



Brooks, Celine (2019) *'The Modern Lass': discourse on the 'flapper' in interwar Scotland*. [MA]

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Deposited: 27 June 2019



'La Mia Rosettes' performing in Glasgow between the wars. Leneman, L., *Into the Foreground: A Century of Scottish Women in Photographs*, Stroud: Alan Sutton Publishing, (1993)

'The Modern Lass': Discourse on the 'Flapper' in Interwar Scotland

Undergraduate Dissertation, Economic & Social History, University of Glasgow

Student Number:

Supervisor: Dr. Jeffrey Meek

Urkund Upload Date: 14/01/19

Submission Date: 14/01/19

Word Count: 12438

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Introduction

The interwar flapper figure normally conjures images of 1920s Hollywood film vixens with bobbed haircuts, dancing the Charleston in smoky jazz bars.

However, during this period, the flapper's cultural significance transcended the silver screen, as real-life 'flappers' became social phenomena as manifestations of post-war modernity. During the war, new work opportunities in offices and factories had afforded women more social and financial independence than they had been allowed in the domestic service industry.¹ The new visibility of young women outside of the domestic sphere challenged established gender norms and the modern girl's 'youthful feminine identity' attracted much attention from social investigators, journalists and politicians.² In the interwar period the media discourse focused heavily on the changes brought about by the First World War, declaring the arrival of the phase they described as 'new modernity'.³

Emblematic of this new phase was the 'modern girl' or the 'flapper' who was seen to be worlds apart from her Victorian and Edwardian counterparts.⁴ The imagery of a slim young flapper with a short skirt and bobbed haircut smoking cigarettes and hanging around dancehalls was nearly ubiquitous in advertising,

¹ Selina Todd, 'Young Women, Work and Leisure in Interwar England', *Historical Journal*, Volume 48, 2005, Issue 3 p. 718

² Todd, 'Young Women, Work and Leisure in Interwar England' p. 722

³ Fiona Skillen, 'Woman and the Sport Fetish': Modernity, Consumerism and Sports Participation in Inter-War Britain' *The International Journal of the History of Sport* Volume 29, 2012 Issue 5 p. 751

⁴ Ibid.

cinema and in the popular press.⁵ The focus on the modern girl was so pronounced that the term 'flapper' has been described as 'one of the defining words' of the 1920s.⁶

Although there are variations, the origins of the term 'flapper' all appear to denote a sense of youthful naiveté as well a kind of loose and uncontrolled movement.⁷ In American 'slanguage', 'flapper' referred to an adolescent bird whose 'undeveloped wings forebode',⁸ while the British version describes a young girl who had yet to 'come out' and whose hair 'flapped in the wind'.⁹ Beddoe argues that flapper was in some ways an elaboration of the masculine appearing 'New Woman' who emerged from the Victorian and Edwardian periods.¹⁰ However, where the New Woman or Garçonne represented a certain kind of political ambition and intellectual seriousness, the flapper was seen as simply 'hell bent on having a good time'.¹¹ Some historians have highlighted the distinction between the New Woman and the flapper while others have taken the terms 'new woman', 'modern girl' and 'flapper' to mean the same thing within the context of the interwar period. For this research, I have taken into

⁵ Adrian Bingham, *Gender, Modernity, and the Popular Press in Inter-war Britain*, Oxford: Clarendon Press (2004) p. 48

⁶ J. Ayto, *Twentieth Century Words* Oxford: Oxford University Press (1999) cited in Bingham, *Gender, Modernity, and the Popular Press* p. 48

⁷ Liz Conor, 'The Flapper in the Heterosexual Scene' *Journal of Australian Studies* Vol. 26, 2002, Issue 72 p. 47

⁸ Stanley G. Hall, 'Flapper Americana Novissima,' *The Atlantic Monthly*, June 1922: 771-780 cited in Chani Marchiselli, 'The Flapper and the Flâneur: Visuality, Mobility, and the "Kinaesthetic" Subject in the Early Twentieth Century American Press, 1920 to 1930,' *The Journal of American Popular Culture, 1900 to Present*, Vol. 13, 2014, Issue 2

⁹ Conor, 'The Flapper in the Heterosexual Scene' p. 47

¹⁰ Dierdre Beddoe, *Back to Home and Duty: Women Between the Wars 1918-1939*, London: Pandora (1989) p. 10

¹¹ Ibid.

consideration the occasionally loose use of the terms in the primary and secondary material and will consider 'modern girl', 'flapper' and, occasionally, 'new woman' as they pertain to single, modern appearing adolescents of school leaving age and women under 30. Additionally, in chapter 3, I will further examine some of the motivations behind the application of the term 'flapper'.

The flapper figure was recognizable in various parts of the world including Europe, North America, Australia and beyond. Although there were some cultural distinctions, the flapper's recognisable aesthetic was relatively uniform. As Conor notes, the shared nature of this figure demonstrates the 'increasing cultural resonance between these countries through visual technologies such as print media and film' during this period.¹² Due to the relative universality of this figure, this research does not necessarily seek to establish a Scottish distinctiveness, but rather to situate the Scottish flapper within the wider scholarship on this common interwar figure. Scotland, however, has a strong national identity and, as Breitenbach notes, has been historically, and continues to be, distinctive from other parts of the UK in many respects.¹³ For example, Scottish law is distinct from English law in both the letter of the law and the application, one relevant example being the regulation of prostitution. Educational traditions were also distinct in Scotland,¹⁴ as well as approaches to

¹² Conor, 'The Flapper in the Heterosexual Scene' p. 46

¹³ Esther Breitenbach and Valerie Wright, 'Women as Active Citizens: Glasgow and Edinburgh c. 1918-1939', in *Women's History Review*, Volume 23, 2014, Issue 3 p. 403

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

‘child guidance’ and physical education.¹⁵ Additionally, after a short re-stocking boom Scotland suffered more from economic decline and depression in the interwar period than its English neighbours.¹⁶ Furthermore, Scottish gender historians have argued that ‘the distinctive narratives of Scottish women’s history have been subsumed into British women’s history, necessitating studies of Scotland specifically’.¹⁷ Finally, since no extensive research on the modern girl has been undertaken on Scotland, it offers a fresh regional look at this interwar phenomenon.

Much of international discourse on the flapper was underscored by a few broad themes, namely interwar social economic conditions and gender relations, consumerism and leisure, as well as perceptions about modern female sexuality. This research will engage with these themes to determine the extent to which the Scottish discourse mirrored the broader interpretations of the flapper figure. In the post-war period Scotland was particularly economically depressed,¹⁸ and since the modern flapper girl was situated within the new consumerist realm, it could be assumed that she did not feature heavily on the minds of the Scottish population during this period. However, anxieties around blurred gender norms and family breakdown were prevalent in interwar Scotland, which drew

¹⁵ John W. Stewart, ‘Child Guidance in Interwar Scotland: International Influences and Domestic Concerns’, *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, Volume 80, 2006, Issue 3

¹⁶ William Knox, *Industrial Nation: Work, Culture and Society in Scotland, 1800-Present*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press (1999) p. 189

¹⁷ Kirsten Elliot, ‘Birth Control Clinics in Scotland, ‘1926 - c.1939’ *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies*, 2014, Volume 34, 2014, Issue 2 p. 200

¹⁸ Knox, *Industrial Nation* p. 189

attention to the social significance of the modern girl.¹⁹ In the early twentieth century Scotland was a highly patriarchal society that saw women treated as second-class citizens, and their work valued much lower than men's.²⁰ After the war, high male unemployment and the idea that modern 'girls' were 'usurping men' created the conditions for some of the gender antagonism evident in the public discourse.²¹ The emergence of the flapper also became associated with perceptions about modern youth, a loss of parental control and what was perceived to be a pronounced generation gap. Additionally, young women's increased visibility sparked concern over feminine morals due to a growing awareness of the emergence of more clandestine forms of prostitution in Scotland's cities.²² Furthermore, surveillance of young women's sexuality during the war reemerged in the interwar period in the form of controls for the prevention of the spread of venereal disease, which served to further perpetuate popular understandings of young modern women as sexually deviant.²³

To examine the public discourse on the flapper in Scotland, this chapter will be divided into three chapters. Chapter one will examine the flapper's revolutionary fashions, her role in the new mass consumerism and leisure and how these

¹⁹ Annmarie Hughes and Jeffrey Meek, 'State Regulation, Family Breakdown, and Lone Motherhood: The Hidden Costs of World War I in Scotland', *Journal of Family History*, Volume 39, 2014, Issue 4

²⁰ Arthur McIvor, 'Gender Apartheid?: Women in Scottish Society' in T.M Devine and R.J Finlay, *Scotland in the Twentieth Century*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press (1996) p. 188

²¹ Annmarie Hughes, *Gender and Political Identities in Scotland 1919–1939*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press (2010) p.

²² Louise Settle, 'The Kosmo Club Case: Clandestine Prostitution During the Interwar Period' *20 century British history*, 2014, Volume 25, 2014, Issue 4

²³ Roger Davidson, 'Venereal Disease, Sexual Morality, and Public Health in Interwar Scotland,' *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, Volume 5, 1994, Issue 4

framed the discussions on the modern girl's appropriate role in society. Chapter two will explore perceptions about modern youth, sexuality and deviance, with particular emphasis on the conditions that caused the flapper to be branded as morally dubious. Finally, chapter three will engage with the ways in which the press and the political climate moulded the image of the flapper and pressed her into the popular imagination. Furthermore, it will examine the motivation behind some of the derogatory language used to describe the flapper as well as perceptions about the flapper's fading importance in the 1930s.

Literature Review

Scottish gender historians, Barclay, Cheadle and Gordon have noted that it is helpful to look to England and other European countries for comparative historiographical material on gender, social and cultural history because it is often just 'as important as the further nuancing of Scottish historical narratives'.²⁴ Due to the international nature of the flapper figure, the existing international scholarship is especially relevant and useful. The seemingly ubiquitous image of the interwar flapper figure in many parts of the world has inspired significant research into her social significance, with historians examining the interwar flapper from many different analytical angles. Some historians have focused on anxieties around new definitions of youth and emerging youth cultures. For example, Selina Todd's work has outlined debates about the emergence of youth cultures in Britain and emphasized some of the

²⁴ Katie Barclay, Tanya Cheadle, Eleanor Gordon, 'Scottish History: Gender', *Scottish Historical Review*, 04/2013, Volume 92, 2013, Issue Supplement p. 107

regional and class limitations in leisure and consumer participation.²⁵ Cynthia Comacchio also examines the significance of new classifications of adolescence and how this contributed to anxieties around the loose behavior of a new generation of young women in English Canada.²⁶ Other historians have situated the 'flapper' image within a cultural shift towards a new 'modernity'. Fiona Skillen's research has emphasised the role that sports played for young women in the intersections between modernity, fashion and consumer culture in interwar Britain.²⁷ Anna Cottrell's *Work* outlines the social significance of the modern girl's fashion style during this period, particularly the controversy surrounding the flapper's revolutionary bobbed hairstyle in Britain.²⁸ Some of the scholarship highlights how the flapper's identifiable image became a lightning rod for discussions about young women's sexuality and its association with moral deviance. For example, Liz Conor has drawn attention to the flapper's role as a public spectacle and how the hypersexualisation of young, modern women was constructed around their visibility, making them into objects of the male gaze in Australia.²⁹ Carol Schmid argues that as young women entered more public spaces unchaperoned during this period it created anxieties around the blurred lines between the respectable girls and prostitutes in Berlin and Shanghai.³⁰ Furthermore, some historians have situated the flapper within a

²⁵ Todd, 'Young Women, Work and Leisure'

²⁶ Cynthia Comacchio, 'Dancing to Perdition: Adolescence and Leisure in Interwar English Canada' *Journal of Canadian Studies* Volume 32, 1997, Issue 3

²⁷ Skillen, 'Woman and the Sport Fetish'

²⁸ Anna Cottrell, 'Deathless Blondes and Permanent Waves: Women's Hairstyles in Interwar Britain', *Literature and History*, Volume 25, 2016, Issue 1

²⁹ Conor, 'The Flapper in the Heterosexual Scene'

³⁰ Carol Schmid, 'The 'New Woman', Gender Roles and Urban Modernism in Interwar Berlin and Shanghai' *Journal of International Women's Studies* Vol. 15, 2014, Issue 1

wider focus on women between the wars, which saw them becoming scapegoats for social, economic and political issues. Melman and Beddoe argue that the criticism was part of a backlash against women and how the flapper was presented as the antithesis of the domestic feminine ideal.³¹ Finally, and perhaps most significantly for this research, Adrian Bingham's work on gender and the British press closely examines gender relations and the depiction of women in the popular press in Britain during this period, particularly in England.³²

Research into the Scottish flapper is limited at best. However, there is a significant body of research on economy and politics in Scotland during the interwar years, which contextualise attitudes towards young women during this period. Annmarie Hughes' research has documented women's 'active citizenship' and feminist participation during this period, whilst outlining some of the conditions that lead to Scottish anxieties over the 'usurping' of men by women as they entered the work place and other public spaces.³³ Hughes and Meek's work outlines some of the issues attributed to family breakdown in Scotland and examines the ways in which single women came under closer surveillance during the First World War.³⁴ The post war gender tensions and focus on young women was closely connected to Scotland's economic and social struggles. W.W Knox's work outlines the economic challenges to Scottish society during this period as a result of economic depression and industrial decline. Settle's work on prostitution in Scotland outlines how the ambiguity between flappers and

³¹ Billie Melman, *Women and the Popular Imagination in the Twenties : Flappers and Nymphs*, Basingstoke: Macmillan (1986), Beddoe, 'Back to Home and Duty'

³² Bingham, *Gender, Modernity, and the Popular Press*

³³ Hughes, *Gender and Political Identities in Scotland*

³⁴ Hughes, Meek, 'State Regulation, Family Breakdown, and Lone Motherhood'

prostitutes, as they came to inhabit the same space in public evening venues enabled widespread clandestine prostitution in Scotland.³⁵ Finally, Davidson's work on the control of venereal disease in Scotland during this period gives insight into the regulation and surveillance of young women's sexuality and how that perpetuated ideas about deviant sexuality among these women.³⁶ Although this universal interwar figure can be identified in many different countries, the research has revealed different national and regional characteristics. There have been major strides made in recent years by historians to develop and map out gender histories in Scotland. However, although many women's histories have examined women's various roles in the interwar period, they have not taken an in depth look at the portrayal of the modern girl in Scotland. This research seeks to contribute to the existing body of work dedicated to Scottish women's history and also to offer new research on the flapper girl from the Scottish perspective.

Methodology

As Bingham notes, the press played a significant role in circulating ideas and controversy involving the flapper.³⁷ In order to examine how Scottish observers perceived this figure, this research will primarily explore commentary and debates within newspaper discourse. To gather this material, I utilised the British Newspaper Archive website to search a variety of Scottish newspapers, both 'national' and regional, primarily between the years 1919 and 1938. As well

³⁵ Louise Settle, 'The Social Geography of Prostitution in Edinburgh, 1900-1939' *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies*, Volume 33, 2013, Issue 2, also Settle, 'The Kosmo Club Case'

³⁶ Davidson, 'Venereal Disease, Sexual Morality, and Public Health'

³⁷ Bingham, *Gender, Modernity, and the Popular Press* p. 49

as searching for 'flapper' and 'modern girl' I also searched extensively using key words relating to young women, modernity, leisure, youth and sexuality. To supplement the newspaper articles, as well as to gain some understanding of the imagery that was used to market to Scottish women during this period, I also looked at Scottish Women's magazines from the years 1920, 1925, 1930 and 1935. The magazines to which I will refer were all published by Scottish publisher D.C Thomson and were widely available in Scotland during the interwar period. I chose to focus on the discourse in newspapers, not only because newspapers and magazines gained wide readership in the interwar period, but also because, alongside cinematic images, much of the historiography suggests that the public fascination with the flapper figure was perpetuated and solidified in newspaper columns and correspondences as well as images and advertising.

There are advantages and disadvantages to using newspaper archives as sources. Critics have noted that discourse analysis does not always reveal an accurate and detailed depiction of actual lived experiences.³⁸ As Hughes notes, discourse on gender has a tendency to depict women 'in the abstract as metaphors of their own lives' rather than as individuals with varied and diverse experiences.³⁹ However, since the objective of this research is to gain some understanding about public discourse and popular attitudes surrounding the flapper, newspapers serve as a helpful medium. Newspaper and magazine contents also provide a window into the kind of language used as well as

³⁸ Birgitte Sølund, *Becoming Modern: Young Women and the Reconstruction of Womanhood in the 1920s*, Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press (2000) p. 7

³⁹ Hughes, *Gender and Political Identities in Scotland* p. 7

demonstrating continuity and change in terms of attitudes and trends. Another advantage of examining newspapers is that they offer a wide-ranging bank of observations and social commentary,⁴⁰ and, in many cases, they reveal an active debate. Furthermore, as Lynn Hunt notes, newspapers can be extremely useful sources because 'rather than simply reflecting social reality, [they can] actively be an instrument of (or constitute) power.... Words did not just reflect social and political reality; they were instruments for transforming reality.'⁴¹

⁴⁰ Adrian Bingham, 'Stop the Flapper Vote Folly: Lord Rothermere, the Daily Mail, and the Equalization of the Franchise 1927-28', *Twentieth Century British History* Volume 13, 2002, Issue 1 p. 36

⁴¹ Lynn Hunt, *The New Cultural History*, Berkeley: University of California Press (1989), p.17. cited in L. D Hirschbein, 'The Flapper and the Foggy: Representations of Gender and Age in the 1920s' *USA Journal of Family History*, Volume 26, 2001, Issue 1 p. 113

Chapter One

Fashion Consumerism and leisure

Young, single women benefited particularly from women's wartime economic progress, which meant greater spending power to indulge in modern leisure pursuits such as attendance at the cinema and dance halls, as well as access to new fashions and cosmetics.⁴² In various countries the Flapper became associated primarily with 'low' culture and the 'industrially produced spectacle'.⁴³ As Comacchio notes, girls appeared to be more 'openly, visibly, scarily, 'modern,' especially because of their new 'ambition to emulate boys'.⁴⁴ In the Scottish press, the discourse around the flapper's modern aesthetic swung between celebrating the modern style as smart and respectable and condemning it as morally questionable. Young women's agency was, in many cases, overshadowed by the confusion about what the flapper's image meant in relation to male identity; whether they want to *be* men or want to be *desired* by men often underpinned discussions. The modern flapper became a symbol of the accelerated changes brought on by the war, class ambiguity and developing definitions of youth. Short skirts and short hair became symbols of morality, and therefore the debates circled around the 'proper' place of women.⁴⁵ This chapter will examine the ways in which the modern girl's fashion, consumer habits and

⁴² Hughes, Meek, 'State Regulation, Family Breakdown, and Lone Motherhood' p. 368

⁴³ Conor, 'The Flapper in the Heterosexual Scene' p. 44

⁴⁴ Comacchio, 'Dancing to Perdition' p. 7

⁴⁵ Bingham, *Gender, Modernity, and the Popular Press* p. 146

leisure pursuits influenced the public's fascination with flapper and impacted the discourse on her 'proper' place in interwar Scotland.

Fashion

Fashion theorists have warned against reading trends in visual styles as reflecting 'social and cultural facts,'⁴⁶ however, as Sutton notes, it is still worth exploring how commentators interpreted the social and cultural meanings behind women's fashions.⁴⁷ While cumbersome dresses and restrictive corsets worn in the Victorian era physically restrained the women who wore them, the practical bob haircut and short dropped waist skirts enabled freer movement, reflecting the new social mobility of modern girls.⁴⁸ Some historians have attributed this look to women's need for practicality as they entered in to more masculine jobs during the war.⁴⁹ However, the origins and motivations behind the flapper's modern femininity have been widely debated. Laver has rejected the notion that women's fashions changed so dramatically for practicality and simplicity, arguing, instead, that flappers chose shorter skirts and bobbed hair to make themselves more appealing to men, rather than less so.⁵⁰ Looking at advertisements in Scottish women's magazines it would be tempting to assume this was the case as advertisers sold the flapper aesthetic as, for example, 'the

⁴⁶ Katie Sutton, *The Masculine Woman in Weimar Germany*, Oxford: Berghahn, (2011) p. 26

⁴⁷ Ibid. (Sutton p 26)

⁴⁸ Irene Guenther, *Nazi Chic?: Fashioning Women in the Third Reich* Bloomsbury online, (2004) chapter 3 paragraph 25

⁴⁹ WHO DAT?

⁵⁰ James Laver *Women's Dress in the Jazz Age*, London: Hamish Hamilton (1964) cited in Guenther, *Nazi Chic? Chapter 3* paragraph 11

beauty that men find so fascinating'.⁵¹ However, not all historians have accepted that women were appealing to the male gaze or that their fashion choices were compelled only by their feminine need to buy their way into modernity.

Grossman, among others, has argued that there was more feminine agency involved in the construction of a new modern identity, which was then marketed to the masses serving to reinforce that identity.⁵²

Women's fashions had already been trending towards practicality before the interwar period, for example, as a result of the popularity of women's cycling.⁵³ The modern girl's fashions, characterized by lower waistlines, shorter hemlines, straight and simple designs and the de-accentuation of feminine curves were also already fashionable in certain circles before the war.⁵⁴ Discourse in the newspapers suggests that the flapper fashions were already evident in some areas of Scotland. In 1914, an energetic correspondence from the *Aberdeen Evening Times* on 'Aberdeen Flappers' describes how 'there is evidently a very sharp cleavage of opinion on the subject of feminine dress and street conduct in their moral aspects'.⁵⁵ The same correspondence suggests that some commentators on the Aberdeen flapper had observed the same figure in the streets of several Scottish cities as well as other major cities in Britain, deeming

⁵¹ *Red Star Weekly*, February 23rd, 1935

⁵² Atina Grossmann, "Girlkultur or Thoroughly Rationalized Female: A New Woman in Weimar Germany?" In *Women in Culture and Politics: A Century of Change*, eds. Judith Friedlander, et al., 62–80. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, (1986) cited in Guenther, *Nazi Chic?: Chapter 3* paragraph 14

⁵³ Sutton, *The Masculine Woman in Weimar Germany* p. 26

⁵⁴ Guenther, *Nazi Chic?* Chapter 3 paragraph 9

⁵⁵ *Aberdeen Evening Express*, 10 Feb. 1914, p.03

her 'the flapper universal.'⁵⁶ Although the style was recognizable to some before the war, the look was more widely popularized and politicized in the interwar period.⁵⁷ In the mainstream press, the modern girl's aesthetic became associated with the work of French designer Paul Poiret and then later the simple, casual style championed by Coco Chanel.⁵⁸ The 'universal' flapper style was not obviously distinct in Scotland and the international influence on Scottish dress is apparent in magazines and newspapers. In the Scottish magazine *Home Weekly* 'whispers from Paris' were setting the new trends in clothing and cosmetics.⁵⁹ Similarly, the faces and fashions of Hollywood flappers were held up as the ultimate aspirational image of beauty.⁶⁰ In figure 1, a photo album available through *My Weekly* magazine captioned 'The World's Most Beautiful Women' demonstrates how the flapper image was sold as the aspirational beauty style.

⁵⁶ *Aberdeen Evening Express*, 11 Feb. 1914, p.03

⁵⁷ Sutton, *The Masculine Woman in Weimar Germany* p. 26

⁵⁸ Guenther, *Nazi Chic?* Chapter 3 paragraph 9

⁵⁹ *Home Weekly*, January 17th 1920

⁶⁰ Evidence of Hollywood influence



Figure 1⁶¹

One of the most analysed aspects of the flapper aesthetic around the world was the short bobbed hairstyle. For example, in Germany, millions of woman from various class backgrounds embraced the 'bob' or 'bubikopf' as the ultimate

⁶¹ *People's Friend*, January 11th 1930

symbol of modernity.⁶² The controversial bubikopf became the subject of numerous cartoons, poems, articles and images in the contemporary media.⁶³ In Australia the flapper's short hair created uneasiness because the 'discarded locks...had once been the exclusive visual domain of their husbands'.⁶⁴ Similarly, the meaning behind and possible consequences of the modern, short haircut became a popular topic of debate in the Scottish press. As a result of the 'bob craze,' beauty parlours had 'sprung up like mushrooms' in Scottish cities.⁶⁵ A 1925 *Sunday Post* article 'To Shingle or Not to Shingle' attempted to grapple with the motivations behind and possible consequences of bobbing or 'shingling' (the waved version) one's hair.⁶⁶ For some commentators, the hair represented freedom and emancipation, while others feared it could be a 'bar to marriage'.⁶⁷ The article goes on to claim that, in 'truth', men disliked the modern look and that, especially among 'the extremists in the fashion', young women were finding themselves 'on the shelf,' or disapproved of as too 'modern type of girl'.⁶⁸ Alternatively, other young women adopting the short doo were not choosing the hairstyle to appeal to men and were, instead, 'determined to stand for freedom'.⁶⁹ This seemed to be the view held by hairdressers in Glasgow where salons struggled to keep up with demand for the short style. As one hairstylist noted:

Everyone is enthusiastic about the comfort and practicability of it...It was hygienic, and, in fact, essential to the sporting girl.... The bulk of

⁶² Sutton, *The Masculine Woman in Weimar Germany* p. 27

⁶³ Sutton, *The Masculine Woman in Weimar Germany* p. 27

⁶⁴ Conor, 'The Flapper in the Heterosexual Scene' p. 55

⁶⁵ *Sunday Post* 1925

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

our clientele is comprised not of slaves of fashion, who respond to every craze, but of sensible business girls, who are considering not fashion but utility.⁷⁰

The other accessory that was seen to symbolize the modern girl's tendency towards the masculine was the cigarette. Smoking was particularly jarring for some observers of the modern girl because before the First World War it was considered a masculine activity and women were hardly ever seen smoking.⁷¹ In Scotland, this inspired some distain from some male commentators who saw smoking as unfeminine or too extravagant. One such commentator pondered how he managed to restrain himself 'from slapping a young flapper who smokes in public,' proclaiming that she 'has ceased to be a lady and has not yet succeeded in becoming a gentleman.'⁷² However, as Jackson and Tinkler have argued, cigarette smoking among young women represented the new modernity and female emancipation.⁷³ For many women, the goal was not to *become men* so much as to be allowed to partake in public activities that men already regularly enjoyed. In response to one reverend's condemnation on the immoral indulgences of flappers, a 'girl' offered a retort in defense of the flapper in the *Dundee Telegraph* in 1922:

The feminine cigarette is very often gold tipped, scented and tinted, and it provides an artistic opening for harmless conversation. But even if I smoked Woodbines it would not be a sign of decadence. Smoking promotes sociability. If you want to pose as Moses the second you had better go out to Salt Lake City and leave us in peace!⁷⁴

⁷⁰ Ibid (Sunday post 1925)

⁷¹ Jackson, Tinkler, 'Ladettes and Modern Girls' paragraph 14

⁷² *Dundee Dundee Evening Telegraph*, 23 Nov. 1927, p.06

⁷³ Jackson, Tinkler, 'Ladettes and Modern Girls' paragraph 14

⁷⁴ *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, 29 May 1922, p.11

This example highlights how the flapper often faced social pushback for her participation in formerly masculine activities, such as smoking, but did not necessarily adjust her behavior to adhere to the expressed preferences for a return to prewar gender roles.

Consumerism

Since the flapper was identified primarily through her fashions, she became heavily associated with consumerism, as a 'major prop' for the new mass consumer society.⁷⁵ Certainly, the increased economic power of many young women did not go unnoticed by advertisers. Cosmetics, central to the flapper look, which were previously viewed as unnecessary if not unrespectable, were rebranded as 'essential beauty aids'.⁷⁶ In Scottish women's magazines the marketing of cosmetics as well as other beauty products, such as home shingling wavers, all catered to the requirements of the flapper aesthetic. Figure 2 and 3 demonstrate how the look was sold to the masses through cosmetic and beauty devises that enabled widespread access to the modern style.

⁷⁵ George E. Mowry, *The Twenties: Fords, Flappers, & Fanatics*, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, (1963) p. 173

⁷⁶ Bingham, *Gender, Modernity, and the Popular Press* p. 49

Hair beautifully waved
while you sleep. No heat, Curlers or Lotion required.

Just place our setter over the head at night and your hair sets into neat waves. Used as a Slumber Cap it holds waves in exact position till morning. You will be delighted with results.

The NU-WA WAVE SETTER AND SLUMBER CAP

Post Free - 1/9
 Super-quality - 2/9
 with full instructions

Send for one to-day!
THE NU-WA CO.,
 Dept. P, 13, Gutter Lane,
 London, E.C.2.

Figure 277

PEOPLE'S FRIEND.

A NEW FACE POWDER FASHION SWEEPS THE COUNTRY

Beauty Secret Smart Women Have Learned from Paris

In an interview Mlle. Yvonne L. . . ., a matronquin of one of the leading Paris dressmakers, said: "Smart French women have just adopted an entirely new kind of face powder. One application in the morning gives a wonderful 'mat-finish' to the skin that lasts all day. Yesterday I was at the races all the afternoon—out in the wind and rain—and my complexion was as fresh and lovely as when I left my dressing table." The secret is the new ingredient called "Double Mousse," now combined by a patent process in Poudre Tokalon. It makes the powder waterproof. Prove it for yourself by this simple test. Cover one finger with the new Poudre Tokalon, dip your finger in a glass of water. Take it out and notice your finger is not wet and shiny but perfectly dry and "mat". Your skin cannot become shiny when you use Poudre Tokalon because it contains Double Mousse. Even perspiration from dancing for hours in a hot room will not spoil the fresh rose-petal loveliness it gives. Get a box of the new Poudre Tokalon to-day and see for yourself the fascinating girlish beauty it can give, because it is the only powder with the "mat finish" secret. Get and try a box.

Figure 378

Advertisements began to appeal to female consumers more and more and they also incorporated societal trends such as the increasing popularity of certain

⁷⁷ *People's Friend*, February 8th, 1930

⁷⁸ *People's Friend*, July 13th 1935

leisure activities.⁷⁹ The notion that the flapper's sole identity revolved around consumption contributed to fears that the modern girl had foregone her feminine duties for a life of unbridled pleasures and extravagance. Unlike the hard-working business girl, the flapper was perceived to be seeking out leisure and thrills rather than virtue.⁸⁰ The opinion that young women's consumer habits were too extravagant was evident in the discourse in Scotland. Commentators pointed out how women from previous generation wore 'homespun' clothes and 'did not think of or dream of the most charming possessions of the modern lass or the pursuit of fashion.'⁸¹ Within the characterisation of flappers as frivolous consumers there is the recurring element of anxiety around certain consumer behaviours that emphasized the generational gap as well as the blurring of class boundaries. This sense of disapproval is evident in this critique of feminine consumer spending from the *Sunday Post*:

The average modern girl is far too extravagant in her dressing and personal expenditure...I know of girls... who pay for their clothes by installments and who are never out of debt. I know others who dress like women who have twice their income, yet come from shabby, even sordid homes...their outlook on life is out of proportion. Dress and pleasure and excitement are assuming more importance than they should, and the real, solid things of life are pushed into the background.'⁸²

To some extent, the democratisation of fashionable clothing, hairstyling and cosmetics allowed a young woman to pass for someone 'respectable,' breaking down one of the barriers many women had previously faced while pursuing

⁷⁹ Skillen, 'Woman and the Sport Fetish' p. 758

⁸⁰ Conor, 'The Flapper in the Heterosexual Scene' p. 44

⁸¹ *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, 04 Nov. 1927, p.04

⁸² *Sunday Post*, 13 Jun. 1926, p.12

employment or social opportunities.⁸³ Possibly because of its sometimes-derogatory connotations (see chapter 3), the term ‘flapper’ evidently seemed not to be used as an aspirational marketing term in Scottish women’s magazines. However, the flapper uniform—bobbed hair, a short skirt and painted face—was nearly ubiquitous. David Fowler has argued that, the flapper figure, in particular, was connected to class aspiration.⁸⁴ Sarah Berry also identifies women’s changing fashions during this period as having the ability to ‘parody, invert, and denaturalize social distinctions’.⁸⁵ This notion of a kind of social ‘bluffing’⁸⁶ did not go unnoticed by Scottish commenters. One observer proclaimed that the ‘feminine sex who would in other days have been described as ‘lasses’ had acquired the characteristics of the ‘ladies’ ... they had evolved into a type, which was almost indistinguishable from the highborn lady.’⁸⁷ Figure 4 is an example of how Scottish magazines like *The People’s Friend* offered free or inexpensive patterns to create this modern look on a smaller budget (see figure 5). Further tips included how to update old clothes and hats to keep them in line with modern fashions, as shown in the example of figure 4. Additionally, in a bid to push ready-made clothes, John Lewis advertisements offered tips on how to mend manufactured clothes.⁸⁸ These examples emphasize the variety of ways Scottish working class women might have had access to flapper fashions.

⁸³ Cottrell, ‘Deathless Blondes and Permanent Waves’ p. 24

⁸⁴ David Fowler, *Youth Culture in Modern Britain c.1920 – c.1970: From Ivory Tower to Global Movement* (Basingstoke, 2008), p. 66) cited in Cottrell, ‘Deathless Blondes and Permanent Waves’ p. 23

⁸⁵ Sarah Berry, *Screen Style: Fashion and Femininity in 1930s Hollywood*, Minneapolis and London, (2000), p. xiii cited in Cottrell, *Deathless Blondes and Permanent Waves*’ p. 23-24

⁸⁶ Berry cited in Cottrell, ‘Deathless Blondes and Permanent Waves,’ p. 23

⁸⁷ *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, 04 Nov. 1927, p.04

⁸⁸ *Woman’s Way*, January 4th 1930

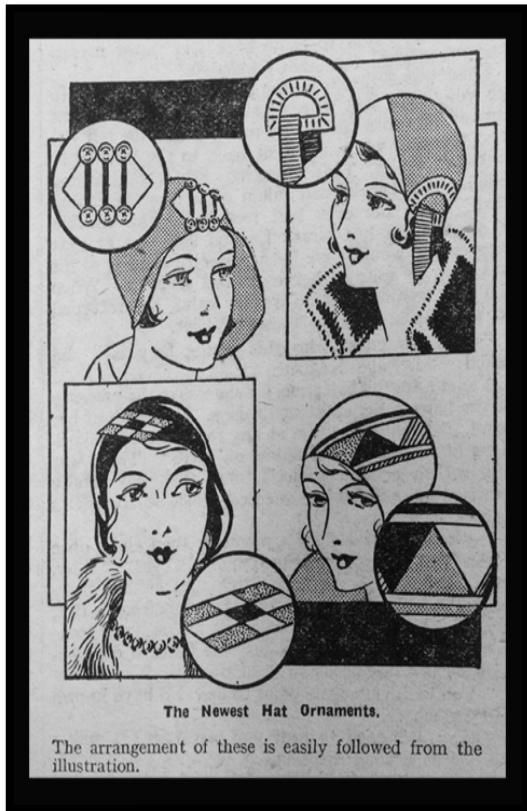


Figure 4⁸⁹



Figure 5⁹⁰

⁸⁹ *People's Friend* September 20th 1930

⁹⁰ *People's Friend* February 7th 1925

Leisure

Beyond the flapper's style, perceptions about her desire to be seen were associated with her participation in modern leisure pursuits. Although the lifestyle of most young people in the interwar period was distinct from that of their parents, access to leisure did vary depending on class and region.⁹¹ Beddoe and Melman have argued that interwar media and literary representations of young people in Britain focused primarily on the upper classes.⁹² Jim Smyth's research on Scottish textile workers emphasises the important role young wage earners played in contributing to the family economy. As a result, the economic responsibility of young working class wage earners inhibited their power as consumers as well as their access to leisure before the Second World War.⁹³ Smyth also argues, that access to the cinemas and dance halls was limited since employment opportunities were confined to 'depressed' sectors like mining, agriculture and textiles, leaving them susceptible to unemployment.⁹⁴ However, some of the literature suggests that many factory girls in Britain dolled themselves up like flappers. In *It's a Battlefield* Graham Green describes girls working in match-factories as pitiful daydreamers who only think about looks and films, when they should be paying more attention to the injustices of their working conditions.⁹⁵ J.B Priestly argued that 'factory girls looking like actresses'

⁹¹ Skillen, 'Woman and the Sport Fetish' p. 552

⁹² Beddo and Melman Cited in Todd, *Young Women, Work and Leisure* p. 717

⁹³ Jim Smyth cited in Todd, *Young Women, Work and Leisure* p. 723

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Graham Greene, *It's a Battlefield*, London, (1934) cited in Cottrell, 'Deathless Blondes and Permanent Waves' p. 26

represented a New England dominated by mass American culture.⁹⁶ There is evidence in the newspaper discourse that there were flappers among some factory girls in Scotland. As one Aberdonian 'Factory Flapper' argued, 'mill girls' also identified as flappers, in fact 'half the flapper brigade is composed of mill girls.'⁹⁷ The economic struggles in these sectors in the 1930s may have resulted in setbacks in terms of possibilities for commercial indulgences. However, this suggests that class did not seem to deter some Aberdonian working class women from self-identifying as a flappers. Furthermore, as Knox notes, an investigation into the social conditions of the unemployed in the 1930s concluded that 80 percent of young unemployed people went to the cinema at least once a week.⁹⁸ As Cottrell notes, for many working class women in the interwar period the cinema was an important source of inspiration for dreams as well as fashion and style.⁹⁹ Additionally, in most Scottish towns and cities dancing was popular and dancehalls thrived during the 1920s and 1930s.¹⁰⁰ Dance halls and the non-commercial practice of 'promenading', in particular, played a strong role in characterizing the Scottish flapper's morally questionable public personae, which will be explored more closely in chapter 2.

⁹⁶ J. B. Priestley, *English Journey*, New York, (1934) cited in Cottrell, 'Deathless Blondes and Permanent Waves' p. 25

⁹⁷ *Aberdeen Evening Express*, 11 Feb. 1914, p.03

⁹⁸ Knox, *Industrial Nation* p. 196

⁹⁹ Cottrell, 'Blondes and Permanent Waves' P. 25

¹⁰⁰ Knox, *Industrial Nation* p. 196



Figure 6¹⁰¹

In addition to the cinema and dance halls, sports were gaining popularity amongst modern girls in the interwar period. As Skillen has argued, the connection between sports, modernity, fashion and consumerism, in relation to the modern girl, has not drawn much attention from British historians.¹⁰²

However, sports and exercise were increasingly promoted and embraced among young women. One reason for this was that the new flapper fashions promoted a

¹⁰¹ *Woman's Way*, February 1st 1930

¹⁰² Skillen, *Woman and the Sport Fetish* p. 751

slim athletic figure as the ideal modern feminine body type.¹⁰³ While sports could be an emancipating force, they could also be used to regulate moral behavior and reinforce expectations about modern beauty and femininity. In the interwar period, like in many European countries, Scotland was concerned about declining standards of fitness and morality among the youth. As a result, 'physical training' was promoted as a way to encourage 'health, obedience, self-respect and physical morality'.¹⁰⁴ Some of the public discourse showed support for sports participation among young women. A column promoting women's football asserted, 'healthy outdoor sporting life led by the girl of today is in every respect better than the old style of bringing up young ladies in Victorian times.'¹⁰⁵

Fears over the masculinisation of the modern girl also coloured conversations about athletic participation in the interwar period. For example, in Munich in 1925, the city magistrate went as far as to ban women wearing ski pants inside the city limits on the grounds that the pants were too masculine.¹⁰⁶ In Scotland, however, fears over the masculinising influence of women's athletic participation was less pronounced. Instead, sports were emphasised as a way to stay slim and beautiful. New modernity placed an emphasis on the shape of women's bodies. Figure 6 is an example of the promotion of exercise to maintain the modern shape proclaiming that 'hips must be thin'. The light, linear fashions of the 1920s placed the body on public display emphasising the

¹⁰³ Skillen, *Woman and the Sport Fetish*, p. 751

¹⁰⁴ Quoted in SED, Second Report of the Quinquennial Committee cited in Skillen, 'A Sound System of Physical Training': the Development of Girls' Physical Education in Interwar Scotland' *History of Education*, 05/2009, Volume 38, 2009, Issue 3 p. 410

¹⁰⁵ *St. Andrews Citizen*, 03 Jun. 1922, p.08

¹⁰⁶ Guenther, *Nazi Chic?* Chapter 3 paragraph 22

measurements of the body; its weight and size became the focus of discussions.¹⁰⁷ A column from the *Falkirk Herald* in 1927, 'To a Flapper by a Beauty Specialist', warned that the flapper who dolls herself up like a 'film vamp...merely shocks rather than charms' going on to suggest that body twisting exercises were a better way towards a natural complexion and 'a perfect waist'.¹⁰⁸ Similarly, flappers were encouraged to play billiards as a way to stay slim.¹⁰⁹ The Scottish observers may not have been as concerned as the Germans over masculinsation, but there was expressed concern over whether the new slim, sporty feminine body type was 'natural.' A lecture given in the Church of Scotland College in Aberdeen warned that women's desire to keep up pace in sports was promoting a 'fashionable cult of skinniness' which violated the 'laws of nature' as women were forced to 'reduce weight like jockeys'.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ Skillen, 'Woman and the Sport Fetish' p. 755

¹⁰⁸ *Falkirk Herald*, 02 Nov. 1927, p.02

¹⁰⁹ *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, 03 Sep. 1936, p.10

¹¹⁰ *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 27 Nov. 1929, p.08

Summary

In Scotland the discourse surrounding the flapper's fashion and consumer pursuits, for the most part, echoes that of the existing studies on the 'universal' flapper figure. The flapper's aesthetic and wider visibility sparked debate about whether this new femininity was good or bad for women and for society at large. In terms of fashion, discussions about the flappers dress and, especially their bobbed haircuts, sought to determine whether these modern trends were smart and practical and a reflection of women's need for greater mobility or whether they were man-repelling hindrances to marriage. In the Scottish press, opinions about the flapper's frivolous consumer interests suggest anxieties about a new generation that had a disregard for more important duties. Scottish women's magazines marketed the flapper aesthetic to sell cosmetics and beauty aids and influence of Hollywood as well as Paris in the magazines was also prominent. In Furthermore, the evidence suggests that despite Scotland's economic slump, magazines offered ways for modern girls to engage in the flapper lifestyle on a budget. Furthermore, sports, which were promoted among young women in Scotland, similarly inspired support and criticism. Sports encouraged healthy athletic participation but also sparked debate about the ideal shape of the modern girl's body.

Chapter Two

'Problem Girls': Youth, Sexuality and Deviance

'Aberdeen is a beautiful city, but it would be a hundred times more beautiful if all the girls in it were pure.'

– Rev. J. H. Morrison, Dundee Courier 1938¹¹¹

In the nineteenth century the term 'flapper' originally meant 'a very young harlot'.¹¹² As Conor notes, the 'flapper has her etymology in the illicit commerce of a precociously deviant sexuality',¹¹³ and she continued to be 'a figure of young female heterosexuality' into the inter-war period.¹¹⁴ Between the wars, new notions of burgeoning youth cultures and a more defined stage of adolescence inspired public commentary on this developing life stage. The behavior of young people became increasingly monitored and dissected, especially the behaviour of young women.¹¹⁵ As Melman notes, discussion about women's sexuality was pulled from the 'domain of the esoteric' into mainstream view in the 1920s.¹¹⁶ Furthermore, the destabilising of gender roles during the war resulted in fears over 'unregulated female sexuality' and illegitimacy in the absence of husbands and fathers.¹¹⁷ This brought young, single women under close scrutiny from

¹¹¹ *Dundee Courier*, 28 Mar. 1938, p.03

¹¹² Conor, 'The Flapper in the Heterosexual Scene' p. 44

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ Comacchio, 'Dancing to Perdition' p. 7

¹¹⁶ Melman, *Women and the Popular Imagination* p. 3

¹¹⁷ Hughes and Meek, 'State Regulation, Family Breakdown and Lone Motherhood' p. 365

Scottish authorities.¹¹⁸ In the interwar period similar measures were applied to regulate female promiscuity as it was targeted as the cause of the spread of venereal disease.¹¹⁹ Like most of the discourse on the modern girl contradictory ideas about young women's sexuality co-existed. In the words of Billie Melman, the flapper figure was perceived as 'sexless but libidinous; infantile but precocious; an emblem of modern times yet, at the same time, an incarnation of the eternal Eve'.¹²⁰ This chapter will examine some of these contradictions in the Scottish discourse in relation to youth and sexuality, and how these ideas were perpetuated by the advent of the increased visibility of young women in the public sphere.

Youth and the Generation Gap

Anxieties surrounding a perceived generation gap were not unique to this period. As Bingham notes, the idea that the youth will challenge and undermine the ideals of the present generation is a common historical theme.¹²¹ However, the new opportunities for work and leisure for young, single women saw them emerge as a distinct category during this period.¹²² Within the mass culture of the blossoming magazine, advertising and movie industries, one of the biggest talking points of the time was youth.¹²³ Furthermore, the interwar period witnessed a heightened focus on adolescence in many parts of the world. Ideas about adolescence as a distinct life stage encapsulating its own age-specific

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Davidson, 'Venereal Disease, Sexual Morality' p?

¹²⁰ Melman, '*Women and the Popular Imagination*' p. 1

¹²¹ Conor, 'The Flapper in the Heterosexual Scene' p. 47

¹²² Bingham, *Gender, Modernity, and the Popular Press*

¹²³ Hirshbein, 'The Flapper and the Foggy' p. 112

culture were also enhanced.¹²⁴ Young people, especially young women, were deliberately targeted as consumers of mass culture, being sucked in by the 'materialistic, commercial, immoral/amoral vortex of modernity'.¹²⁵ Perceptions about the 'youth problem' were linked to wider issues of national welfare, citizenship and new modernity.¹²⁶ Additionally, doctors and psychologists began to analyse adolescence as brand of psychosis, which singled out girls as being 'particularly susceptible to emotional and nervous disorders'.¹²⁷ A new trend towards the 'pathologising of childhood' was also emerging in Scotland during this period.¹²⁸ Addressing the The Scottish Association for Mental Welfare, psychiatrist David Yellowlees outlined the ways in which 'mental hygiene' could be encouraged within the family, through better parenting as a way 'to avert psychological and emotional problems in children and so to contribute to individual and collective mental good-health'.¹²⁹ He argued that these problems could be manifested by, for example, personality or behavioral 'disorders' such as temper tantrums, timidity or sexual misbehavior.¹³⁰ The idea that the misbehavior of young people was due to parental failures is also not unique to this period, but the generation gap from those who came of age before and after the First World War seemed more significant. For example, as Comacchio notes, this was the first time in history that youth were setting the fashion pace.¹³¹

¹²⁴ Comacchio, 'Dancing to Perdition' p. 10

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Comacchio, 'Dancing to Perdition' p. 6

¹²⁷ Comacchio, 'Dancing to Perdition' p. 7

¹²⁸ John W. Stewart, 'Child Guidance in Interwar Scotland' p. 519

¹²⁹ David Yelowlees cited in John W. Stewart, 'Child Guidance in Interwar Scotland' p. 519

¹³⁰ David Yelowlees cited in John W. Stewart, 'Child Guidance in Interwar Scotland' p. 519

¹³¹ Comacchio, 'Dancing to Perdition' p. 14

Drinking, smoking and 'loose' attitudes towards pleasure and sex represented their desire to differentiate themselves from previous generations.¹³² Many Scottish observers agreed that the flapper's loose behavior and brash attitude was the result of a lack of parental control and the emergence of a new, more 'effeminate' treatment of modern youths.¹³³ One such commentator wrote, 'girls whom some people call 'flappers,' [are] nice-looking, well dressed, but, evidently, not well-mannered... my experience is that their parents and guardians are chiefly to blame'.¹³⁴

Sexuality

The Modern girl's sexuality was also treated with a certain kind of ambivalence.¹³⁵ On the one hand the flapper was celebrated as a symbol of female emancipation from stuffy 'Victorian' conventions while on the other, she represented the erosion of manners and a slide into immorality and indecency.¹³⁶ Similarly, modern girls were portrayed as naïve and vulnerable whilst at the same time having a dangerous knowingness of things of a sexual nature.¹³⁷ As one Scottish commentator wrote in the *Aberdeen Press and Journal*:

They are hardly out of the cradle, yet with an air of ultra-sophistication and profound erudition you can hear hard-boiled

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ *Linlithgowshire Gazette*, 04 Mar. 1938, p.06

¹³⁴ *Edinburgh Evening News*, 30 Jul. 1932, p.06

¹³⁵ Lucy Bland, 'Guardians of the Race, or Vampires Upon the Nation's Health?: Female Sexuality and its Regulation in Early Twentieth-century Britain', in Whitelegg E.(ed.), *The Changing Experience of Women*, Oxford: M. Robertson, (1982) p. 374

¹³⁶ Bingham, *Gender, Modernity, and the Popular Press* p. 48

¹³⁷ Conor, 'The Flapper in the Heterosexual Scene' p. 46

flappers and effeminate youths talking about the 'sex urge,' 'repressions,' and all the usual cant of the half-baked psychologist.¹³⁸

The early twentieth century witnessed the development of two contrasting images of young women's sexuality – the 'promiscuous woman', and the 'healthy mother'.¹³⁹ Although young women were visibly more 'modern', as Comacchio notes, young womanhood was still viewed biologically, as a preparation for marriage and motherhood.¹⁴⁰ As noted in Chapter one, much of the discourse in Scotland revolved around whether the modern girl's new lifestyle would jeopardise her inevitable role as a wife. Some feared her more masculine lifestyle and aesthetic would deter potential husbands, while others were felt assured that the modern girl would eventually shed her fun loving ways and fall into her 'natural' role. In the *Dundee Courier* in 1921 'Olivia' wrote, in defense of the modern girl, that, 'In spite of all outward changes...she is still the same loving mother when the children come, and is just as houseproud ...as granny was before her...she still lives to please Mr Right'.¹⁴¹

However, as Sigel points out, the popular image of the flapper figure was hedonistic and pleasure seeking,¹⁴² the opposite of nurturing. Flappers smoked, drank cocktails, were promiscuous, independent and embodied a kind of sexual frivolity.¹⁴³ Several historians have noted the press' obsession with young women during this period, highlighting how the image of the flapper, and her

¹³⁸ *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 31 Jan. 1934, p.06

¹³⁹ Bland, 'Guardians of the Race' p. 373

¹⁴⁰ Comacchio, 'Dancing to Perdition' p. 7

¹⁴¹ *Dundee Courier*, 31 Oct. 1921, p.04

¹⁴² Lisa Z. Sigel, *Making Modern Love: Sexual Narratives and Identities in Interwar Britain*, Temple University Press, (2012) p. 12

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

association with a kind of deviant female sexuality, was deep set into the cultural imagination.¹⁴⁴ In Germany and France the 'new woman' or the 'Garçonne' had associations with an emerging understanding about the female homosexual.¹⁴⁵ Similarly, by the inter-war period the New Women had become associated with lesbianism in Britain.¹⁴⁶ Conor, however, situates the Australian flapper within a distinctly heterosexual scene,¹⁴⁷ and in Scotland the discourse suggests that the flapper's 'goo-goo eyes' seemed also to court the gaze of men.¹⁴⁸ The modern girl was viewed as the successor to the more serious New Woman, but rather than pursuing intellectual and political causes, she was 'hell bent on having a good time'.¹⁴⁹ The image of the 'Flapper Trapper', whose ambition was to use men with no intention of marrying them, reverberated through pop culture.¹⁵⁰ Films like *Der Blaue Engel* and *Pandora's Box* featured the central characters as air-headed and hypersexed flappers who unapologetically emasculated their male admirers causing the eventual ruin of formerly great men.¹⁵¹ By the interwar period the cinematic flapper stereotype had a presence in the cinemas of Scotland. One advertisement for the shows at the Pavilion encouraged people to watch as 'The flapper is revealed as a human being!'¹⁵² The notion of young women as irresponsible users of men had gained some traction during the war.

¹⁴⁴ Melman, *Women and the Popular Imagination*

¹⁴⁵ Sutton, *The Masculine Woman in Weimar Germany* p.6

¹⁴⁶ Beddoe, *Back to Home and Duty*, p. 10

¹⁴⁷ Conor, 'The Flapper in the Heterosexual Scene'

¹⁴⁸ Aberdeen Evening Express 1914

¹⁴⁹ Beddo, *Back to Home and Duty* p. 10

¹⁵⁰ Conor, 'The Flapper in the Heterosexual Scene' p. 54

¹⁵¹ *The Blue Angel (Der Blaue Engel)*, 1930 Full movie, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3uy2IAi93l0>, Accessed 01.12.19, *Pandora's Box*, 1929, Full Movie, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QGHZczuu2Sc&t=4437s> Accessed 01.12.19

¹⁵² *Forfar Dispatch (Angus)*, 20 Mar. 1930 p.01

In Scotland, wartime policies had sought to regulate the behaviour of young women in order to protect men, especially married men, from young women's predatory behavior.¹⁵³ For example, women's patrols monitored women who were seen to be behaving immorally, or hanging around too close to the soldiers barracks.¹⁵⁴ One commentator noted, there were certain 'types' of 'flappers'— 'always found in university towns—who long to capture a 'student' because 'he must have plenty of money.'¹⁵⁵ Whether the actions were morally dubious or not, the general visibility of modern women gave rise to this kind of suspicion. As Conor notes, the Australian flapper personified a sense of scandal that was associated with her public presence.¹⁵⁶ The poet and writer Baudelaire developed the French verb *flâneur* to describe a person who wanders around city to experience it.¹⁵⁷ Unlike the male wanderer, the 'femme flâneur' had to justify her presence in the streets, or she was assumed to be prostitute.¹⁵⁸ Before the war, promenading had become a common pastime among many young people in the main Scottish cities,¹⁵⁹ and by the interwar period, the flapper's visibility in the streets had caused more concern about declining public morality.

A walk in the evening down the main thoroughfares of a large city will reveal the presence of an alarming evil. One is struck with the great percentage of young girls strolling about aimlessly—not in search exercise and air, but in the hope of finding a male companion

¹⁵³ Hughes, Meek, *State Regulation, Family Breakdown, and Lone Motherhood* p. 367

¹⁵⁴ Hughes Meek, *State Regulation, Family Breakdown, and Lone Motherhood* p. 367

¹⁵⁵ *Aberdeen Evening Express*, 11 Feb. 1914, p.03

¹⁵⁶ Conor, 'The Flapper in the Heterosexual Scene' p. 43

¹⁵⁷ Schmid, 'The 'New Woman', Gender Roles and Urban Modernism' paragraph 35

¹⁵⁸ Schmid, 'The 'New Woman', Gender Roles and Urban Modernism' paragraph 35

¹⁵⁹ *Aberdeen Evening Express*, 10 Feb. 1914, p.03

quite unknown to them and whose influence upon them may be quite the reverse of good.¹⁶⁰

Although it was both boys and girls who took part in promenading and ‘picking up’, the blame for immorality amongst the youth was often disproportionately placed on girls. While ‘the boys of today were desirous of being chaste’, said Reverend Richard Free, ‘it was the little flappers with the unnecessary adoration of their bodies that was ruining the country.’¹⁶¹

Visibility and Deviance

The flapper was not at home in the domestic sphere.¹⁶² Her positioning outside of traditional perceptions about the ‘place’ of the feminine scandalized her.¹⁶³

The flapper’s pleasure seeking image around the world was closely associated with modern dancing. The dancehall in particular was seen as a hot bed for sexual crimes among unmarried people, caused by the ‘unseemly’ bodily contact that modern dancing demanded.¹⁶⁴ One reverend, commenting on the dancehalls in Aberdeen, proclaimed, ‘There are dances that no modest girl would ever dance, dancing places that no wise girl would ever enter, and late and unhealthy hours that no wise girl would ever keep’.¹⁶⁵ For many of the unemployed in Scotland in the 1920s and, especially the 1930s, socialising on street corners was the only form of leisure that poverty afforded them.¹⁶⁶ However, as Knox notes,

¹⁶⁰ *Hamilton Advertiser*, 22 Jun. 1918, p.03

¹⁶¹ *Southern Reporter* (Selkirkshire), 14 May 1931, p.03

¹⁶² Conor, ‘The Flapper in the Heterosexual Scene’ p. 44

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ *Southern Reporter* (Selkirkshire) 1931

¹⁶⁵ *Dundee Courier*, 28 Mar. 1938, p.03

¹⁶⁶ Knox, *Industrial Nation* p.196

others chose the path of escapism and hedonism.¹⁶⁷ While the Scottish labour movement disapproved of the influence of American jazz or 'jungle music', and the growth of dance halls, the working class seemed to pay little notice to this kind of moral disapproval.¹⁶⁸ As Comacchio notes, in English Canada the dancehall became a stage for young people to try out their 'sexual personae' and flaunt their cultivated sex appeal.¹⁶⁹

As a fixture of the dancehall, in many of Europe's big cities, the interwar flapper girl also became closely associated with prostitution.¹⁷⁰ In Berlin, there were numerous dance halls, nightclubs, and seedy establishments to choose from and hanging around these amusement venues was viewed as a 'prelude to prostitution'.¹⁷¹ Prostitutes were becoming more visible and more of a threat to middle-class morals as a new lower class industry emerged around prostitution in cafes and music halls.¹⁷² In order to fund and maintain the modern lifestyle, the flapper was also associated with a form of 'treating', which was the exchange of drinks or gifts for a dance or some other flirtatious exchange.¹⁷³ Young women who hoped to enjoy the consumer pleasures of modernity could find themselves following their interests into fair-weather jobs like that of a dance

¹⁶⁷ Ibid. Knox p. 196

¹⁶⁸ Ibid. Knox p. 196

¹⁶⁹ Comacchio, 'Dancing to Perdition' p.13

¹⁷⁰ Schmid, The 'New Woman', Gender Roles and Urban Modernism', paragraph 40

¹⁷¹ Schmid, The 'New Woman', Gender Roles and Urban Modernism', paragraph 33

¹⁷² Schmid, The 'New Woman', Gender Roles and Urban Modernism' paragraph 34

¹⁷³ Ole Reinsch, 'Flapper Girls: Feminism and Consumer Society in the 1920s', *Gender Forum*, 2013, Volume 40, 2013, p. 37

instructress or fashion mannequins.¹⁷⁴ In Scotland, one Lady Commissioner voiced the need for a kind of 'benevolent supervision' of young women to avoid them succumbing to certain evils:

Most modern girls dance, and it is not difficult for one of natural grace and youthful charm to procure a position as 'dance instructress,' the somewhat euphemistic title, which often means no more than paid partner...The glamour and luxury eat into their natures, and presently they find it impossible to cut adrift from the vicious atmosphere of excitement and pleasure but even the best the work is uncertain and demoralising.¹⁷⁵

In Scotland, the reputation of dance instructresses as morally dubious was only heightened by a high profile case involving widespread prostitution at Edinburgh's Kosmo club. As Settle notes, the presence of the flapper enabled the Kosmo Club's system of 'booking out' dance instructresses as a modern form of clandestine prostitution.¹⁷⁶ The Kosmo club took advantage of young women's wider visibility in the streets and in evening leisure venues and blurred the distinctions between promiscuity, and prostitution during this period.¹⁷⁷ In clubs like the Kosmo the lines between 'respectability' and 'deviance' were regularly challenged.¹⁷⁸ As figure 7 below shows, the 'twelve Kosmo girls' were advertised to potential patrons of the Kosmo Club alongside other benefits such as free car parking. In Edinburgh, prostitution was no longer confined to certain 'informal tolerance zones.' Prostitutes moved freely between the working-class parts of the city and as well as the middle and upper class areas, transgressing class and

¹⁷⁴ *St. Andrews Citizen*, 19 Sep. 1925, p.06

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁶ Settle, 'The Kosmo Club Case' Conclusion paragraph 2

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

gender boundaries.¹⁷⁹ The moral ambiguity surrounding dance instructresses meant that in Glasgow in 1927 dance hall regulations were implemented which outlined restrictions on how men should engage with dance instructresses. The *Scotsman*, among other Scottish newspapers, reported on some of the changes: 'dance partners must not fraternise with patrons, and must not sit with them at the tables'¹⁸⁰ ' and, furthermore, 'no lady shall be admitted unless accompanied by a gentleman, and that no girl under the age of 58 years be employed as a dancing partner within the licensed premises.'¹⁸¹ While those in the clandestine prostitution industry were able to benefit from the wider visibility of young, unchaperoned women and their presence at various leisure venues, these new blurred lines of propriety had detrimental effect on the reputation and freedoms of those women who were not engaging in prostitution. The blurring of respectable and non-respectable boundaries and the branding of these leisure venues as unsavoury only served to emphasise the flapper as deviant in the Scottish imaginations.

¹⁷⁹ Settle, 'The Social Geography of Prostitution in Edinburgh' p. 234

¹⁸⁰ *The Scotsman*, 26 Oct. 1927, p.10

¹⁸¹ *Ibid*

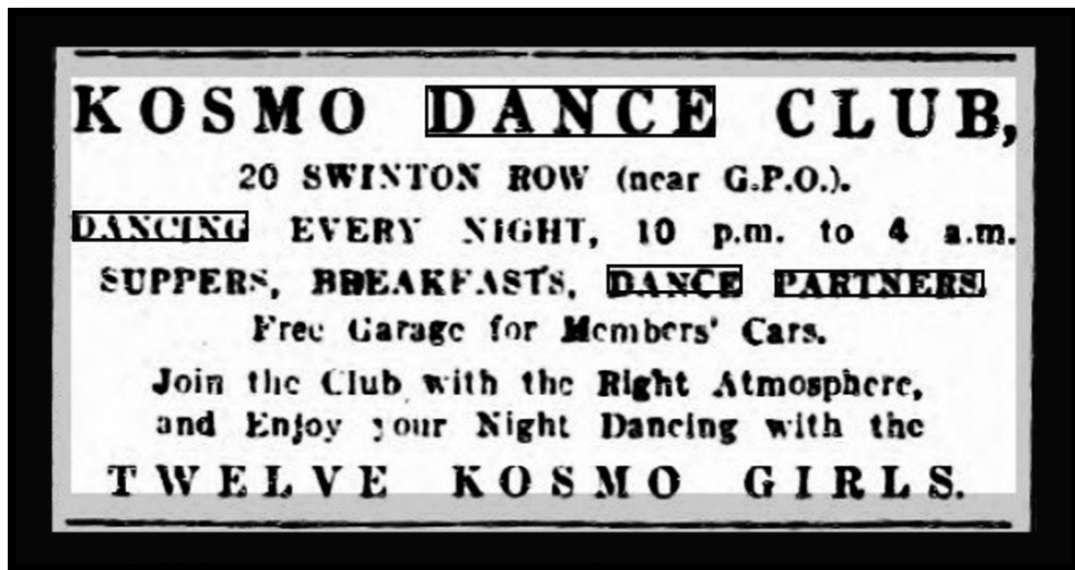


Figure 7¹⁸²

The flapper's perceived sexual deviance was also associated with developing ideas surrounding female promiscuity, which had become known as 'war nymphomania' or 'amateur prostitution.'¹⁸³ As Bland argues, the term 'amateur prostitute' represented the lack of understanding of 'female sexuality outside the institution of prostitution.'¹⁸⁴ Not only was the concept of women giving sex 'for free' baffling, additionally, unlike prostitutes who were assumed to be working class, the amateur was thought to come from all classes and also seemed to be notably younger than professional prostitutes.¹⁸⁵ In 1921 Sir Leonard Dunning, inspector of the Constabulary, reported on the 'modern girl's morals.' In his report he supported the need for women police officers in Scottish cities to help guide the morals of modern girls who, he thought, did 'not attach much value to

¹⁸² *Edinburgh Evening News*, 1932

¹⁸³ Bland, 'Guardians of the Race' p. 380

¹⁸⁴ Bland, 'Guardians of the Race' p. 381

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

chastity,' through 'advice and personal influence.'¹⁸⁶ He concludes with the proclamation that, although he could only offer a man's view, 'his experience as a policeman had made him think for many years that the women who takes to prostitution for a living is being driven out of business by the amateur'.¹⁸⁷ Bland argues any *display* of women's sexuality was met with contradictory reactions, especially from those who wished to 'protect' women.¹⁸⁸ Promiscuous women were both scandalized and pitied, but were never entitled to a sexual identity on in the same way as men.¹⁸⁹ Conor attributes the air of scandal that followed the flapper figure, in part, to Australian authorities singling out of young, promiscuous women as spreaders of venereal disease.¹⁹⁰ Similarly, in Scotland 'amateurs', along with professional prostitutes, were seen to be 'contaminating' manhood as the source of the spread of venereal disease by Scottish authorities.¹⁹¹ In Scotland, a certain set of strategies was recommended to deal with infected young, single women in particular, who were officially described as 'problem girls'.¹⁹² The institutional and social control of infected 'problem girls' draws parallels to the fear surrounding casual promiscuity and prostitution during the First World War.¹⁹³

¹⁸⁶ *Dundee Courier*, 28 Feb. 1922, p.05

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁸ Bland, *Guardians of the Race* p. 374

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁰ Conor, 'The Flapper in the Heterosexual Scene' p. 48

¹⁹¹ Davidson, 'Venereal Disease, Sexual Morality, and Public Health' p. 71

¹⁹² *Ibid.*

¹⁹³ Davidson, 'Venereal Disease, Sexual Morality, and Public Health' p. 77

Summary

Both youth and female sexuality was identified as something that needed tighter controls. The close scrutiny of the modern girl in Scotland was, in some ways, related to the continuation of a trend towards the surveillance of young women during the war. The Scottish discourse on youth blamed a more 'effeminate' approach to the treatment of young people and poor parenting for the ill manners and lack of respect among young women. Similar to the situation in English Canada, New understandings of youth saw childhood and adolescence pathologised and problematized, in Scotland which emphasised the new modern generation as different. Modern girls were seen as both in need of protection as well as embodying a type of scarily modern sexual frankness. Ideas about the 'flapper trapper' had some resonance, not only in the cinema but also by the wider population, including to some extent, the Scottish authorities. The flapper's wider visibility in the streets and the dancehalls blurred the lines of respectability. This, as well as contemporary interwar understandings of promiscuity, saw them judged in a similar light as prostitutes. Furthermore, beliefs about women as spreaders of venereal disease also helped to solidify the flapper as sexually deviant.

Chapter Three

The Politics of Flapperhood

The 1920s, witnessed an enormous preoccupation with issues of female identity and women's proper role.¹⁹⁴ Melman has described how the flapper's ability to 'haunt the popular British imagination' was related to the 'surplus woman' debate, which was a reaction to the large-scale loss of young men's lives during the First World War and ignited 'fears of a perturbed, demographically imbalanced society.'¹⁹⁵ However, the modern girl, as Skillen points out, was a living breathing person with different experiences and interests.¹⁹⁶ Soland has made the distinction between the rhetorical construction of 'The New Woman' as a 'symbol of a world in disarray' and the real lived experiences of 'new women' who were 'not just figments of anxious imaginations'.¹⁹⁷ However, as Bingham notes, it was the press that popularised the label of 'flapper',¹⁹⁸ therefore it is worth exploring the public commentary produced by these 'anxious imaginations.' This chapter will examine the economic and social conditions that contributed to the shaping of the discourse in Scotland. It will examine some of the male hostility towards the modern girl and the application of the term 'flapper' as a kind of slur. Finally, it will consider the accuracy of declarations of the flapper 'death!' in the 1930s.

¹⁹⁴ Sølund, *Becoming Modern* p. 5

¹⁹⁵ Melman, *Women and the Popular Imagination* cited in Conor, 'The Flapper in the Heterosexual Scene' p. 46

¹⁹⁶ Skillen, 'Woman and the Sport Fetish' p. 752

¹⁹⁷ Sølund, *Becoming Modern* p. 7

¹⁹⁸ Bingham, 'Stop the Flapper Vote Folly' p. 19

Masculine Hostility

As Bingham notes, the discourse on the emergence of the modern girl was extensive, varied, and not entirely hostile.¹⁹⁹ However, in the Scottish press, a great number of articles and correspondences were openly misogynistic and unabashedly hostile when discussing the modern girl. Women had faced close scrutiny in the press before the interwar period, however none quite like the 'modern young woman' or the flapper.²⁰⁰ The flapper epitomized modernity, consumerism and frivolity, which many viewed as insensitive, at best, at a time when Scotland had become one of the 'depressed of the depressed' areas in Britain.²⁰¹ In Scotland, the particularly difficult economic climate meant that modernity; especially modern gender roles, were met with some resistance.²⁰² Before the war, Scotland had been a prosperous industrial hub, but not long after the war Scotland's industries entered in a period of economic malaise.²⁰³ In the 1920s Scotland experienced lower economic growth rates than the rest of the UK and had an unemployment rate much higher than the UK average.²⁰⁴ Additionally, as McIver notes, Scottish society was intensely patriarchal in 1900 and women were widely viewed as second-class citizens, with their labour being valued at less than half of the rate of men's.²⁰⁵ Although the modern girl's public personae and greater access to public life, work and leisure opportunities was

¹⁹⁹ Bingham, *Stop the Flapper Vote Folly* p. 36

²⁰⁰ Bingham, *Gender, Modernity, and the Popular Press* p. 47

²⁰¹ Hughes, *Gender and Political Identities in Scotland* p. 16

²⁰² Hughes, *Gender and Political Identities in Scotland* p. 2-3

²⁰³ Nicholas J. Evans, Marjory Harper, 'Socio-economic Dislocation and Inter-war Emigration to Canada and the United States: A Scottish Snapshot,' Volume 34, 2006, Issue 4p. 529

²⁰⁴ Knox, *Industrial Nation* p. 189

²⁰⁵ A. McIver, 'Gender Apartheid?: Women in Scottish Society' in T.M Devine and R.J Finlay, *Scotland in the Twentieth Century*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press (1996) p. 188

somewhat exaggerated, the discourse on modernity in the press helped to circulate and perpetuate the notion that women were usurping men.²⁰⁶ As women entered into 'masculine' jobs during the war, at least some of the blame for the economic problems was placed at the feet of the young women seen to be usurping men in the job market. Even before the depression, some sought to re-enforce pre-war gender norms. For example, Charles Robinson, Motherwell Trades Council delegate, opposed a 1918 resolution proposing a union campaign to dismantle occupational segregation, calling women's industrial participation 'demoralising' and insisting that woman's place was in the home.²⁰⁷ Furthermore, state wide policies such as the Restoration of Pre-War Practices Act, were put in place as a means to remove women workers from the workforce.²⁰⁸ As the interwar period progressed, high levels of unemployment created an environment that further 'threatened the links between manliness, work and work-related expressions of male identity', as men struggled to provide for their families.²⁰⁹ As Hughes argues, the lack of economic opportunities in Scotland in the 1930s meant that male tolerance towards women's ambitions had dwindled and hostility towards feminist objectives had risen.²¹⁰ Anxieties about women displacing men are apparent in the newspaper correspondence. Some commentators feared that the more masculine traits of the modern girl were emasculating men, and that, as a result, Scotland was

²⁰⁶ Hughes, *Gender and Political Identities in Scotland* p. 2

²⁰⁷ McIver, 'Gender Apartheid?' p. 188

²⁰⁸ Hughes, *Gender and Political Identities in Scotland* p. 2

²⁰⁹ Hughes, 'Gender and Political Identities in Scotland' p. 3

²¹⁰ Hughes, 'Fragmented Feminists? The Influence of Class and Political Identity in Relations Between the Glasgow and West of Scotland Suffrage Society and the Independent Labour Party in the West of Scotland, c.1919-1932', *Women's History Review*, Volume 14, 2005, Issue 1 p. 7

teetering on the edge of a situation similar to that which led to the fall of Rome.²¹¹ Other men sought desperately for anything to distinguish men from women in this new age of apparent gender ambiguity.²¹² In one particularly blunt offering, 'He-Man', expressed regret that through a 'mistaken sense of chivalry' men had been 'bamboozled' by women and should never have 'allowed' them to leave the domestic sphere:

Woman should never have been allowed to leave the confines of domesticity. Not only was she less dangerous there—she was definitely useful. Woman was allowed to escape from domesticity and, like a dangerous lunatic at large, she has been—possibly unintentionally pursuing a destructive course ever since. Her equality has simply meant that she is doing jobs that man can perform far more effectively; that home-life is decaying; the birth-rate decreasing and man becoming effeminized. Is that not a black list?²¹³

'Flapper' Derogatory Term?

The women's movement that emerged in nineteenth century Britain saw women demanding entry into new careers; access to education and a political voice, inspired the media image of the New Woman.²¹⁴ As Beddo notes, the image of the New Woman denoted ridicule and disapproval.²¹⁵ The 'hostile and mocking parody' depicted the New Woman as an 'ugly blue stocking', in a high collared blouse and a tie, smoking and mimicking masculine poses.²¹⁶ Similarly, the misogyny and mockery directed at the flapper as evident in the Scottish correspondence columns, was not directed at her looks, but her naiveté as a 'silly

²¹¹ *Dundee Courier*, 28 Jan. 1930, p.06

²¹² *Dundee Courier*, 28 Jun. 1928, p.06

²¹³ *Falkirk Herald*, 17 May 1930, p.03

²¹⁴ Beddoe, *Back to Home and Duty* p. 10

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*

ga-ga person'.²¹⁷ Before the war, observers had already begun using dehumanizing descriptors to comment on the modern flapper figure. A 1911 article signed 'Mgr' on 'The Flapper' proclaimed that 'the young girl with the shy laugh has disappeared from our natural history and is being replaced by a species which Schopenhauer would have called the 'monkey with a pigtail''.²¹⁸ As Marchiselli notes, it was common among American commentators on the flapper to take a 'tone of pseudo-scientific remove, imagining the young woman on the street as a foreign species'.²¹⁹ Writers regularly searched for a name or scientific category into which to place the flapper, or to diagnose her narcissism, vanity and relationship to consumerism.²²⁰

In the interwar period this kind of language gained more power as arguments for keeping young women out of public positions. The flapper label was increasingly applied to discredit young women who rejected traditional femininity within the domestic sphere. The most notable British example of this was the 'Stop the Flapper Vote' campaign run by the daily mail in England.²²¹ The extension of the franchise to women over 21 quickly became known as the 'flapper vote' throughout Britain, and newspaper correspondences used this catch phrase as a jumping off point for debate. Although, as Bingham argues, this 'unusually hostile' campaign against young woman had more to do with fears that young

²¹⁷ *Linlithgow Gazette*, 25 Apr. 1930, p.08

²¹⁸ *Northern Times and Weekly Journal for Sutherland and the North*, 27 Apr. 1911, p.02

²¹⁹ Marchiselli, 'The Flapper and the Flâneur' paragraph 9

²²⁰ Marchiselli, 'The Flapper and the Flâneur' paragraph 9

²²¹ Bingham, 'Stop the Flapper Vote Folly', p. 20

working class women would vote socialist than it had to do with misogyny,²²² the use of 'flapper' as a slur extended to other criticisms of women in public positions. For example, one commentator thought that men should not 'take orders from a flapper' because it would surely bring the further effemination of boys and men if 'flappers' were to be allowed to become headmistresses.²²³ The framing of the extension of the franchise to young women as extending power to a cohort of young giddy girls predictably brought anxiety about the loss of male power. Numerous male commentators in Scotland expressed their disapproval and regret towards the extension of the franchise. In a correspondence titled 'Flapper and the Franchise,' Mournful Man wrote, 'For almost 2000 years, man has laboured and sacrificed much for the fair sex, and now a deliberate attempt is being made to thrust him from his position.'²²⁴ There is a perception that there was more opposition to women playing a role in public life in Scotland because the electorate seemed to be initially less comfortable with the idea of women MPs than was the case in some other parts of England.²²⁵ Although, as Baxter notes, this is not necessarily evidence that Scottish voters were more prejudiced against women,²²⁶ it may hold some significance in explaining some Scottish commentators initial resistance to young women having voting power and the desire to discredit them.

²²² Ibid.

²²³ *Linlithgow Gazette*, 25 Apr. 1930, p.02

²²⁴ *Falkirk Herald*, 02 Nov. 1927, p.02

²²⁵ Kenneth Baxter, 'The advent of a woman candidate was seen ... as outrageous': Women, Party Politics and Elections in Interwar Scotland, *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies*, Volume 33, 2013, Issue 2 p.283

²²⁶ Ibid.

As Schmid notes, men controlled most of the discourse on the modern girl.²²⁷ In Britain, the press continued to spread stereotypes about 'women's interests' which meant that feminists and female politicians often had a difficult time getting their 'opinions, rather than their fashions, noticed by the press'.²²⁸ The interwar period saw the emergence of two types of contrasting femininities in the media: one reinforced the housewife as the ideal woman and the other, the flapper, spinster or lesbian, was depicted as deviant.²²⁹ As a result, some young women did not want to associate themselves with the term 'flapper', instead, rejecting the label as offensive. Some expressed an awareness that the 'flapper' label was being applied in order to degrade them. In 1930 a 'sex war' among Glasgow University students erupted over whether or not females should be completely exorcised from the men's student union inspired one young woman's enthusiastic retort:

...it is because these moth-like male creatures see us only as butterflies, fit merely to flutter with them in a communal wing-singing at the social candle, that we are obtusely labeled flappers, which would be an indignity great enough to sear the soul of a filleted louse, did it not illustrate the amiable and peculiar whelkishness of outlook found in the male human.²³⁰

The 80 year old Suffragette Dame Fawcett also publically objected to the word 'flapper,' or even 'girl,' as a fair description of young women: 'Why call them

²²⁷ Schmid, *The 'New Woman', Gender Roles and Urban Modernism*, paragraph 9

²²⁸ Bingham, in Gottlieb, Julie V; Toye, Richard, *The Aftermath of Suffrage: Women, Gender, and Politics in Britain, 1918-1945*, Palgrave Macmillan, (2013) p. 101

²²⁹ Beddoe, *Back to Home and Duty* p. 9

²³⁰ *Dundee Courier*, 24 Jan. 1930, p.06

girls? You might as well call men of 21 boys.’²³¹ The Duchess of Atholl similarly rejected the ‘Flapper Epithet’. Speaking on behalf of the East Renfrewshire Women’s Unionist Association at Paisley, the Duchess supported the vote for young women arguing that most girls of 21 today were as well educated as their brothers and therefore were just as worthy of the vote,’ furthermore, ‘It was a ‘little bit thick’ to call them flappers.’²³² On the other hand, as Conor notes, older women during this period were often viewed as antagonistic to the flapper.²³³ Australian Feminists, such as Vida Goldstein and Rose Scott, singled out the flapper as throwing away women’s ‘hard won independence’ and liberty on fun and frivolity.²³⁴ While Scotland had a strong presence of women’s organisations in the interwar period, these organisations in Glasgow and Edinburgh were more concerned with major public policy issues: contraception, housing and maternal health and child welfare, while campaigns around the regulation of prostitution combined moral hygiene, equal rights and health and welfare interests.²³⁵ In western feminism a tension emerged between the whether the new feminine visibility was to be viewed as political participation, or as ‘self-indulgent vanity’.²³⁶ Reinsch argues that although flappers acted strictly as ‘a-political individuals’, however, because of the way they challenged gender expectations, there is ‘feminist potential’ in ‘flapperhood’.²³⁷ To call flapperhood a feminist movement would be a stretch, but the modern appearing girl in Scotland challenged class and gender boundaries and transgressed the existing social,

²³¹ *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, 07 Oct. 1927, p.08

²³² *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 5 Oct. 1927, p.07

²³³ Conor, ‘The Flapper in the Heterosexual Scene’ p. 50

²³⁴ Conor, ‘The Flapper in the Heterosexual Scene’ p. 50

²³⁵ Breitenbach, Wright, ‘Women as Active Citizens’ p. 415-416

²³⁶ Conor, ‘The Flapper in the Heterosexual Scene’ p. 50

²³⁷ Reinsch, ‘Flapper Girls: Feminism and Consumer Society’ p. 31

sexual, spatial, professional and political gendered 'spheres.' As one commentator put it, she was 'more intelligent, more useful, and every way every way more like men'.²³⁸ Hughes argues, that 'feminist behavior does not have to be intentional' and 'feminist consciousness does not have to be articulated and indeed can be situational'.²³⁹ The interwar actions and position of the modern girl threw traditional understandings of gender norms into a frenzy of confusion and blurred lines. The fact that Scottish flappers, like many of her international counterparts took her space in formally male spaces was radical enough to enough to spark a major dialogue about modern woman's changing role in society.

The Flapper is 'Dead!'

In the immediate aftermath of the war, this gender confusion created the widespread fascination and careful scrutiny as to what should be the proper place of the modern girl. As Bingham has argued, the general practices of the press encouraged journalists to place an emphasis on change rather than underlying continuities, reinforcing the preoccupation with modernity after the war.²⁴⁰ Towards the latter half of the interwar period, it is apparent that the Scottish press was similarly eager to declare the death of the flapper, with headlines such as 'The Flapper is Dead! Long Live Her Successor!'²⁴¹ A declaration that the flapper 'object' needed saving also appeared in the *Dundee Courier* as early as 1926: 'The 'flapper,' once so pleasing an object on the

²³⁸ *Dundee Courier*, 28 Jun. 1928, p.06

²³⁹ Hughes, *Gender and Political Identities in Scotland* p. 9

²⁴⁰ Bingham, *Gender, Modernity, and the Popular Press* p. 49

²⁴¹ *Linlithgow Gazette*, 25 Apr. 1930, p.08

landscape, has now almost disappeared from the cities of Europe'²⁴² In various countries around the world, moving into the 1930s, the press was declaring masculinity 'over' while helping to redefine a new modern femininity. In Germany, journalists were heralding a return to 'true femininity' and 'womanhood'.²⁴³ Similarly, in America the flapper's successor would be the Siren, who was perceived to be 'much more agreeable'.²⁴⁴ Several Scottish newspapers also touted the end of the flapper; some with regret, but mostly with eager anticipation. One correspondent for the Dundee Evening Telegraph, reporting from Paris wrote:

The flapper is shoved from her place of eminence in society as the arch type on which modern life is modelled to make room for the subtle siren who combines mundane ease with utter smartness and also a certain measure of seductive languor.²⁴⁵

As Sølund has argued that toward the end of the 1920s the obsession with women began to fade.²⁴⁶ This was, at least in part, due to the onset of the Great Depression, which turned the public's attention towards other matters.²⁴⁷ An article in the Motherwell Times on new cinema releases in 1932 similarly declared that 'the public are tired of sex, seduction and silk stockings, and want stories about ordinary, everyday people, doing ordinary, everyday things'.²⁴⁸ Some historians have emphasised the 'backlash' model of women's experiences in the interwar period. This model emphasises the 'triumph of conservatism,'

²⁴² *Dundee Courier*, 20 Sep. 1926, p.04

²⁴³ Guenther, *Nazi Chic?* Paragraph 24

²⁴⁴ *New York Times* cited in Mowry, *Fords Flappers and Fanatics* p. 186

²⁴⁵ *Dundee Evening Telegraph* 1929

²⁴⁶ Sølund, *Becoming Modern* p. 6

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁸ *Motherwell Times*, 05 Aug. 1932, p.08

which limited progress towards sexual equality and the 'emancipation' of women during this period.²⁴⁹ Despite declarations that the flapper had been replaced, debates about the flapper continued, at least to some degree, into the 1930s. Furthermore, the recognisable image of the flapper was still gracing the covers of Scottish women's magazines in 1930, as shown in figure 8 below. Though the flapper of the interwar period may have provoked exceptional fascination in the press, the New Women provoked a similar reaction of hostility and mockery. Furthermore, as Jackson and Tinkler's research on 'troublesome' femininities demonstrates, comparisons can also be drawn between the reactions to the behaviour of the flapper and twenty-first century Britain's binge drinking 'ladette'.²⁵⁰ When women behave like men, it seems that has been historically 'troublesome.'

²⁴⁹ Bingham, 'An Era of Domesticity'? Histories of Women and Gender in Interwar Britain' *Cultural and Social History*, Vol. 1, 2004, Issue 2, 2004 p. 233

²⁵⁰ Jackson, Tinkler, 'Ladettes and Modern Girls'



Figure 8²⁵¹

Summary

The close scrutiny of the modern girl in the interwar period was not unique to Scotland and commentary in many ways mirrored the discourse on the flapper in other countries. However, the discourse in Scotland was, in many ways underpinned by anxieties about women gaining a new level of power and usurping men at a time when men were particularly disempowered. Scotland

²⁵¹ *Woman's Way*, February 1st, 1930

offers a good case study for the conditions that breed this kind of gender antagonism. The weakening and decline of Scotland's once prosperous industry is analogous to the perceived weakening of male control. Similarly, certain hostility is evident in the use of language. Although the terms 'modern girl', 'flapper' and 'new woman' were sometimes used to identify the same figure— young women with short bobbed hair and short skirts who were out and about town—the term 'flapper' seemed to be used more than the others to denote a certain kind of air-headedness. Similar to other writings on the flapper around the world, the term 'flapper' was adopted as a kind of slur to undermine female social and political participation. As a result many women took offense to the label and did not wish to use it, finding it derogatory and discrediting. In the second half of the interwar period, again, as was the case in countries like Germany and America declarations that the flapper was gone or 'dead!' were evident in the Scottish press, however the flapper figure did not seem to disappear overnight.

Conclusion

The prevalence of debates about the flapper in the Scottish press is both surprising and expected. The international reach of the flapper figure and the emerging global influence of American cinema and French fashion extended to Europe, Australia and beyond. However, considering Scotland's declining industry and mass unemployment during this period, it may be surprising that this figure, who came to be the symbol of modernity, particularly in fashion and consumerism, was widely recognised on the streets of Scottish cities. Although the discourse contains both critics and champions of the flapper, it is difficult to

get a sense of who the flapper was from the archives. Although some women commentators came to the defense of the modern girl, and a small few self-identified as flappers, the newspaper discourse does not reveal a great deal about the experiences or opinions of the flapper herself. The commentary on the flapper in Scotland mirrors much of the discourse in England, as well as some of the other countries mentioned above, and was framed by a similar social and cultural climate. Scottish observers were similarly confounded by the revolutionary fashions of the flapper girl which sparked active debate over what inspired the new look and whether the modern girl's visual aesthetic made her fundamentally different from the young women that came before her. There is evidence in the newspaper archives of sightings of the flapper figure on the streets of Scottish and English cities prior to the war. However, the debates surrounding the modern girl's wider visibility and consumer and leisure participation during the interwar period were framed by ideas about a woman's 'proper' place. The controversial bob worn by the flapper was a particularly powerful symbol of young women's modernity. As had been the case in other countries, in Scotland the bobbed haircut gained widespread popularity and triggered anxiety about the modern girl's rejection of the male gaze, and therefore marriage. Significantly, the discourse on the Scottish flapper challenges the notion that flapperhood was exclusively an upper and middle class phenomenon. The evidence from Scottish newspapers and magazines suggests that, despite Scotland's economic challenges, some young working class women, including mill girls, were engaging in flapperhood, and the advertisements in women's magazines support the notion that there were ways to achieve the lifestyle relatively inexpensively. The international influence on fashion and

consumer trends in Scotland is also notable in magazines, such as *Peoples Friend and Womens Weekly*. As remains the case in contemporary western culture, during the interwar period clothing and cosmetic trends were imported primarily from Paris and Hollywood.

Within the realm of fashion and leisure consumption, the discourse on the modern girl was both critical and supportive. The modern girl's participation in mass consumerism was met with some criticism about whether the new generation of young women were neglecting more important duties in the home. Several commentators condemned the modern girl's extravagance, while others perceived young flappers promenading in the streets as morally dubious.

Additionally, the widespread fixation on the flapper image placed a particular emphasis on the body, and sports and fitness were increasingly important for the modern girl in order to maintain the boyish physique necessary for the wearing of modern fashions. In Scotland, sports were encouraged among young women for the promotion of physical and moral health. While young women's sports participation created anxiety in some cultures due to perceptions about the masculinizing influence, this seemed not to be the case in Scotland. However, some anxiety was expressed about the pursuit of a modern slim physique that was perceived as 'unnatural' for young women.

While the flapper aesthetic served as a springboard for discussion, the international flapper figure also became associated with youth and female sexuality. In common with Canada, the medicalisation of youth behaviour in the pursuit of moral health during the interwar period was also evident in Scotland.

However, some Scottish commentators were concerned that the emphasis on youth was responsible for the effeminisation of the young. Furthermore, discourse on the flapper echoed similar anxieties about the loss of parental control and an absence of manners and decency among young people during this period. 'Flapper' denotes, not only a youthful naiveté, but also a certain sexual deviance. The modern girl's newfound public visibility also allowed her to become a target of prevalent notions of declining morality. While in Germany and France discourse surrounding the flapper was framed by fears over the masculinisation of women, as well as a growing awareness of female homosexuality, discussions about the flapper in Scotland suggest that, similar to the Australian flapper, she was situated within the heterosexual scene. Although the modern girl was characterised as having a certain knowingness of all things sexual, she was also seen to require a kind of 'benevolent supervision' to protect her from falling into unsavoury scenes that could be precursors to future sexual misbehaviour. The language in the Scottish press was not overtly sexual in nature, however, there is some evidence to suggest that the Scottish public was aware of the stereotype of the 'flapper trapper' that men needed protection from. Certainly, wartime policies in Scotland implied that there was a perceived need to protect men and prevent illegitimacy through the regulation of young women's sexuality. Similarly, the newspapers reported new regulations in Glasgow that barred young women from dancehalls unless accompanied by a male companion. In Scottish cities, as well as in Berlin and Shanghai, the emergence of clandestine forms of prostitution blurred the lines between the flapper and the prostitute. The flapper was also associated with female promiscuity, which in the understanding of the time was deemed 'amateur'

prostitution. In Scottish cities, ambiguity between promiscuous women and prostitutes was also evident. As was the case in Australia, in Scotland prostitutes as well as 'amateurs' were blamed for the spread of venereal disease. As a result, Scotland implemented its own regularity policies to 'deal with' the problem of female promiscuity.

The development of the flapper figure in the popular imagination owed a great deal to the prevailing political and economic climate, as well as sensationalism in the press. The discourse on the modern girl was undoubtedly impacted by the changes in gender roles that the conditions of the First World War created. As had been the case in Britain as a whole, in Scotland the modern girl came to symbolise a discontinuity that made many commentators uncomfortable. As a result, the flapper became a target for masculine anxieties about the seeming omnipresence of women, as well as ideas that young women were usurping men in the workforce and the public and political sphere. In Scotland the high unemployment and declining industries fuelled anxieties about the effeminisation of society. Perceptions about the modern girl's widespread access to work and leisure, although overstated, further exacerbated gender tensions. Furthermore, the extension of the franchise to women of 21, which became known as the 'flapper vote' opened the door to further debate over the political competence of young women. Just as the media creation of the New Woman had attracted mocking commentary, the 'flapper' was presented as air-headed and barely human. Attempts to decipher or 'diagnose' the modern girl also inspired similar pseudo-scientific language among American writers. Although 'flapper', 'modern girl' and 'new woman' were used to describe the advent of the bobbed

headed, short-skirted modern, the term 'flapper' appears to have been applied with significantly more derogatory connotations than the others. As a result, some Scottish women, young and old, called out the application of the term as insulting.

By the 1930s the discourse on the flapper was shifting. Articles in Germany and America were now declaring the flapper passé. Similar declarations of the demise of the flapper were evident in the Scottish papers, most likely due to the influence of Hollywood. While some seemed to mourn the loss of the flapper, others, perhaps hoping that women's visibility would be a passing trend like the drop-waist hemline, welcomed the arrival of the more feminine Siren. Despite the declarations of the death of the flapper, the image lingered into the 1930s in newspaper correspondences and magazine covers in Scotland. The flapper girl was not the first to engender shock and premature predictions of the end of civilisation and, we can be sure, will not be the last. The flapper figure did however encourage debates about the modern woman's role in society in Scotland, as in other regions throughout the world, which have had a lasting, and in many ways positive, impact on young women's freedoms and standing in society.

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Figure 1, *People's Friend*, January 11th 1930

Figure 2, *People's Friend*, February 8th, 1930

Figure 3, *People's Friend*, July 13th 1935

Figure 4, *People's Friend* September 20th 1930

Figure 5, *People's Friend* February 7th 1925

Figure 6, *Woman's Way*, February 1st, 1930

Figure 7, *Edinburgh Evening News*, 1932

Figure 8 - *Woman's Way*, February 1st, 1930

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