how the body as a visual image required mental editing of the body as a physical, experiential vessel. He expressed this in a recount of his experience dissecting a human corpse, a staple practice in the Fine Arts curriculum of the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts.[9] In *The Gross Clinic*, this mental editing was performed vicariously by the audience of scholarly observers, medical field inductees who eschewed carnal shock for scientific research. The opened, unconscious adolescent patient visually encapsulated the triumph of science domineering the body. However, to the unconditioned layperson, represented by the revolted female bottom left, it

[9] See Thomas Eakins' quotes in William C. Brownell, "The Art Schools of Philadelphia" in *Scribner's Monthly* XVIII (September 1879), 737-750. Reprinted in *Art in Theory: 1815-1900: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, eds. Charles Harrison and Paul Wood with Jason Gaiger (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), 650.

delivered only horror, questioning whether the youthful ideal of classic origins can exist within the modern epoch.[10]

Again and again in his work, Eakins annihilated the classical form of male youth with cold and mechanical optics. *Swimming* (Fig. 7.2) presents one of his most puzzling examples of this, especially as the quasi-classical setting and allusion to a Greek frieze seemed intent on shielding these figures from contemporary realities. Elizabeth Johns observes that the display of nude gymnastic activity alluded to the "bodily beauty and mental control" of Greek culture, practices Eakins admired and even directed for posed nude photographs.[11] Yet Eakins' figures do not look like Classical marble casts. Their pale flesh flushes, revealing sunburns and temperature fluxes. The seated reaching figure and Eakins' diving figure reveal muddy feet. Most disruptive, however, is the detailed exploration of flesh and muscle in different stages of adult development. The central figure, arranged in Classical contrapposto, exposes perhaps the greatest chasm between classical idol and contemporary substitute. Probably sourced from the central model who appeared in *Three nude models in a painting studio*, Eakins highlighted the soft flesh of his buttocks, the pointed shoulder blades, and stringy muscles. This body displayed pubescent markers, eschewing the smooth, undulating, and, for Victorians, reassuring muscular physiques of Greek models.

[10] For a discussion of the female figure, see Katherine A. Foster and Mark S. Tucker, "The Making of the Gross Clinic" in *An Eakins Masterpiece Restored: Seeing The Gross Clinic Anew* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 59-60.
[11] Elizabeth Jones, "Swimming: Thomas Eakins, the Twenty-ninth Bather" in "'Kindly Relations': Edward Hornor Coates and Swimming" in *Thomas Eakins and the Swimming Picture*, eds. Doreen Bolger and Sarah Cash (Fort Worth: Amon Carter Museum, 1996), 68.

The awkward rejection of *Swimming* by its commissioner, Edward Hornor Coates, often prompts historians to categorize Eakins's painting as a personal failure. Alan C. Braddock attributes the painting's rejection to "the failure of *Swimming* to reconcile competing aesthetic impulses."[12] Randall Griffin positions this failure around the Classical and Romantic elevation of the male creator as a superior force, concluding, "despite Eakins's concerted attempt to reinforce sexual difference, his image made especially relative the supposed fixity of the male body as a sign."[13] Kathleen A. Foster floats the possibility that the "tension of continuity and discontinuity may be the inadvertent product of Eakins' method", referencing Eakins' practice of painting his figures in separate modelling sessions. Yet she also asserts these tensions "must be intentional" and constitute "an expression of Eakins' mind", externalizing his "layered vision of old and new beauty."[14] Foster ascribes the painting's lack of success to the concomitant controversies about nudity and moral depravity that "rose to the surface to color contemporary perceptions."[15]

My own approach to *Swimming,* following Martin Berger's lead, focuses less on the rejection and more on "why Eakins painted this particular work in the first place."[16] Created when Eakins had embarked on a series of Arcadian pieces, *Swimming* belonged to a puzzling body of paintings, sculptures, and photographs devoted to recreating Classical arrangements

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[12] Alan C. Braddok, *Thomas Eakins and the Cultures of Modernity* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2009), 144.
[13] Randall Griffin, Thomas Eakins' Construction of the Male Body, or 'Men Get to Know Each Other across the Space of Time' in *Oxford Art Journal* Vol. 18, No. 2 (1995): 78.
[14] Kathleen A. Foster, "The Making and Meaning of *Swimming*" in *Thomas Eakins and the Swimming Picture*, eds. Doreen Bolger and Sarah Cash (Fort Worth: Amon Carter Museum, 1996), 30-31.
[15] Ibid., 30.
[16] Martin Berger, *Man Made: Thomas Eakins and the Construction of Gilded Age Manhood* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000), 90.

and themes. These paintings and sculptures lacked the smooth amalgamation of photographic realism and painterly fantasy mastered by Eakins' mentor, Orientalist painter Jean-Léon Gérôme. Eakins supplanted the Greek statue's youthful, sculpted perfection with bodies that spoke to their own physical surges and prolapses. Berger contends that Eakins wielded his unnerving male nudes intentionally to address the "structured forces" of the Victorian age "that made it impossible to achieve the contradictory attributes of manhood."[17] My analysis brings the theme of adolescent development into play with Berger's theory to further explore how *Swimming* toppled the modern nude's untenable aspiration to serve as a Classical object for contemplation. I believe that here Eakins invoked the camera lens and its scrupulous record of reality, rather than the scalpel, as his tool for dissection.

Swimming loosely quoted classical statues, many of which appeared in 19th century photographs of the Pennsylvania Academy's cast collection. The composition's far left figure has received the most notable attention from scholars for recreating the *Dying Gaul*. In addition, the arched back, flexed deltoids, and curved neck of the partially submerged red-haired figure clinging to the wall echoed *Discobolus*. Second from the left, a figure perched atop the wall either waves or calls with an inexplicably clenched hand and flexed arm. His strained angle and clasping fingers roughly replicated the motion of the *Borghese Gladiator*. The central standing figure, perched atop the composition, exemplifies quintessential Greek stance with a distinct weight shift, a traditional symbol of harmonious balance and stored energy. Multiple locomotion photographs of models shifting in and out of contrapposto attest

[17] Ibid., 4.

to the importance of this classical stance in Eakins' studies. In pose, if not in physique, Eakin's figure approximated the Pennsylvania Academy's cast of Polykleitos' *Doryphoros*, Polykleitos' literal canon of classical proportions and reflexive harmony.

Swimming is also connected to a large compilation of preparatory photographs (Fig. 7.3). Eakins' body of nude photography continues to tantalize and provoke historians over their shocking specificity and eroticism. For an artist so keyed into the duplicity of modern images, it is hard to imagine the salacious qualities of these photographs escaped Eakins' notice despite his silence on this topic. However, his collaboration with Eadweard Muybridge and the distribution of his photographs to students as scholarly resources suggest Eakins viewed these, at least in some capacity, as a professional resource rather than a private indulgence.[18] Eakins' photographs of Classical reenactments, performed by both clothed and nude models, seem to accentuate, rather than bridge, the chasm between the Classical ideal and clinical modern reality. In this view, photographed recreations of Arcadia, which could not modulate the prominence of body hair, period haircuts, and prominent genitalia, suggest an alliance with the distasteful practice of dissection: both dissection and photography provide imperfect resources that furthered comprehension of the body even though they disturbed the aesthetic appeal of the body as an idealizing metaphor. As Eakins said, "no one dissects to quicken his eye for, or his delight in, beauty."[19]

Eakins' on-site photographs for this painting reveal that he was thinking in terms of Greek classical sculpture early on. In these photographs of nude groups, one or two of the

[18] Martin Berger discusses the circulation of photographs among students in *Man Made*, 98.
[19] See Thomas Eakins' quotes in William C. Brownell, "The Art Schools of Philadelphia," 650.

models would adopt exaggerated, even painful looking hip shifts to engage contrapposto. However, in both the finalized *Swimming* and its preparatory photographs, Classical overtures exacerbate the uncanny tendency of photography to offer the body as a carnal specimen. Martin Berger points out that this tension between the Classic and modern was embedded even in the location Eakins chose for his artificial Arcadia. Dove Lake was not an untouched Eden, but a man-made reservoir recently created to form a lake for the landowner's copper rolling mill.[20] The men do not congregate on a grassy slope, but climb upon a stone wall ruin, a pathetic invocation of the Acropolis.

While scholars have closely analyzed the Classical motifs that permeate *Swimming*, few have fully explored Eakins' reference to Greek temple architecture. The painting's long, triangular arrangement of bodies recalled a Greek pediment.[21] Eakins' lectures on the Parthenon's frieze as well as the Classical studies he undertook for his series of Arcadian paintings imply his familiarity with how Greek sculptures operated in a cohesive assembly within the Greek architecture.[22] In *Swimming*, the steady rise of stances from reclining to standing further mimic the choreography of poses commonly seen in Classical Greek pediments. Eakins could contemplate such an assembly firsthand from the Pennsylvania

[20] Berger, *Man Made*, 92. Martin Berger identifies this choice as an optimistic view which posits "the ways in which the modern capitalist industrial world allowed middle-class men to form communal ties through their newfound leisure."
[21] Richard R. Brettell refers to *The Swimming Hole* as having a "pedimental" composition and Kathleen Foster describes the figures imitating the "high relief sculptures set within the pediment of a Greek temple." See Kathleen Foster's "The Making and Meaning of *Swimming*" and Richard R. Brettell's "Thomas Eakins and the Male Nude in French Vanguard Painting, 1850-1890" in *Thomas Eakins and the Swimming Picture*, eds. Doreen Bolger and Sarah Cash (Fort Worth: Amon Carter Museum, 1996), 16, 87.
[22] Marc Simpson, "Thomas Eakins and His Arcadian Works," *Smithsonian Studies in American Art* 1, no. 2 (Autumn 1987): 86.

Academy's cast collection, which included copies of the Parthenon's west façade sculptures. *Swimming*'s partially submerged bodies and their severe anatomical cropping echoed these fragmented Parthenon remains.

However, *Swimming*'s composition and anxious, strained posturing bears closer affinities to the Classical battle played out in the Temple of Aegina's eastern pediment. Eakins did not mention visiting the Glyptothek on his trip to Munich in 1868, though that would be a logical pilgrimage for a student of the École des Beaux-Arts. Here the pediment sculptures were on display in their triangular arrangement.[23] The Greek revivalist room designed by Leo von Klenze included a reproduction of the Temple of Aegina's façade with a fully detailed pediment in ornamental relief.[24] In order to fill an obtuse triangle with full scale bodies, the Aegina assembly reserved the acute ends for prostrate wounded and dying soldiers. As the pitch of the roof rose, crouched defensive positions gave way to offensive standing attacks. The central peak of a Greek pediment was often reserved for the patron god or goddess, a compositional support beam whose composure and calm ruled over the chaos. Eakins' triangular composition followed a similar visual blueprint, creating a narrative that flowed from the outer borders toward the center. However, Eakins' medial progression conflated the Classical flow from dying to victorious with another theme: from age to youth.

The two book-ending figures of *Swimming* (the reclining figure at left and Eakins' self-portrait as a submerged swimmer on the right) were the oldest in age and generally laden with

[23] See Fig. 4 in William J. Diebold, "The Politics of Derestoration: The Aegina Pediments and the German Confrontation with the Past," *Art Journal* 54, No. 2 (Summer 1995): 62.
[24] Heiner Knell and Hanno-Walter Kruft, "Re-Opening of the Munich Glyptothek" in *The Burlington Magazine* 114, no. 831 (June 1972): 432.

signifiers of weakness and obsolescence. They sported thicker, developed muscles, particularly around the neck. The reference to *Dying Gaul* associated the left figure, despite his relaxed pose, with expiration and the obsolescence of a foreign invader. Resting on his elbow and twisting to the side, his pose more closely resembles the dying soldier found in the eastern pediment of the Temple of Aegina. As for Eakins' swimming doppelganger, the figure in the water lacked the typical grace and athletic confidence found through Eakins' depictions of exercise. The figure's paddle toward shore matched the dog's paddle, where both creatures appear vulnerable and out of their element.

Right of the *Dying Gaul* figure were two stacked bathers, one atop the wall and the other climbing out of the water, who sported leaner and younger physiques. Recreating the active reaches of *Discobolus* and the *Borghese Gladiator*, their athletic bodies flexed and tensed. Together, they generated a momentum of stretching toward the central standing figure. While reaching toward this standing boy, the *Borghese Gladiator* figure faintly echoed the gesture made by the female in the *Gross Clinic*, with hand clenched and head facing away as if contemplating something abhorrent.

In the center of Eakins' implied pediment in the position of the Greek god stood the strident adolescent.[25] Although he placed the boy in contrapposto, Eakins departed from the classical *Doryphoros* pose by relocating the boy's arms to the hips. Rather than illustrating

[25] Conservator Claire M. Barry reports that Eakins secured this central placement by scoring a deep vertical line "through the exact center of the canvas, where he would place the left leg of the standing figure." "*Swimming* by Thomas Eakins: Its Construction, Condition, and Restoration in *Thomas Eakins and the Swimming Picture*, eds. Doreen Bolger and Sarah Cash (Fort Worth: Amon Carter Museum, 1996), 99.

Polykleitos' ideal based on a harmony of opposites that balanced and recycled internal energies, this lanky figure effused extremes of angular shifts, awkwardly expelling his energy. He was striking for a haughty arrogance that was unsubstantiated by the attenuated anatomy. Both his stance and pubescent body harkened to Florentine Renaissance sculptor Andrea del Verrocchio's bronze biblical *David,* a cast of which resided in the Pennsylvania Academy. Both the Greek and Renaissance references here aligned this adolescent with symbols of state resilience. *Swimming* thus connects with a history of placing emblems of male physiques on pedestals to publicize a collective's up and coming presence on the world stage. However, Eakins' American model, a measly figure dwarfed by the massive expanse of dark trees, generated an unconvincing metaphor for triumph.

In addition to the triangular arrangement, the four central figures of this painting also formed a quasi-circular clockwise composition that narrated a stop-motion sequence of climbing out of the water, reaching toward the top, surmounting the apex, and dramatically plunging back into the inky lake. [26] The diving figure possessed the same underdeveloped boney anatomy of the standing adolescent, accentuated by the sinewy arm muscles stretched overhead and thin, folded skin under the buttocks. As such, the diver suggested a vision of the next photographic moment, the standing figure jumping into the watery void. The diver struck an eerie form. His shadowy obscured head, just submerging under water, transformed into an unnatural black blob. The plunge into darkness and head/body disconnect generated a

[26] Doreen Bolger identifies this sense of locomotion in Eakins's figures and places it in context with his relationship with Eadweard Muybridge and studies of the human body in locomotion. Kathleen A. Foster refers to the combination of figures as a "zoetrope." See Foster, "An Introduction" and Doreen Bolger in "'Kindly Relations': Edward Hornor Coates and Swimming" in *Thomas Eakins and the Swimming Picture*, eds. Doreen Bolger and Sarah Cash (Fort Worth: Amon Carter Museum, 1996), 27, 39.

surrealist vision, reminiscent of the imaginings by French symbolist painter Odilon Redon and perhaps triggered by Eakins' practice of molding a wax figure to accomplish this pose.[27] The awkward foreshortened view, extreme highlight on the leg, and obscured face also recalled the anesthetized adolescent from the *Gross Clinic*, triggering a similar, if more subliminal, repulsion. Martin Berger interprets the painting's plummet into the void as directed and encouraged by the paddling Eakins figure, a leader urging his students to take the plunge into a fresh, brave vision of painting.[28] However, I cannot help feeling that, if the central standing figure was meant to channel the bravado of the biblical boy-hero David, he feels forebodingly forsaken in the diver catapulting himself toward an invisible Goliath.

For the Ancient Greeks, temple pediments and nude human bodies recounted mythological narratives that embodied core cultural beliefs. As a pediment to American culture, Eakins constructed a troubling vision. Drawing back on Martin Berger's analysis, this painting participated in Eakins' conviction to confront audiences with "the anxiety-inducing manner in which Gilded Age men were made."[29] Mature anatomies collapsed and were pushed to the side, presided over by an unproven adolescent. The adolescent's pointed scapula and willowy legs resonated with another destabilizing referent: Jean-Léon Gérôme's rear view depiction of a youth in *The Snake Charmer* (Fig. 7.4), an exoticized fiction of Eastern indolence.[30] Linda Nochlin's famous 1983 essay "The Imaginary Orient" describes how the

[27] The artist's wife Susan Macdowell Eakins mentions this in a letter to the New Century Club. Reprinted in *Writing About Eakins: The Manuscripts in Charles Bregler's Thomas Eakins Collection*, eds. Kathleen A. Foster and Cheryl Leibold (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989), 300.
[28] Berger, *Man Made*, 93-96.
[29] Ibid., 120.
[30] I cannot find evidence that Eakins viewed this painting, but it was residing in New York following art patron Alan Spencer's 1880 purchase.

"beguiling rear view of the boy holding the snake", the "childish, trancelike concentration of its audience", and the "sexually charged mystery at the center" forefronts the Orientalizing topos of the "mystery of the East itself."[31] For *Swimming*, beguiling adolescent anatomy, languishing adults, and entranced viewers, not in the painting but actualized in the museum, resound uncomfortably through a pantomime of Classical posturing, not a topos for some fantasy foreign adventure-land, but for America as a mature cultural power.[32]

Historian Martin Berger describes Eakins as predicting the crisis around American masculinity, a cultural emergency that would surge into the forefront of public discourse by the late 19th century. Yet Martin Berger emphasizes the restorative potential of Eakins' encounters, describing how Eakins' works shifted the terms of the debate over paradigms of gender, "thus allowing for the expansion and contraction of those discourses that policed the borders of what Victorians could imagine about themselves and others."[33] As the adolescent diver in *Swimming* catapults into the abyss, Eakins' circular composition compels us to assume he will cycle back along the path of Eakin's self-portrait and restart the process. Yet the figure also dives toward an area of the composition where light breaches across the water and discloses an alternate, open grassy pathway winding deep into the image. To steal Eakins' metaphor, this dissertation has similarly attempted to explore some of those alternative pathways forged around the specter of American masculinity. While comics and illustration did not demolish the dominant

[31] See Linda Nochlin, "The Imaginary Orient", *Art in America* (May 1983): 119.
[32] Incidentally, these are nearly the same questions generated by Eakins' much more scintillating 1898 presentation of the adolescent physique in *Salutat*.
[33] Berger, *Man Made*, 123.

discourse in place, they did expose its artificial limits and untenable boundaries, allowing those sentenced to march in the promenade of masculinity alternate routes.



Fig. 7.1 Thomas Eakins (American, 1844-1916).
Portrait of Dr. Samuel D. Gross (*The Gross Clinic).* 1875.
Oil on canvas. 8’ x 6’ 6”. Philadelphia Museum of Art.
Gift of the Alumni Association to Jefferson Medical College in 1878 and purchased by the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and the Philadelphia Museum of Art in 2007 with the generous support of more than 3,600 donors, 2007. 2007.7.7
Image courtesy the Philadelphia Museum of Art.
https://www.philamuseum.org/collection/object/299524



Fig. 7.2 Thomas Eakins (American, 1844–1916). *Swimming.* 1885. Oil on canvas. 27 3/8 x 36 3/8 in. Amon Carter Museum of American Art, Fort Worth, Texas. Purchased by the Friends of Art, Fort Worth Art Association, 1925; acquired by the Amon Carter Museum of American Art, 1990, from the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth through grants and donations from the Amon G. Carter Foundation, the Sid W. Richardson Foundation, the Anne Burnett and Charles Tandy Foundation, Capital Cities/ABC Foundation, Fort Worth Star-Telegram, The R. D. and Joan Dale Hubbard Foundation and the people of Fort Worth. 1990.19.1. Image Courtesy Amon Carter Museum of Art



Fig. 7.3 Thomas Eakins (American, 1844–1916). *Thomas Eakins and Male Nudes at the Site of "Swimming."* 1884.
Albumen silver print. 3 1/2" x 4 1/2". The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles. 84.XM.811.1. Digital image courtesy of the Getty's Open Content Program.



Fig. 7.4 Jean-Léon Gérôme (French, 1824-1904). *Snake Charmer.* c. 1879. Oil on canvas. 32 3/8" x 47 5/8". The Clark Institute. Acquired by Sterling and Francine Clark, 1942. 1955.51. Image courtesy the Clark Institute. Clarkart.edu

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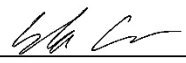
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George Bellows (1882–1925)
Shower-Bath
1917
Lithograph
15 7/8 x 23 7/8 in.
Amon Carter Museum of American Art, Fort Worth, Texas
1985.306



Thomas Eakins (1844–1916)
Swimming
1885
Oil on canvas
27 3/8 x 36 3/8 in.
Amon Carter Museum of American Art, Fort Worth, Texas, Purchased by the Friends of Art, Fort Worth Art Association, 1925; acquired by the Amon Carter Museum of American Art, 1990, from the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth through grants and donations from the Amon G. Carter Foundation, the Sid W. Richardson Foundation, the Anne Burnett and Charles Tandy Foundation, Capital Cities/ABC Foundation, Fort Worth Star-Telegram, The R. D. and Joan Dale Hubbard Foundation and the people of Fort Worth
1990.19.1

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Email Correspondence Letter from Cleveland Museum of Art regarding use of George Bellows (American, 1882-1925), “Boy in a Blue Coat”, 1915, 1938.45

May 13, 2021, 1:57 PM

James Kohler <JKohler@clevelandart.org>

Christine,

Thank you for your message. It sounds like your planned usage does not require a high-resolution tiff file, which includes image service fee of $75, and an image service contract is issued. The client is also responsible for clearing the copyright with the copyright holder. I have attached a Word/PowerPoint quality file that I hope will meet your needs, which I can provide free of charge. Please note the image as "Courtesy of The Cleveland Museum of Art," and use the following caption when referencing the image:

Boy in a Blue Coat, 1915. George Bellows (American, 1882-1925). Oil on canvas; unframed: 91.5 x 61 cm (36 x 24 in.). The Cleveland Museum of Art, Bequest of Mrs. Henry A. Everett for the Dorothy Burnham Everett Memorial Collection 1938.45

If you have any questions, please let me know,

James Kohler
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